British American Football: National Identity, Cultural Specificity and Globalization

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by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the hybridity and distinctiveness of British American football. Sports have socio-historical links to specific nation-states, thus encoding them with culturally specific values. Despite a movement towards cultural convergence, especially of popular culture, aspects of sport have remained resistant to dominant globalization trends. My thesis reveals that the globalization of American football to Britain has been a process which makes concessions to the local, while still retaining many of its global characteristics. Through an ethnographic study of one team, I spent an entire season becoming an 'insider' and understanding the British American football culture from the perspective of the participants themselves. Analysis of data collected through participant observation and interviews revealed a number of themes which defined British American football as a hybrid and distinctive sport. First, that British American football was distinctive within the domestic British sports space because of its unique combination of American characteristics. Second, that 'glocalization' influences the structuring of British American football under the amateur code, in order for the sport to better fit within the British sporting habitus. Finally, that the two branches of American football in Britain, the NFL and the British grassroots, were found to be involved in a disparate relationship which involved each branch concentrating on their own separate agendas for the sport. In conclusion, the American football played in Britain is *British* American football and this study importantly demonstrates that while a sport can retain its roots in terms of its physical appearance and playing structure, in order for it to infiltrate a foreign sports space, concessions must be made to the local sporting culture. The single most important thread that ran throughout this thesis was that American football could, and has, taken on multiple meanings, which were dependent upon the national context in which it was being played. It emphasizes the idea of globalization as glocalization; that the local is important in the global aspirations of the sport of American football. British American football has placed a uniquely British stamp on an otherwise purely American pastime.

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Abbreviations

AAFC - American Amateur Football Conference
AFL – American Football League
AFLUK - American Football League United Kingdom
BAFA – British American Football Association
BAFACL - British American Football Association Community League
BAFCA – British American Football Coaches Association
BAFRA – British American Football Referees Association
BAFF - British American Football Federation
BAFL - British American Football League
BBC – British Broadcasting Channel
BNGL - British National Gridiron League
BSL – British Senior League
BUAFL – British University American Football League
CAFL - Caledonian American Football League
FA – Football Association
FIFA - Federation Internationale de Football Association
GB – Great Britain
MLB – Major League Baseball
NASCAR - National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing
NBA – National Basketball Association
NCAA – National Collegiate Athletic Association
NDMAL - National Division Management Association League
NFL – National Football League
NFLUK – National Football League United Kingdom
NGB - National Governing Body
NHL – National Hockey League
RFU - Rugby Football Union
SAFL - Southwestern American Football League
UK – United Kingdom
UKAFA - United Kingdom American Football Association
UKAFL - United Kingdom American Football League
US – United States
USA – United States of America
USAFE – United Stated Air Forces in Europe
WLAF - World League of American Football
WSP – Whole Sport Plan

Chapter 1 – Introduction

A Personal Journey

American football has always been a part of my life. One of my earliest childhood memories is of sitting in my grandparents' basement in 1987, watching the Cleveland Browns take on the Denver Broncos in the AFC championship game. I can distinctly remember the disappointment on my grandfather's face as John Elway drove his team 98 yards down the field in 5 minutes and 2 seconds to tie the game with 37 seconds left and send it into overtime, where the Broncos eventually won by a field goal. What the reader should understand about this personal antidote is that my grandfather is a 'die-hard' Cleveland Browns fan. He wears brown and orange clothing as if it were his uniform, owns all types of Browns memorabilia, and even purchased a Volkswagen 'bug' and had it painted orange with a brown and white strip down the middle to look like a Cleveland Browns helmet. As a family, we took trips to the city of Cleveland where my brother and I would paint our faces and dress up like Cleveland 'Dawgs'. This was the type of football fanaticism with which I grew up; it was normal in Pennsylvania, and I loved it.

This type of American football fanaticism is not uncommon in the United States; in fact, by the end of the 1960's, American football had become the most watched domestic sport (MacCambridge, 2005; Oriard, 2007). By 2003, the Harris pole named NFL American football as Americans' favorite pastime by a two-to-one margin (29 percent to 13 percent) over baseball (MacCambridge, 2005). My grandfather grew up in an era when American football was in a constant state of flux. It was evolving out of an amateur labeled, university centered pastime into a professional national obsession. He chose to follow the Cleveland Browns because between 1946 and 1964 they were one of the best teams in professional American football and he felt a connection to them. As I will later argue in this thesis, American football had more generally struck a chord with American sports fans as it reflected the values of capitalism, masculinity, urbanization, and technology (Gems, 2004; Oriard, 1993; Paolantonio, 2008). It took advantage of its relationship with television while

also maintaining its association with spectator rituals, such as socializing, tailgating, and cheering, all of which have little to do with the purpose of attending a live game, to watch the play on the field (Mandelbaum, 2004). The NFL also developed itself to make the occurrence of every game both a habit and a special event. It was a game that happened often enough to sustain interest, but infrequently enough so that each game mattered to people like my grandfather. It became a national obsession and one which my family bought into.

While my grandfather remains a loyal Cleveland Browns fan to this day, my loyalty shifted to our local team, the Philadelphia Eagles. I became enraptured with supporting the local team because I wanted to show pride in where I came from, eastern Pennsylvania. In this way, supporting a specific American football team represented more than just enjoying a game; it was a form of identification. American football's growing success depended upon the enthusiasm of those who did not play but who identified, sometimes passionately, with it (Mandelbaum, 2004). This desire to identify with an American football team unknowingly followed me into my undergraduate studies where I found myself fulfilling my clinical requirements in athletic training by working with an Ivy League institution. It was here where I began to look at American football as more than just an entertainment spectacle; I began to appreciate the sport on a team level.

I had been personally involved in all types of athletics as a school girl, and thus had a deep attachment to the concept of team. However, there was something unique about being a part of an American football team. The athletic requirements fascinated me more than in any other sport because I began to see past American football's image as a 'jock' culture. I was able to experience my favorite spectator sport from the inside for the first time, and I realized that the sport was about more than the spectacle I watched on television every week. My investigation into these revelations was superseded by my role as an athletic training student, and thus I did not explore this interest into the American football culture any further. However, the seed of inspiration was planted for my later academic study of American football.

Upon my relocation to Oxford, England to pursue my Master's degree, I wanted to retain my clinical athletic training skills and thus sought out a sports

team with which I could volunteer my medical expertise. To my surprise, the University of Oxford had an American football team. It was the first instance in which I had considered American football as a 'global' sport. Until that day, I had only ever considered American football to be an American pastime. I entered the British university American football culture unaware of how the sport had adapted to British sporting culture. What I experienced was an American football culture which differed greatly from that with which I had grown up. Here, the sport was a purely amateur game, enjoyed by students who had grown up playing and watching association football or rugby. British American football, for many of them, was a 'new experience', associated with entering into university and trying new things in general.

My studies at Oxford, and my experience with the Oxford team, began to overlap when professors would ask me about the team and the sport in general. They would inquire about how the American and British American football cultures were different, and if I had any opinions on how the British American football league could improve their general reputation. It was at this time that I began to ponder the connection between globalization, national identity, and American football. I did some background research on the subject and uncovered Maguire's (1990, 1991, 1993a, 1999) work, which specifically dealt with the globalization of American football to England in relation to the media sports production complex. In reading this academic literature, I recognized that there were two pronounced gaps in the British American football research. First, that Maguire's work was conducted primarily in the 1990's, and very little new research on the subject had been done since. Secondly, Maguire wrote primarily in reference to American football as a commodity of the NFL and as a media phenomenon. I wanted to focus my research on the grassroots level of participation, on the types of athletes I had come to know on the Oxford team. I believe that it was at this grassroots level of play where information could be gathered on how the game, at a fundamental level, was successfully or unsuccessfully being globalized to Britain, and how the national identities of the players have influenced that globalization process.

It also so happened that the beginning of my own research journey coincided with the development of the new NFL International Series, which London had been chosen to host. American football seemed to be attempting

globalization on multiple levels, at the level of the media and at the level of grassroots participation. I wanted to conduct my own research during this wave of development in hopes of being able to produce a study which addressed the making of *British* American football. An in depth analysis of the media event that surrounds the International Series is outside the scope of this thesis; however, what I aim to achieve is an in depth analysis of the British American football culture from the perspective of some of those who participate in it as an amateur sporting activity.

In order to formulate my research questions, I drew on my personal experiences with both American American football and British American football, and on the existing academic literature. First off, I wanted to acknowledge the unique athletic characteristics which made American football America's most popular national pastime. Did the British value the same characteristics as I, and the American athletes on that Ivy League team? Second, I was interested in American football as a global sport and whether the grassroots level had experienced globalization in the same way as Maguire outlined the NFL had in the 1980's. Why did British athletes want to play, and not just watch, American football? Third, I wanted to concentrate on how identity, like that which drew my grandfather to support the Browns and me to support the Eagles, affects the sport on a global level. Did possessing British national identity influence whether someone watched or participated in American football? Based upon these three points, I created a research question which formed the basis for my academic exploration: How do local and global processes influence the construction of the culture of British American football?

Thesis Structure

The next two chapters will provide a sociological and historical literature review on the subject of the globalization of sport and of American football particularly. The aim of these chapters is to introduce how other academics have understood, approached, and dealt with the subject thus far. Specifically, chapter 2 will introduce the sociological literature which underpins this thesis. I will concentrate on theories of globalization, national

identity, the global media, the encoding and decoding process, the social self (specifically the work of Bourdieu), and masculinity. These theoretical frameworks will provide the existing academic backdrop for my later exploration of how the culturally specific sport of American football has been able to infiltrate the British sports space and embed itself into the British sporting identity of my research group, the London Bombers. The chapter which follows, chapter 3, gives a socio-historical account of the development of American football. This historical framework importantly provides a background into how American football attained its ties to American national identity. The chapter will also reflect on the early globalization trends of American football's expansion to Britain. By the conclusion of these sections, I aim to have introduced the academic material which has directly led to the formation of my research question, and to situate the reader within a specific sociological and historical context.

Chapter 4 will introduce my methodology. The aims of this chapter are to set out how my research was designed and undertaken, to introduce my various research methods, and to provide rationale for why they were chosen. It will explain my epistemological position, why ethnography was chosen to collect data from within the British American football community, and how I used narrative analysis to analyze and present my data. I will also discuss some of the methodological and theoretical criticism which are associated with undertaking this kind of qualitative research.

My discussion chapters are structured to give the reader a narrative about the 2009 London Bombers' season, as well as to critically analyze the data which is embedded within this narrative. I will intersperse excerpts from my field notes within the text, in order to place the reader within the culture of British American football, albeit via the eyes of the researcher. I will also utilize quotations from my interviews so that the voice of the participants themselves can be heard. It was important for me to include excerpts from both sets of data within the body of the text because I want the reader to feel as though my experience within the British American football community has shaped this thesis, and that its contribution to the field of sports sociology stems from this unique exploration of a specific community of athletes. I want my study of an individual team to provide a snapshot of how these particular

British American football athletes have responded to the processes of globalization, identified with a 'foreign' sport, and adapted that sport to fit within their national habitus.

The first discussion section, chapter 5, will concentrate on what characteristics make British American football a distinctive sport within the British sports space. It utilizes Mead's (1934) concept of the 'Other' to make comparisons to both alternative British sports and American football played in America. The primary focus, however, will be on concepts put forth by Bourdieu (1977, 1984). His concepts of distinction, capital, habitus, and field will be used to support findings in my data which show how a sport can change meaning depending upon its social situation, without being physically altered. This chapter outlines the most commonly mentioned characteristics which drew London Bombers players to American football and kept them interested in playing the sport.

Chapter 6 expands upon this idea of British American football as a distinctive sport. I will again utilize Bourdieu's concepts of distinction, capital, habitus, and field to demonstrate how British American football is also distinctive from the American version of the sport. Theories of 'glocalization' will also be interwoven into this chapter to argue that British American football combines the needs of the local with the desires of the global. I use the amateur structure of the British American football league as an example of the necessary compromise to appease British sporting habitus. The final discussion chapter, chapter 7, discusses the influence of the spectacle driven NFL on the British grassroots leagues. As the NFL is the most globally recognizable form of American football, its presence within the British sportscape cannot be overlooked. This is especially the case with the International Series being based in London. I will continue to use Bourdieu and the idea of 'glocalization' to evaluate how these two branches of American football are working to globalize and popularize their own agendas for the sport.

The last chapter of this thesis, chapter 8, will draw together a number of sociological ideas and themes, in order to offer my general conclusions. It will also contain some of the implications and limitations of my study. Finally, I will spend some time on the process of reflexivity in order to address

some of the shortcomings of ethnography as an academically trustworthy methodology.

Chapter 2 - American Football as Sociological Theory: A Review of the Academic Literature

This chapter will first present a theoretical framework for understanding how the culturally specific sport of American football has been influenced by processes of globalization and embedded itself into British sporting identity. It will then move beyond globalization to utilize other theorists, but mainly those of Bourdieu's concepts of distinction, capital, and field, in order to explain how his work may help inform understandings of sport within a global context. It is the relationship between these two main theoretical perspectives which will be the focus of this chapter. In the next chapter, I will discuss the historical importance of American football within its national context. Only recently has the sport attracted attention in the global sporting landscape, but, nonetheless, American football does exist and thrive outside the borders of the United States. The global presence of the sport is maintained mainly through images associated with the NFL, but also in grassroots leagues scattered across 52 countries. Many of these leagues go relatively unnoticed in their respective domestic markets; however, the sport has been able to create its own international culture which has been able to survive for decades. This thesis will primarily focus on individual British American football athletes who deal with local-global interplay on a micro-level.

Globalization Theory

Globalization theory has dominated the academic discussions which surround the global expansion of the sport of American football. American football has been overwhelmingly associated with America in the past, but in the last 25 years the NFL has become a media phenomenon in countries such as Great Britain. One example of how academics have attempted to explain the presence of American football within British culture is through arguing that the sport was a product of globalization and, more precisely, the Americanization of British culture. While these academic debates about the influence of globalization on American football have explained some of the reasons behind

the international progression of the sport, they lack a coherent framework which defines what British American football actually is. Is it an American pastime that is enjoyed as a novelty, or is American football in Britain a growing and sustainable sporting commodity? This section will explore some of the theories of globalization that have previously influenced academic writing about American football as a global sport, as well as addressing critiques of these perspectives. According to Thibault, "sport has always included an international dimension but this dimension appears to have intensified. The evidence that sport is globalized is uncontestable" (Thibault, 2009, p.4). In order to understand the intensification of the international dimensions of sport, it is necessary to consider sport in relation to theories of globalization. Globalization has been understood as "the spread of worldwide practices, relations, consciousness, and organization of social life" (Ritzer, 2008, p.573). Globalization theory evolved not only in response to high profile changes throughout the world, with the construction of global organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the International Olympic Committee (Houlihan, 1994), but also against earlier theoretical perspectives, for instance modernization theory (Robinson, 2007). These earlier theories were defined by their Western bias and the idea that the rest of the world was powerless to stop becoming more like the West; however, current literature has moved away from a focus on just the West to examine transnational processes that flow in multiple directions (Ritzer, 2008). Although these global interconnections have not occurred evenly across the globe, recent debate would suggest that these processes of diffusions are gathering momentum (Maguire, 2000, 2008).

Globalization can be analyzed in a number of ways, including culturally, economically, politically and institutionally, and sport has not escaped this application (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007; Harvey & Houle, 1994; Harvey, Rail & Thibault, 1996). Robertson (1990), for example, has identified three factors which he believes have contributed to world integration of sport through processes of globalization: capitalism, western imperialism, and the development of global communications. The next section of the thesis will consider some of the shortcomings of the application of globalization theory in a sporting context and offer alternative ways of explaining how processes of globalization have affected sport.

While the process of globalization may be a complex combination of economic, political, institutional and cultural components, in regards to this thesis, I shall be focusing on the cultural aspect of globalization. Much of the debate surrounding cultural globalization has centered around two positions: cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization (Appadurai, 1990; Hargreaves, 2002). Supporters of the homogenization perspective perceived globalization as an inevitable and unidirectional process whereby the world shares an increasingly universalized culture (Hargreaves, 2002). Conversely, supporters of cultural heterogenization recognized a level of interconnectedness while still celebrating the influence of local cultures. This is by far the more accepted perspective and is supported by academics such as Appadurai (1990), Bairner (2001), Giddens (1990), Nederveen Pieterse (1995, 2004), Robertson (1990, 1992), and Tomlinson (1999). They have argued that globalization occurs as a multi-directional process. Robertson described globalization "in its most general sense as the process whereby the world becomes a single place" (Robertson, 1992, p.135). However, he went on to stress that it was not a cohesive system: globalization "involves the development of something like a global culture, not as normatively binding, but in the sense of a general mode of discourse about the world as a whole…" (Robertson, 1992, p.135), and a generalization where "the world becomes 'united' but by no means integrated" (Robertson, 1992, p.51). Tomlinson's emphasis on the cultural aspects of globalization acknowledged "the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and inter-dependences that characterize modern social life" (Tomlinson, 1999, p.2).

Within the idea of cultural heterogeneity, Nederveen Pieterse (1995, 2004) identified that there are different degrees of ways that cultures can be combined. He argued that the centrally important issue surrounding cultural globalization was whether cultures around the world were eternally different, converging, or hybrid forms combining global and local cultures. He described cultural differentialism in regards to globalization having an impact that goes only surface deep, leaving the core of cultures largely unaffected. Using this perspective, cultures are largely closed to outside influences, and lasting differences persist among and between cultures and civilizations in spite of globalization. In contrast, cultural convergence, which is actually a form of the

homogeneous perspective mentioned earlier, suggests that globalization is leading to increased sameness throughout the world. Under this theory, cultures are growing increasingly similar, at least in some ways, as a direct result of globalization. Convergence theorists tend to see assimilation in the direction of dominant societies, especially of the West. Finally, Nederveen Pieterse described a middle road, cultural hybridization, which emphasized the mixing of cultures as a result of the integration of the global and the local. What is important here is that global and local cultures are becoming integrated to produce new and distinctively hybrid forms of heterogenization. This idea of heterogenization provides an alternative definition for what globalization is; a complex blend of the global and the local.

Gems (2004) gave an example of the presence of cultural hybridity when he argued that, during American occupation of the Philippines, the indigenous people adopted or adapted those cultural forms which they believed best suited their own culture. The hybridity which evolved was represented in part by the 'American' sports that the Filipinos took up after the Spanish-American War of 1898, most notably baseball. A second example is that of Trobriand cricket being played in Papua New Guinea. This case researched how a quintessentially English game had been remade according to the rules of the Melanesian culture (Foster, 2006). The case of Trobriand cricket has been a popular example of cultural hybridity and resistance to accepting foreign imports on compromising terms. Specifically with this case, these terms included not losing the local Melanesian identity to the global identity of the British. In considering American football's globalization to Britain, the concept of cultural hybridity may be useful in accounting for the ways in which the sport has been adopted and adapted by individual athletes within new terrains.

Houlihan (2008) also focused some of his research on cultural globalization and, in doing so, he defined culture as "an integrated set of values, practices, and attitudes that give each community its distinctiveness" (Houlihan, 1994, p.357). Within this work, for example, he argued that we should ask whether the globalization of sport is evident merely at the commodity level which sits at the periphery of a particular sporting society, or if it has penetrated more deeply into the structural values and practices of sport. Using the example of American football in Britain, Houlihan questioned whether the sport

was an invasion of, and challenge to, the British nation's core identity or merely an example of a cultural oddity confined to the marketplace and periphery of British culture. Houlihan's view of culture demonstrates how globalization can be said to have been antithetical to the idea that culture is collectively made by people within certain contexts based on their lived experiences (Taylor & Francis, 2009). My research will employ the perspective of cultural hybridity and will seek, in part, to explore on a more local level the ways that athletes engage with and experience an imported sporting practice.

While focusing on the cultural aspect of globalization will provide the most useful framework in relation to this thesis, a consideration when defining this cultural globalization is whether the researcher is discussing globalization as a process or an outcome. Houlihan (2008) discussed both of these concepts and the implications they each had on sport. I have already mentioned how globalization is a complex combination of economic, political, institutional and cultural components which refers to how globalization is a multi-layered process. With respect to globalization as an outcome, however, Houlihan (2008) listed three trajectories of globalization. First is a globalized sporting world where nation and nationality mean little in terms of defining identity or the regulatory framework in which a sport takes place. Therefore, sports are deterritorialized (Tomlinson, 1999), meaning that nations are no longer defined by their identity which is caught up in national affiliations, but are rather structured according to other principles such as commercial opportunity or ideology. Second is that globalization leads to a pattern of intense 'inter*national*' competition where the sporting world is defined by the volume of competition between nation states and where these international competitions are more important than domestic competitions. Third, he describes as multinationalized sport where the nation is still an important reference point for identity, but the pattern of participation and fan identity reflects the increasingly common trend of possessing multiple personal identities. These three trajectories which globalization may take reflect the notable lack of consensus surrounding the effect of globalization on sport, and that globalization considered like this, demands attention be given to the way this complex phenomenon is experienced by the individual. This idea that globalization can be either an outcome or a process gives further support to my argument that

globalization theory on its own is not sufficient to theorize how athletes engage with and experience an imported sporting practice.

Within this realm of the cultural globalization of sport a debate exists regarding the influence of the local and of the global on the processes involved in the globalization of sport. Sport spans geographical boundaries as well as ethnic, cultural and linguistic boundaries. An and Sage (1992), Cantelon and Murray (1993), Maguire (1993b), Miller, Rowe, McKay, and Lawrence (2003), Rowe (1999), and Whannel (1995) all reference the mediation of sport as a transmitter of cultural values, messages and ideologies on a global scale. Following theorists such as Harvey (1990), Maguire (2000) pointed out that people and nation-states were interwoven into a tighter and deeper interdependency and that globalization appeared to be leading to a form of time-space compression. For example, modern technology allows people and information to travel across the globe at rapid speeds. There is also an increased sense of awareness of the world as a whole because of this movement, and through this there is a resurgence of the local and the national. In this way, people become more attuned to living their 'local' lives, while at the same time becoming a part of a single social space, the globe.

Local-global interplay has been explored by theorists on the macro-level by studying the transnational promotional strategies which surround sporting events, leagues, players and teams (Featherstone, 1991). This interplay is predicated on the creation of corporate alliances, international media synergies, corporate sponsorship and promotion on a global scale (Falcous & Maguire, 2005). When looking at the body of work focused on this local-global interplay on a macro-level, it can be said that the transnational industry has become a significant feature of the globalization of sport (Maguire, 1999). Sporting corporations and organizations, such as the NFL which controls the professional variety of American football within the United States, have some level of imperialistic ambitions. They desire to expand their geographical presence as much as possible (Hodgson, 2010). Their main interest is to see their power, influence and profits grow (Ritzer, 2004). However, companies can find global expansion to be difficult if their products are loaded with culturally specific content. They are more likely to be rejected by other societies because conflict exists with the local cultures. Ritzer (2004) understood sports such as these as

'full forms' in contrast to 'empty forms' that were devoid of such culturally specific content, so less likely to come into conflict with the local and, therefore, easier to globalize. An example of an 'empty form' is the American shopping mall, which is a neutral structure that can be filled with culturally specific content such as local shops and foods. It may be possible to understand the National Football League in these terms as it attempts to enter the global sports market place. It is most notably through this outlet of the NFL that American football endeavors to expand globally, but thus far it has encountered resistance from the local populations of the global marketplace.

The dynamics of global sport highlight the potential contradiction of local sports affiliations when set in a broader context. This is characterized by the global sports labor market and the commodification of sports structures. In this way, local sports leagues are undermined by a political economy which positions the elite forms of the game in a broadly dependent relationship with global (and in this case, American) influences (Maguire, 1994). Often local leagues and their interests are marginalized in favor of expansion of the elite or professional spectacle (Thibault, 2009). An example of this has happened in Japan where baseball fans are paying more attention to Major League Baseball than their own domestic leagues (Horne, 2005; Lee & Lin, 2007). The consequence of this is the struggle to maintain and protect the local professional baseball subculture of Japan, where the historically American game has been adopted as the national pastime. Similar contradictory elements that may exist in the relationship between the National Football League and the British American football leagues will be explored later in Chapter 7.

Harvey & Houle (1994) argue that those who insist on analyzing globalization in terms of imperialism assume that the logistics of this analysis can be explained through economical and cultural flows, as well as through state action. Academics have provided examples of societies accepting and later resisting a cultural invader. Houlihan (1994) used an example of the Gaelic Athletic Association's decision to prevent the spread of 'English' rugby Union to Ireland. The belief was that the continued adoption of the sport would undermine Irish local culture and support British imperialism and the globalization of British sport forms. Taking the position that meaning is negotiated, rather than determined, raises questions about the limits of the

negotiation process between the local and the global. Houlihan reflects that: "In practice it is likely that for some local cultures the awareness and acknowledgement of a global culture are important elements in defining their own identity and distinctiveness" (Houlihan, 1994, pp.362-363). Therefore, adopting certain 'global' sports may highlight the distinctive qualities of a local culture. However, the context of the interaction is controlled by deeper ideological forces which are more attuned to the prevailing power distribution. Due to the presence of this ideology, a separation must occur between it and the adoption of individual events or sports. The acknowledgement of these layers of global culture is what Houlihan (1994) argues will begin the reconciliation between claims of true globalization and the ability for local communities to demonstrate cultural diversity:

> The acceptance of a common pattern of sports organization may indeed signal the global spread of an important ideological imperative, but this should not lead to a failure to recognize that profound differences will nonetheless still divide states and that these differences might be reflected in the sports they play or the significance attached to particular competitions (Houlihan, 1994, p.364).

Therefore, to place this idea in the context of this thesis, the Americanization of British culture would be considered a direct result of economic, cultural and political dynamics specific to America. This idea will be addressed in more detail further on in this chapter when the work of Maguire is discussed.

Contrary to this view by Houlihan, Harvey & Houle (1994) offered another description of globalization which took into account the existing differences of nation-states, and underlined how economic and cultural flows are the products of dynamics that are independent of these nation-states. Thus, when explaining the spread of sport through processes of globalization, they argue that it is necessary for theorists to define new identities for those individuals who adopt the newly globalized sport because sport is part of an emerging 'global culture'; that the outcome of globalization cannot be explained by theories such as Americanization or Westernization. Harvey & Houle (1994) come to the conclusion that "new sport forms associated with globalization do not necessarily contribute to its elements of mass culture or

commodification of sport, but rather to the development of a fragmented culture" (Harvey & Houle, 1994, p.351).

While this thesis will briefly touch on the local-global interplay at the macro-level through the presence of the NFL, it will primarily focus on the perspectives and experiences of American football athletes in Britain within the context of the local grassroots leagues. Castellis (1997) addressed this debate between the local and the global on a micro-level by arguing that an individual's sense of national identity had not been crushed by globalization, but that local identities offer resistance to capitalist globalization. Thus, the impact of globalization on identity becomes a matter of interplay between globality and localizing forces. Tomlinson (2003) also adds to the debate by arguing that globalization can in fact lead to the creation and proliferation of cultural identity. He continues to support the idea that globalization is a complex process by discussing it alongside modernity. Modernity, using Tomlinson's definition, is the abstraction of social and cultural practices from the local and how they are institutionalized and regulated across time and space. He goes on to suggest that globalization is in fact the globalization of modernity, and that modernity is the herald of identity: "What this idea implies is not that globalization destroys localities…but that cultural experience is in various ways 'lifted out' of its traditional 'anchoring' in particular localities" (Tomlinson, 2003, p.273).

Houlihan (2008), addressed this debate between the influence of the local and the global by pointing out that some globalized sports can function only on the surface of society, like a passing fashion trend. If this is the case, these sports will exhaust themselves and be replaced fairly quickly. Within his discussion of globalization as a process, Houlihan (2008) acknowledged that the significance of cultural change must be conceptualized in terms of the depth of social embeddedness. When evaluating the globalization of sport, he argued that theorists must not get caught up in granting too much importance to the surface popularity of a sport, as a sport which expands to a new nation likely holds a deeper meaning for the individuals who play it than mere frivolous entertainment. This particular argument by Houlihan (2008) supports this thesis because this work will go beyond viewing American football as a frivolous

American export, and focus on the British individuals who have adopted it as a part of their identity as a British athlete.

Appadurai (1990), Bairner (2001), Giddens (1990), Robertson (1990), and Tomlinson (1999) also all placed strong emphasis on the continuing role of the nation-state and this balance between local and global. Bairner (2001) argued that it was globalization which linked sport to national identities because sport provided us with an important arena in which to celebrate this national identity. American baseball and basketball have been popular research topics in regards to national identity as a form of American missionary zeal (Cho, 2009; Falcous & Maguire, 2005; Hayes, 2001; Lee & Lin, 2007; Voigt, 1977). Barnett (1953) argued that professional displays of American sports were ineffective in globalizing sport generally. Sporting 'missions' did little to transmit American pastimes to foreign societies; it was actually more modest means of imitation which were most successful in the initial stages of globalization. Voigt (1977) argued that, therefore, games played abroad always carried the unique stamp of the culture adopting them. Globalization of sport, he contested, must be negotiated by equals and not dictated by one side.

As we can see by the number of differing theories on the effect of both the local and the global on the process of globalization, the extent of the interaction between the global and the local is complex and it cannot be explained in a unidirectional process. Houlihan (2008) attempted to bring the two sides together by arguing that many countries, such as the UK, can provide dual sporting cultures which sit comfortably along side of each other. Houlihan uses the example of Ireland, which has various Gaelic sports but still participates in the World Cup and in the Olympic Games. Harvey and Houle (1994) also argued that sports do not evolve as a function of intrusive forces, such as economic or cultural imperialism through the introduction of sport during colonial rule or military occupation, but that they are shaped by a myriad of globalization processes and, at the same time, contribute to the development of those processes. Robertson (1987) also stressed the importance of choice in cultural change and uses the term 'glocalization' to convey the idea that the global is not imposed upon the local. The Dominican Republic, for example, has found the capacity to import, redefine and re-export baseball as a cultural product of their country (Klein, 1991). Klein found that American and

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Dominican sporting cultures have become blended to co-exist, even though a specific power relationship is still in effect. The Dominicans have been able to adapt American baseball and in turn produce some of the sport's most gifted athletes, thus giving the people of the Dominican a sense of national pride within the community of baseball. In this case, globalization can be said to be a participatory process where negotiation and accommodation are utilized to adapt to new global trends while retaining some sense of locality.

Robertson went on to suggest that the local-global debate should be referred to as the "global institutionalization of the life-world and the localization of globality" (Robertson, 1990, p.19). Robertson's (2001) work identified four essential elements of 'glocalization': 1) that the world is growing more pluralistic; 2) that individuals and local groups have the power to adapt, innovate and maneuver within the globalizing world; 3) that social processes are relational and contingent; and 4) that commodities and the media are not coercive, but rather provide material to be used by individuals and local groups. These four elements of glocalization deconstruct the barrier between the local and the global and demonstrate how the two can work together during the process of globalization. Within his discussion of this 'glocalization' Robertson attempted to stimulate future work which would bring the local and the global closer together. The data collected in this thesis will do just this, as it will focus on how individuals and the local British sporting culture have affected the global expansion of American football. While Robertson's work will be useful within the context of this thesis, he recognized the limitations of his glocalization theory when he argued that the importance of choice exists within cultural change. Robertson commented that the balance of forces between the local and the global can be skewed by the potential for unequal power distribution between nations, and that the spatial dimension of globalization relies too heavily on the consequences of modernity (Robertson, 2003). The local/global relationship, therefore, is affected by the specific connection a nation has with its local identity and its importation of global influences.

Andrews & Ritzer (2007) dissected this idea of 'glocalization' into two halves. One half looks at glocalization from above and refers to the involvement of local governments and transnational corporations in the expansion of global sports. The other half considers glocalization from below.

This refers to the diverse ways that local sports fans consume global sports. Importantly in this argument, the two halves are not meant to be opposites, but highlight the complexities involved in combining the local and the global (Andrews & Ritzer, 2007). Cho (2009) also drew on the work of Robertson and Andrews to explore how baseball was experienced in Korea. He argued that the success of baseball in Korea was due to a combination of glocalization forms located both above and below the sport. Pressure from above came specifically from transnational corporations and the Korean government using images of Korean national players in the MLB, and below from individuals promoting their own ideas of national identity through personal choice (Cho, 2009).

While many of these theorists give credit to the local for thus far defending itself from a homogenized global take over, a question remains about whether local cultures have the continuing capacity to absorb the on-going global incursion. Is there a limit to how much a local culture can adapt and redefine an increasing number of global influences to be supportive of local values? Studying the cultural significance of organized sport highlights the tension between the global and the local, and the study of global sports adds to the ever-expanding definition of how cultural globalization works and what the outcome of its processes are for society. Due to the social significance of sport, it is important for theorists not to dismiss the adoption of particular sports as superficial in terms of cultural significance. Therefore, the transformation of culturally specific sports through the codification rules, the development of formal patterns of competition and the implementation of governing bodies, as well as individual athletes caring about the outcome of specific competitions or the playing of specific sports, are important in impacting a community's cultural identity. This is primarily what this thesis is about, focusing on the individual's perspective of the social significance of one particular sport, American football, within the context of the local-global debate (the local British sporting culture, vs. the globally ambitious American sporting culture).

Taking these theories into consideration then, globalization is complex and multi-dimensional. The globalization of sport is part of a much larger process involving the globalization of economics, politics, and institutions, but especially of culture. Sport has spread across the globe; its administration, organization and participation are global in scale. How American football

specifically interacts with these processes of globalization has been the focus of previous academic work and has influenced my theoretical choices when analyzing and presenting my own data. A conceptualization of local-global interactions will be central to explaining the adoption and adaptation of American football in Britain, but I will also utilize theories which lie outside globalization theory. I have chosen to look beyond the macro-centered theories of globalization theory because of the lack of consensus surrounding their influence on the global spread of sport. This thesis will stress the importance of the local interaction within the global meaning of the sport of American football. That being said, in order to fully understand the global importance of sport, it is necessary to pay attention to the role of sport in constructing identities at a local, or individual, level. Therefore, this thesis will not only utilize globalization theory to describe American football in Britain, but it will also focus on theories surrounding identity construction. It is my intention to engage with not only the global implications of American football's exportation to Britain, but to concentrate on how the local has influenced the way the sport has been adapted to fit into the British sporting culture.

National Identity Construction and Sport

The nation-state is the most universal form of political and cultural organization in the modern world (Bairner, 2001), and it is under this construction of the nation-state that national identities are formed. It is important to note the differences between the concepts of nationality and national identity. Nationality implies the nation-state to which a person is assigned, whereas national identity consists of a sense of belonging to a nation-state of which one is not necessarily a citizen (Bairner, 2003, 2009). National cultures contain competing discourses that are bound up in the actions of specific groups. In fact, Maguire (1993c) argues that national identities involve references to an 'imagined community' that contain stories and memories which connect a nation's present with its past. Through these discourses, people construct meanings which influence and organize both their own and others' actions and conceptions of themselves. This nationalism is powerfully promoted through sport; dominant groups construct identities by producing

meanings about the nation with which people could identify. Therefore, specific sports are seen to embody the qualities of a national character. "Different sports represent individuals, communities, regions, and nations, and a key feature of the sports process is that it is used by different groups, established as well as emergent or outsider groups, to represent, maintain, and/or challenge identities" (Maguire, 1994, p.410).

A nation is a political arrangement of boundaries, and it is constructed through a shared language and culture. People express a certain way of life and satisfy a need to belong through identification with a certain nation. Individuals are politically assigned a national identity upon their birth, they are brought up with a specific language, and are surrounded by specific cultural expectations, yet, for Sarup (1996) and Mato (1998), national identity should not be seen as an inherited legacy. Instead, they conceptualized national identity as a construct, fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a particular time. People are social actors, and through interaction with other social actors, they constitute and transform themselves (Mato, 1998). Throughout history, groups have constructed different national identities to suit their purposes (Sarup, 1996). Sarup stated that national identity was an ideology, referring to the way the things we say and believe connect with the power structures of the societies in which we live. It is a glue that binds people to their social obligations (Sarup, 1996). National identity becomes an even more complicated form of identity as an increasing number of people develop a sense of transnationality due to the processes of globalization.

The precise character of a nation has been subjected to a wide variety of interpretations. Language, ethnicity, geography, religion, and shared experience all have been cited as being fundamental to its formation. In whatever combination these factors contribute towards the definition, a nation is fundamentally about belonging. Two contrasting theoretical positions have made the greatest headway in understanding the concept of the nation. The Modernists' position (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983; Kumar, 2003) conceptualizes the nation as a social construct. From their perspective, and that until about 1800, no national loyalties existed, only local ones. They argue that national identities were imposed upon societies because they were a necessary part of the modernization process. The challenge to the Modernists' theory

comes from the so-called Primordialists (Greenfeld, 1992; Hargreaves, 1997; Hastings, 1997; Smith, 1998) who claim that nations are an ancient and natural phenomenon. For this group, common myths, histories, and cultures bound and mobilized people and, thus, gave significance to the nation. What both of these perspectives on identity emphasize, despite their differences pertaining to the origins of it, is that national identity is a shared form of identity between individuals.

Due to the fact that national identity is a shared form of identity, in both of these theoretical positions a significant amount of attention has been paid to the role of the 'Other' (Said, 1993; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Recognition of the 'Other' is important in national identity formation as it has no meaning per se without a meaningful contrast to other nations. This concept of the 'Other' will play an important role in this research as, historically, the British and the Americans have perceived one another as the 'Other'. As this thesis will demonstrate in the next chapter, American identity was largely constructed in relation to Britain; American football will be used as an example of the way in which Americans developed their own national pastimes, and thus national identity, as a way to distinguish themselves from the British. However, in more contemporary times, the power balance has shifted, and this theorization of the 'Other' can still be used to explore the negotiations of identity that may have arisen when American football was transplanted to Britain.

An example of sport embodying the qualities of a national character, and supporting the notion that sport is in some way amenable to globalization, is England and its relationship to cricket. "In the habitus of male upper class Englishness, cricket *embodies* the qualities of fair play, valour, graceful conduct on and off the pitch and steadfastness in the face of adversity" (Maguire, 1993c, p.297, italics in original). This example alludes back to others used in the section on globalization where emphasis was on how processes of globalization were utilized to produce a specific outcome which reflected a hybridity within a specific sporting culture. This specific example demonstrates how one sport can undergo multiple globalization processes to produce different outcomes. This is possible because of the fact that each country has a unique shared national identity, and the possession of that national identity influences how the sport will be adapted. Cricket is seen to represent what being English is, but at

the same time, does so by referring back to the past glories of the nation. Majumdar and Brown (2007) used the sports of cricket and baseball to explain how different countries reacted to globalization through imperialism and the adoption of specific sporting practices. In America, the desire was to dissociate American sport from British sport, whereas in India, the British Empire lasted much longer and British sport was indigenized for purposes of resistance (Majumdar & Brown, 2007). Within this case, nationalism asserted itself in completely different ways. In India, cricket was a non-violent means of competing with Britain, while this need was completely irrelevant in America, as it received independence a century and a half earlier. Rather, what was important in the United States was to sever all connection to the Empire and create its own unique identity. The consequence of this was the creation of baseball, as opposed to the adoption of cricket.

Rowe (2003) offered an alternative view by arguing that the nation does not aid the process of globalization, but that it often stands in the way of globalization by simultaneously problematizing and mobilizing sporting cultures. Sporting nations have deep historical roots which result in passionate national differentiations that make sport less sympathetic to globalizing forces than other cultural forms. "The development of the apparatus of sport in each country varies according to the specific character of its historical social formation, but there are few sports that have not…been aligned with some conception of nation" (Rowe, 2003, p.285). He went on to say that "despite the success of sport in the institutionalized diffusion of the framework for regulated, competitive physical play, the record of the actual 'export' of national sports is much less impressive. Truly international sport consists only of a relatively small set of games…" (Rowe, 2003, p.286). Therefore, not all sports have been subjected to the processes of globalization to the same degree. Association football is an example of a truly 'world game' because it is played to varying degrees in most parts of the world, and it embraced international competition relatively early on. On the other hand, a sport such as American football was formed within the confines of an isolationist nation (Greenfeld, 1992) where the globalization of uniquely American sports has only more recently begun.

Due to the importance of national identity, sport has become a way of expressing national sentiment, and Hobsbawm acknowledged this by stating that the "rise of sport provided new expressions of nationalism through the choice of nationally specific sports" (Hobsbawm, 1983, p.300). As this chapter has so far emphasized, a debate rages about whether these globalizing trends inhibit or enhance local sporting culture, and although a global culture can be perceived to destroy local traditions and culture, it can also be seen to construct a sense of locality. Global activities can lead to polyculturalism and an awareness of otherness (Featherstone, 1991); therefore, sovereign individuals become empowered to freely choose from the global sport pool whichever activities fit their own personal needs and values. The world can be understood as an interdependent unit; so, while globalization processes do not necessarily lead to the destruction of local cultures, such cultures may survive in a context defined by those more powerfully established groups. This idea will be further explored in the next section through an analysis of Maguire's work on the topic. He used American football as an example of how sport has been globalized through processes involving interdependent units and existing power relations.

A Critique of Maguire's 'touchdown' of American Football in Britain

American football itself has received little attention within European cultural studies. One academic who did focus on American football was Maguire (1990, 1991, 1993). His work anticipated that American football had and would continue to become a staple within the British (English) sporting culture. However, it did not reach the level predicted by Maguire. American football's brief popularity in the 1980's and early 1990's did not lead to a profound cultural change within the British sporting landscape. In this section, I will review and critique Maguire's earlier work in order to establish how my study will provide an alternative view to the way in which American football in Britain can be understood now that the sport has been played on British soil for over 25 years.

Maguire (1990) situated his research into American football in Britain within the context of the Americanization of British (English) culture. He contended that while people have the ability to interpret American cultural

wares, these products are also a part of a larger structural process. According to Maguire, there are shifting ratios of power balances involved in the making and consuming of American culture. Therefore, while an individual may have the ability to reinterpret a cultural product, they cannot decisively influence the way this product is constructed at its source.

Maguire (1990) based his understanding of Americanization on White's (1983) definition of the term:

> Americanization most usefully refers to the fundamental reference points of a culture, and the extent to which they can be located in the United States rather than in the culture itself; not just cultural change, but what it has transmitted; not just the measure of American content, but its impact, (if any) on behavior and ways of thinking. In this sense the examination of Americanization should embrace not just the impact of Americanization on popular culture, but also its effect on the culture as a whole. (White, 1983, p.110)

Maguire takes this a step further by arguing that the Americanization of British sport must be understood in terms of the interdependencies which exist between the United States and Great Britain. The two countries have deep-rooted histories with one another and, there has always been a balance of power relationship which has shifted over time. I will address this deep-rooted history between the United States and Great Britain in the next chapter, which focuses on the historical background of American football. Therefore, while Maguire admits that individuals may have the ability to interpret and change certain cultural wares floating between their two countries, they are still caught up in a long-term, unintended interdependency chain which has a structured character to it.

Maguire sought to challenge previous scholarship such as Mason (1990), who suggested that American football would remain an exclusively American pastime, and expand on others, such as Chandler (1988), who had theorized about American football's potential in Britain. The question Maguire raised in reference to theories of Americanization and sport was: "Whereas the consumers are no less caught up in this unfolding figuration, to what extent have they the capacity…to reinterpret the American cultural product into something distinct?" (Maguire, 1990, p.217) Therefore, he does argue that the

homogenizing influences of Americanization may be overstated and that there is the possibility for the emergence of new identities at the level of the individual.

He suggests that a number of factors explain the development of American football in Britain in the 1980's, one being the commercialization of English sport in general. He relates these developments in American football to the 'Thatcherite values' of the time and that such emphasis on an enterprise culture provided a favorable climate for American football to spread into British sporting culture. He also argues that three key players existed – Channel 4, Anheuser-Busch and the NFL – but that none of these had a monopoly over the control of the spread of the game. The spread of American football was, therefore, influenced by conscious strategizing on the part of these companies playing up to the commercialization and Americanization of the British culture. In order to explain how these three key players interacted, Maguire utilized Elias's (1978) theory of figurational dynamics. This theory of figurational dynamics examines the multiple networks of interdependence that both enable and inhibit the actions of people. While Maguire's optimism for the continued growth of American football remained throughout his early work on the subject, one of the conclusions Maguire offers, using this theory of figurational dynamics, is that the market limit for American football in Britain may have already been reached by 1990. He postulates that this saturation may have to do with changes in the wider context of the globalization of the sport and the active interpretation of products by individuals. This conclusion about the potential for individuals to influence the saturation of American football in Britain is one of the points I will return to in my thesis as I explore some of the other facets of British American football which Maguire neglected in his analysis.

In 1991, Maguire expanded his work on globalization and American football by incorporating the 'media-sport production complex'. Here he argued that "the development of American football in Western European societies has arguably less to do with the 'ludic'/play qualities it may possess and more to do with an interweaving of media-sport production and marketing interests". He draws on Whannel's (1981) work on media and its relationship to globalization and Alt's (1983) work on the ritual dimension of sport to stress that the NFL played the most crucial role in American football's globalization

to Britain because it had a specific marketing strategy in place. This strategy tapped into the media-sports production complex, rather than relying on the game's ludic qualities or consumer (athlete) demand. He further argued that this marketing strategy had a different character from previous attempts to globalize sport, such as through the spread of British sport by way of its Empire, because it was television led.

In 1993, Maguire again published an updated version of his analysis of American football in Britain. Within this paper, he stated that a reconsideration of Americanization must take place. He bases this statement on the research of fellow academics such as Bigsby (1975), Kaplan (1986), Webster (1988), and Hebdige (1982), who all argued that the Americanization thesis is oversimplified and that the transmission of culture on a global scale contains no fixed ideological message, but can be interpreted differently by different audiences. Bigsby (1975) especially argued for the existence of a 'new identity' within the process of the globalization of culture and that individuals could reinterpret American cultural products into something distinct. While Maguire does not deviate dramatically from his initial analysis of American football in Britain, the articles published in 1991 and in 1993 do more clearly emphasize the social construction of sport, and concentrate on issues of distinction which reflect and articulate existing power relations. Maguire concludes the 1993 article by arguing:

> The cult of individualism evident in the ideology of American sport finds cultural resonance with British society of the 1980s and early 1990s, and corporations, within the broader context of globalization processes, that provides a framework within which to understand the making of American football in British society over the past decade (Maguire, 1993, p.227).

This emphasis on creating a 'new identity' and focusing on 'distinction' within the process of globalization has factored into my exploration about the British American football leagues by inspiring my concentration on individuals' interpretations of their sporting experience.

Maguire's research was limited in the fact that it did not delve far enough into the participatory culture of British American football. He argued:

These arguments may have provided a useful corrective to a too crude Americanization thesis, but this should not lead one to the conclusion that the consumer is sovereign, that there are no power differentials involved in the provision of cultural forms, and that this provision cannot be explained in terms of figurational dynamics and political economy (Maguire, 1990, p.231).

He emphasizes the essential role of capital and consumerism in the transplantation of American football and the influence of established power relations, rather than looking into the development of American football at a grassroots level and the identities being constructed by the athletes who considered themselves part of the British American football community. Therefore, while acknowledging theories about the reinterpretation of sport during the globalization process, he continues to make use of 'figurational dynamics' as the explanation for American football's success or failure in Britain. This thesis will instead utilize Bourdieu's concepts of distinction, capital, and field to address the debate on a more micro-scale. It will focus on the more central issue of why British American football is being developed and played by British athletes, and not just on why the American version of football is consumed by the British population via the television media.

Maguire does state that further studies need to be ethnographically focused to address the "sociogenesis of the pleasurable excitement engendered in consuming American cultural goods and the possibility of the emergence of a new identity, with individuals reinterpreting American cultural products into something distinct" (Maguire, 1990, p.235). This suggests that future work should be based upon the assumption that American football is socially constructed. This thesis will employ some of what Maguire has argued in his work on American football in Britain, but it will also move beyond his use of 'figurational dynamics' and utilize more of Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of distinction, capital, and field to enhance the study of American football in a 'glocal' context. The use of Bourdieu will allow this research to focus on the individual athletes who are creating a unique British American football identity and developing the game within the context of British sport, rather than just as an American sport which has gone through the process of globalization and landed in Britain. Maguire neglected to interact with American football at the

local and individual level and, thus, this is where this research will extend the debate on the globalization of American football to Britain. It will be based on British American football being played at a grassroots level because it is at this fundamental level where a sport becomes a part of a nation's sports space.

American 'Exceptionalism' and Sport Space

In order to give a comprehensive insight into the British American football culture, focus must first be on its roots as an *American* sport. As it has been stated previously in this chapter, this will mainly involve utilizing Bourdieu's concepts of distinction, capital, and field within the context of a 'glocalization' framework. Exploration into British American football will be at the level of the local and how individuals interpret the global game of American football to work for them as British athletes. Before these alternative theories are discussed in detail, however, it is important to address academic work which has contributed towards American football developing unique American based characteristics. Therefore, this section will provide a summary of two theories associated with American football's sociohistorical significance; 'American exceptionalism' and 'sport space'.

A definite trend towards cultural convergence, especially of popular culture, has been one of the main criticisms of globalization. However, according to Rowe (2003), sport remains one of the most poignant areas of resistance in relation to these global trends. For example, America took a different path from Europe and the rest of the world when it came to sport as culture. Brown (2005), Markovits & Hellerman (2001), and Sugden and Tomlinson (1996) have used the term 'American exceptionalism' to describe "the notion that the United States was created differently, developed differently, and thus has to be understood differently – essentially on its own terms and within its own context" (Brown, 2005, p.1106). America's sports exceptionalism is deeply rooted in other exceptionalisms that constitute essential features of American life (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001). Most models of American exceptionalism rely on a path-dependency model, which contend that those sports which became popular during the initial formation of

sporting landscapes are most likely to remain the most popular now (Brown, 2005).

Before I shift focus to these differences between America and Europe, modern sports also contain some common features which are inextricably linked to the development of mass societies. Sport, in its form of a regulated leisure activity, has been inextricably linked with components of modernization (Guttmann, 1978). These include aspects of industrial life, the strict separation of work and leisure, organized recreation for the masses, cheap public transportation, mass communication, and modern education. In addition to this pattern of development, most advanced industrial societies have a 'sport space'. Sport space refers to the amount of room, both quantitatively and qualitatively, that a nation has, and, according to Markovits (1990), once that space is filled there are very few changes that can be made to it:

> Sports space should be understood as referring to that which is socially constricted, not merely physically determined… But sports space refers to the cultural meanings of a sport and to the capacity of a society to value a particular kind of sport and render it meaningful and of social significance. There are socially determined and culturally specific conditions in which cultural forms such as sport are established and developed in particular societies (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1996, p.244).

Theories concerning sports space take into account cultural and power relations in different societies. The sequence of which sports made their way into the space first, managed to do so most efficiently, and related best to the society's overall modernization, are the sports which make up a nation's sport space. The key period during which this took place was between 1870 and 1930, the crucial decades of industrial proliferation when modern industrial societies were established. After this key period, it has been argued by supporters of the sports space theory that while it is not impossible for a new sport to enter the space, it is difficult. It appears that sport spaces were 'frozen' by the end of this key period, and no significant thawing has occurred since. While individual changes have occurred in sport at the level of individual institutions, rules, and venues, their overall presence in the sport space has not

significantly shifted. Markovits and Hellerman argued that history played a key role in this concept of sport space:

> All hegemonic sports reproduce and legitimate themselves through constant acts of loyalty, legends, colors, and icons. Thus, every contemporary game becomes…a discourse with history. The culture of continuity and comparability develops over time and space, and this gives the already established sports an attraction that virtually no newcomer can match. Indeed, all established sports prolifically utilize a constant appeal to history to discredit their potential rivals (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001, p.20).

Breaking through this 'sports space' was one of the obstacles that American football had to face when expansion to Britain began. As was discussed earlier, Maguire concentrated on how American football utilized the media and the spectacle of the NFL to try to infiltrate the sports space. However, he neglected to give consideration for how the sport may have been infiltrating the British sports space by way of British athlete participation at the grassroots level. This is the level at which this thesis will explore how far American football has infiltrated the British sports space.

Waddington and Roderick (1996) contested Markovits and Hellerman (2001) and Sugden and Tomlinson (1996) for their interpretation of sports space. They believed that sports space theories emphasized a quantitative perspective on sports that 'got in first' or 'crowded out' others. They did not support the notion that certain sports were unpopular in specific countries simply because the sports space was already occupied. Waddington and Roderick (1996) pointed out that different countries have differing numbers of sports in their sports space. The amount of leisure time and the significance which people attribute to sports vary and, thus, the fact that one sport may be well established should not necessarily exclude the successful establishment of a second, third, fourth, or so on. Brown (2005) also challenged Markovits (1990) and Sugden (1994) in regards to their 'frozen' sport space thesis. He argued that the American sport space was shifting to support a desire for homogeneous American sports. He argued that baseball and basketball were on the decline because they have become too 'international' in their character, and that sports which remain 'purely American', like American football and

NASCAR, were on the rise. While theories of sport space may be contested, and I agree that sports spaces are not 'frozen', I will continue to use the term because I find it useful in my discussions of how the identities of specific sports are saturated with historical discourses. This thesis specifically concentrates on the 'qualitative' aspect of the theory that influences the types of sports which make up a nation's unique sports space.

When deciding which sports came to fill a country's sports space, critical junctures were crucial in the establishment of those sports; these included chance happenings which could determine a sport's successful establishment as either mass culture or mere activity (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001). Every sport can point to a few critical junctures which turned out to be fortuitous events in their development towards cultural dominance in any given nation's sports space. These serendipitous events included major demographic changes, mass urbanization, the introduction of mass transit, commodification of public life, increased competition, and an ever-increasing population (Guttmann, 1978). This is important in reference to American exceptionalism because it was through these critical junctures that the global sports of soccer, and to a lesser extent cricket, were rejected in America for their counterparts of American football and baseball (Brown, 2005). More recently, Klein (2007) outlined the case for the globalization patterns of Major League Baseball. In this study, he concluded that the basis for baseball's desire to expand to international markets was because of its weakened position in the United States. However, even with this desire to expand, the MLB continues to operate in a 'cold war' mindset associated more closely with global domination than decentralization. The MLB is committed to the United States remaining as the hub of baseball excellence, whilst developing an international presence (Klein, 2007). This could be classified as a contemporary critical juncture for baseball, but not one which has fully infiltrated the American identity still clinging to the sport.

While American sports culture may share certain parallels with Europe and the rest of the world, it does exhibit sufficient differences. It is no surprise that modern sports developed most efficiently in the two most bourgeoisified societies of the nineteenth century, Great Britain and the United States (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001). The British, however, derived much of its

sporting pride from being the center of a global empire, while the United States attained its identity by precisely shunning the British Empire. It has been argued that the 'special relationship' between Britain and America which balanced both admiration and antipathy proved particularly significant in the development of American sports: America's ambivalence towards all things European, and especially British, fuelled its exceptionalist tendencies (Oriard, 1991).

American exceptionalism is marked by a number of different characteristics, the first of which is the role universities play in American sporting culture. Universities played a key role in the creation, dissemination, and reproduction of the American sport space. University teams came to represent the identity and the culture of particular regions, and thus reinforced a key ingredient of American bourgeois ethos: that of meritocracy. In Europe, sports rarely entered the realm of the university, as they were seen as strictly research institutions or training grounds for the bureaucrats and the church leaders. Once professionalization began to take over sports culture, America once again went a different direction. American professional sports teams have always been franchise businesses. Owners could and would move franchises to whatever location best suited them, so long as it did not violate league rules. Franchises are purely market-based and are devoid of public obligations.

> In their institutional presence and their culture, American sports are like American education and American religion: independent of the state, market driven, and ultimately subject to few, if any, regulating bodies outside of their own creation (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001, p.46).

Conversely, clubs in Europe could not simply pack up and depart for another location based on an owner's whim. Instead, poor-playing European teams are punished through the relegation system. Association football, for example, is governed by the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), whereas no comparable organization has ever existed for any of the three big American sports. American sports also feature and foster quantification and ranking within sport.

> In a society that anchors much of its legitimacy in meritocracy and achievement rather than in entitlement and ascription, 'value free'

numbers denote not only a sense of impersonal fairness but also a clarity of rank understood by everybody, regardless of cultural background and linguistic origins (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001, p.50).

Finally, American sports have an altogether different relationship to nationalism than other global sports. As essentially North American entities, competition primarily occurs domestically. Rivalries and loyalties are not, therefore, attached to national sentiments, but exclusively to subnational ones. It is also rare for American players to represent their country on various Team USA's. The American public generally accepts this, as they are less internationally minded than the public in other countries because their sporting horizons remain largely national. Markovits and Hellerman (2001) concluded that two essential and complementary sides of soccer remain enigmatic to American sports fans: its deeply rooted nationalism and the equally thorough international presence of the game on which such nationalism was based.

> While soccer fosters highly national sentiments and identities, it also offers an international language of communication and an international cultural code that is truly binding and bonding. None of the hegemonic American sports offers either of these sentiments. American sports neither engender a deep sense of nationalism nor provide a genuine forum for internationalism (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001, p.49).

Hobsbawm (1994) also argued that association football was the universalizing agent for sport during the twentieth century, in the way American culture was for much of everything else. Therefore, a brief mention of research conducted on soccer and American exceptionalism is desirable. The American rejection of soccer will also provide a platform for comparison to American football's status in Britain.

Markovits and Hellerman (2001) and Sugden and Tomlinson (1996) explored American soccer exceptionalism and specifically why soccer was 'crowded out' in the United States at the same time the game was becoming a global phenomenon everywhere else. They stated that, first, the American bourgeoisie had already created its own national game, baseball, while rejecting the sport which was most closely associated with old England and the

aristocracy, cricket. Young elites at top American universities were keener on playing, and then altering, rugby into American football, instead of playing soccer, which had become commercialized, professionalized, and vulgar in the eyes of the elite. Markovits and Hellerman (2001) and Sugden and Tomlinson (1996) both argued that the American sports space became filled at this point alongside the invention, presence and dissemination of basketball. These three American sports, baseball, American football, and basketball, were all embraced by Americans during the key developmental period. They purposely filled the American sports space with sports which tied into America's isolationist intentions and soccer was 'crowded out'.

Second, soccer was perceived as a non-American activity at a time in American history when there was a great desire to create a distinctly American self-image. In the places where soccer did take hold in the United States, during the Pre-World War I era, the game remained closely associated with immigrants. This stigma was to prove fatal in soccer's potential of becoming a popular mass sport. Sugden and Tomlinson (1994) pointed out that the United States "has often appeared reluctant to important cultural forms which might highlight its own cultural and ethnic diffuseness" (Sugden & Tomlinson, 1994, p.9). When soccer finally expanded into high schools in the 1970's and 1980's, it ironically became a middle-class amateur alternative to the excessively violent professional American sports. Compounding this stereotype was the adoption of the game by women. Sugden concluded that "…so long as soccer in America continues to be viewed as a game for foreigners, rich white kids and women, its chances of becoming established as a mainstream professional sport there are minimal" (Sugden, 1994, p.250). Third, soccer was dealt a significant blow by a series of poor leaders who failed to develop any comprehensive organizational framework that could take on the American born sports. Even stunts such as importing international players, Pelé and Beckham specifically, have failed to substantially increase the popularity of soccer in the United States at the spectator level.

In conclusion, America's quest for a distinctive selection of homegrown sports represented the new nation's desire for self-identity. American exceptionalism emphasized America's nativism, which manifested itself in the celebration of its own identity formation and with the degradation of other

cultures, particularly the British culture. This self-obsession has left modern day American sports on the periphery of sporting globalization trends. American football is the most extreme case of this as it has had the least amount of success globally. An example of this was the NFL's attempts to gain a global fan base through schema such as NFL Europe, which have thus far failed. However, with the new global initiative, the NFL is committed to global expansion and has re-evaluated how to market the sport of American football by using the media and live professional competition to promote the sport as a global spectacle. Also, British American football has been slowly growing at the grassroots level indicating that the sport may be breaking out of its stereotype as strictly a sport for Americans; that British athletes may be recognizing traits within the sport which have a global appeal.

Globalization and the Media

Maguire's work on American football in Britain identified the role the media played in the dissemination of American football abroad. It was this media- and NFL-driven version of American football which took precedence within Maguire's research, as opposed to the spread of global participation in American football. While this thesis will address this gap in the research by concentrating on the grassroots community, American football is more popularly known as a spectacle broadcast on television. Since the media has been so influential in American football's global history, and continues to be a powerful advertisement tool for the sport, the next section will explore the relationship between the media and globalization.

The relationship between sport and the television based media has always strived to be entertaining. In order for television to be successful at screening sport in an exciting way it must consult with the cultural codes of sport spectacularization, but according to Rowe (2003), the demand surrounding the type of sporting spectacle mutates according to national contexts. Super Bowl Sunday is one of the most lucrative events on the sports media calendar. It rivals such events as the Olympic Games and the World Cup. While, at first, it may seem to be a national preoccupation, it has global implications. "Super Bowl Sunday has become the single most important day for the export of

American culture to a globe amazingly eager to absorb the marketing fineries of consumer capitalism" (Wenner, 1998). Nationally, the Super Bowl dominates the 'top ten' list of all-time best-rated television programs. Advertisers pay over a million dollars for commercial spots during the game. An observation made by Real over thirty years ago still holds true:

> The structural values of the Super Bowl can be summarized succinctly: North American professional football is an aggressive, strictly regulated team game fought between males who use both violence and technology to gain control of property for the economic gain of individuals within a nationalistic entertainment context. The Super Bowl propagates these values by elevating one game to the level of a spectacle of American ideology collectively celebrated (Real, 1975, p.42).

Sport is at the forefront of the local-global media analysis. This is because sport spans geographical boundaries as well as cultural, ethnic and linguistic barriers; it has a wide and cross-cultural appeal. In conjunction with this, media corporations have utilized sports broadcasting as a key commodity to penetrate the global marketplace (Falcous & Maguire, 2006). The world media system has been created out of wider globalization processes, including that of markets, trade, and labor, but especially of culture, and with it we have seen the transformation of sport. Sport existed long before the media, but when sport became a form of commercial entertainment, the media became an intricate part of sporting life (Poulton, 2004). Watching sport became a major cultural pastime as part of the entertainment industry boom, as television was able to transform how people spent their leisure time. Television became so powerful that sports organizations began to alter their events to suit the needs of the television industry. For example, during the 1960's, dramatic changes to the presentation, organization, finance, competitive structure, and occasionally even to the rules, were seen (Whannel, 1992). These changes transformed both the media industry and their audiences.

According to Whannel (1992), the process of moving sport from a live event to a television event was organized by two principles: realism and entertainment. Potentially, though, these two are in conflict. Whannel (1992) continued to argue that audiences want televised sport to be real and as close to

what they would experience had they been present in the stadium; but, they have also become accustomed to the spectacle that television adds to an event to make it as entertaining as possible. For example, at a live event, fans do not have the benefit of close-ups and commentary, but they do have interaction with other fans, and often the emotional component is much higher. Realism values transparency; it wants to give the audience a portrayal of sport which is impartial and truthful. Entertainment values organizational images which portray action, introduce star personalities, and drama. That is not to say that realism does not contribute to entertainment, but it is not the first priority when creating an entertaining event that holds an audience (Whannel, 1992).

Peters (1976) further explored the connection between sport and television media:

> …television coverage of sport is a highly constructed viewpoint, which involves not just a preferred reading of the game, but the construction of definitions which tell us how and what to think about the world we live in; what to expect and what to look for. In short, it favours a particular kind of society located in the construction of images which mobilize and enlist ideas about how life in that society should be lived and organized (Peters, 1976, p.1).

The society he spoke of here is one that encompassed values of competition, individualism, and exceptionality. The media and sport both encompass the same kinds of determinations and reproduce the dominant ideologies associated with contemporary capitalistic society, but the media have often been criticized for spoiling the pureness of the original intention behind sport with this spectacularization. Debord (1994) and Williams (1981) presented accounts of the relationships between individuals and the spectacle. Within the spectacle, the commodity reigns supreme as it creates a desire for certain needs which can only be achieved through the subjective consumption of the spectacle. Debord (1994) also described a tendency for the individual to subconsciously admire material commodities in seeking a connection with the spectacle. The media are the most widespread means for creating and then fulfilling this demand as they keep spectators abreast of the newest ways to consume spectacle (Ritzer, 2001). Mediated sport can be considered as an example of the society of the spectacle. The sporting spectacle has been defined as anything from the

aforementioned American sporting mega-event, the Super Bowl (Real, 1975), the mass mediation of sport (Gruneau, 1989), or the vast ceremonial dimensions of competition (Tomlinson, 2002). Thus, it can be said that an athletic event is no longer just an athletic event (Lee, Laucella, Lim & Fielding, 2009). However, the media's representation of spectacle is crucial to the success of any sport (Lee, 2005).

America's use of the media in relation to sport is different from the way Britain uses it (Blain, Boyle & O'Donnell, 1993). Both the United States and Britain have proud sporting histories, but this fact alone does not mean that the sports that are popular in one country can be just as successful in the other country. Sports are seen as symbolic representations of national identities, and Blain & O'Donnell (1998) argue that it is the media's framing of these sporting events which vividly highlights the cultural and ideological significance attached to national sport. Television is bound to work within these social contexts, and people have expectations in relation to content and entertainment value when watching sport on television (Chandler, 1988). This premise will aid in my framework for how American football has used spectacle to infiltrate the British sports space, but how this same utilization of spectacle has not been enough to propel grassroots American football into the national sporting consciousness of the country.

Sporting events frame the contest between the 'us vs. them' attitude which is linked to the construction of national identity (Maguire & Poulton, 1999). Poulton argues that: "The discursive practices of media sport, for example, present us with a set of consciously created images, histories and symbols that confer meaning on what it is to be a part of the nation" (Poulton, 2004, p.493). Multiple case studies have addressed the complex relationship between the media and the construction of national identity (Delgado, 2003; Poulton, 2004; Tuck, 2003). Tuck (2003) specifically detailed how English national pride was tied up in the identification of the 1995 Rugby World Cup team. In many ways, these 'men in white' were imagined national heroes who embodied the English national identity. Falcous and Maguire (2006) focused on the NBA and its global expansion to the UK through the media. They acknowledged that enjoyment through media sport varies by location, and that power relations were bound up in the significance of any sporting event. The

NBA had to create credibility amongst UK audiences, while still emanating a confidence in their own apex on top of the global sporting hierarchy.

The intermeshing of corporate culture capitalism with those involved in sports media outlets has been referred to as Mediasport by Wenner (1984, 1998). This was expanded upon to include the relationship between sporting organizations, media, marketing organizations, and transnational corporations and is referred to broadly as the media sports production complex (Jhally, 1989; Maguire, 1993b, 1999; Rowe, 1996, 1999; Scherer, Falcous & Jackson, 2008). These theories stress the interdependency that exists among the above-mentioned institutions. These academics make the case that "our cultural sensibilities about sport have shifted to create an almost indivisible and naturalized interrelationship between sport and the media" (Phillips & Hutchins 2003, p.229). Related to this is the argument that the media operates intentionally because producers have predetermined viewpoints which they wish to convey to their audience (Entman, 1993). I will now turn to theories which address the encoding and decoding of sport and how sports can be translated differently as they are adopted in different countries. I will discuss these ideas in relation to the realm of media and sport, before applying them to the active adoption of sport globally.

Encoding/Decoding Sport

In his paper, Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse, Hall (1973) suggested that within the analysis of media culture, there was an interconnection between social structures and symbolic structures. He sought to interpret the communicative process between those who produced media and those who viewed media. This communicative process was distorted, according to Hall, but it was sustained through the articulation of linked, but discursive, moments. Events must first become stories before they are able to become a communicative event (Hall, Hobson, Lowe & Willis, 1980). The production team is required to issue a structured program, and their goal is to provide a specific message wrapped within the story they chose to tell. The message produced was framed by ideas and meanings that support the production company's professional ideologies, routines, and institutional knowledge. Of

course, while the circuit may seem to begin here, the production team also draws information from their potential audience. So, in a way, the audience acts both as the receiver of, and a source of inspiration for, the story encapsulating the message. The meanings attached to the message, however, on either the producer-encoder or the receiver-decoder side, may not necessarily be the same. They will, however, be linked. The degree to which the message was understood or misunderstood varies with each transaction. This depends on both the degree of symmetry/a-symmetry between the producer-encoder and the decoder-receiver, and also the degree of identity/non-identity between the codes that were transmitted. Misunderstanding arises when there is a lack of equivalence between the two sides in the exchange. This demonstrates the relative autonomy of the entry and exit of the message in its linguistic form (Hall, 1973).

Hall specifically referred to television transmissions in this essay, but his theory could be easily applied to other forms of media. He was anxious to prove that television was not simply a behavioral event, but a communicative discourse. Similarly, other media forms can be analyzed on different levels; that media can be considered from the perspective of the producer-encoder, during its distribution, or from the reinterpreted perspective of the receiver-decoder. At each level, the message may have different meanings and invoke different reactions. For example, audiences in America and Japan interpret the meaning of baseball in differing ways. Americans see baseball as reflecting values of competition, determination, power and skill, whereas the Japanese see baseball as reflecting values of order, harmony, perseverance and self-restraint (Roden, 1980).

Kinkema and Harris (1992) drew on Hall (1973) and applied his theory to the sports media, where they stressed the production and importance of mediated sports. This involved the political and economic context in which sport is produced as a visual media. This also included the technical process of crafting a sporting event for television. Sport is re-represented to audiences through selected images or narratives which cannot be separated from the political and economic context from which it is developed. In this way, media sports are assumed to be symbolic constructions. Although different people interpret media images and narratives in different ways, many people use

mediated sports as reference points as they form, revise, and extend their ideas about how sport is a reflection of social life and social relations (Coakley, 2003).

Sports themselves can be understood as being encoded with specific ideologies to historically attract participants and audiences. This encoding takes place in order to package sport to meet the needs of a specific group (Gems, 2004). The difficulty in globalizing sports, such as American football, is that they were developed as socially specific leisure activities, in that they were shared by a group of people who encompassed the same set of social values. Once a sport is distributed to a global audience, the engrained ideologies inevitably undergo an active translation by the decoder, which may or may not be in line with the original intentions of the producers. Bigsby called this a 'sea-change', and asserted that during cross-cultural diffusion of American culture, for example, individuals could reinterpret a product into something distinct (Bigsby, 1975).

Consequently then, American football can be understood as encoded in a way that reflects its 'Americanness' (Bigsby, 1975; Kinkema and Harris, 1992). Throughout the process of exporting the sport to Britain then, it will be decoded in a way that reflects the audience's 'Britishness'. It is this relationship between national identity and the adoption of culturally specific sports which has led to the selected case study of American football in Britain. The diffusion and transformation of rugby and association football to American football in the nineteenth century echoed the American desire for total isolation from the British way of life, and, thus, the formation of a uniquely American identity, one that was distinctively non-British. In this way, "sports…appear to play a crucial role in the construction and representation of national identity" (Maguire, 1999). Maguire indicated the importance of sport's historical associations with national identity suggesting that in the English/British case: "…given the role that sport plays in personal and national identity formation, defeats on the playing field become represented as a kind of litmus test for the nation's decline" (Maguire, 1999, p.179).

American football's attempts to 'make it' in Britain are currently based upon the game's symbiotic relationship with the media. American football, as produced by the National Football League for television, is a spectacle because

it is able to blend its own sporting needs with the needs of the media. Despite this symbiosis, American football has struggled to gain a truly international foothold on the global sports market.

This above mentioned work inspired my research about how participation in American football within Britain, and not just the NFL's infiltration of the marketplace, has been transformed and decoded to be *British* American football. What is most important to this study, in terms of the relationship between the media and the globalization of sport, is whether international popularization of American football will be limited to television packages and merchandizing, or whether leagues will be able to establish themselves and thrive globally. How do participants geographically located at a distance from the origins of American Football receive and respond to the dominant images of the sport? While it is clear that globalization and local/national identity inform the experience of sports such as American football, it is necessary to consider the process of identity formation that may include factors such as gender and class, as facets of national identity. Consideration of the self as a social construction will enable me to explore the extent to which individuals participating in British American football might be said to choose the sport as part of their wider social identity.

The Social Self and Sport

As I have alluded to in my earlier exploration and critique of the globalization literature, this thesis will utilize Bourdieu's concepts of distinction, capital, and field to go beyond some of the constraints of previous studies of American football in Britain. I have chosen to use Bourdieu's work in order to focus on the local culture of British American football. These concepts of distinction, capital, and field will build on previous work by addressing how individual athletes are contributing to the development of American football in Britain and how these athletes have allowed their identities as British athletes to affect how the sport is played outside of the United States. This thesis was conceived to specifically contribute to the previous work on the globalization of American football by utilizing an alternative micro-centered, but still complimentary, approach to exploring what British American football is. I

wanted to explore British American football from the perspective of those athletes who have chosen to play the sport, rather than just observe the sport through the perspective of the media and the general population. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will explore this idea of the social self and its importance in understanding the culture of British American football.

Sociological perspectives on identity have focused on how cultural institutions shaped the self and how the notion of identity was reproduced in social networks. I will summarize the work of three theorists, George Herbert Mead, Anthony Giddens, and Pierre Bourdieu. While the theories discussed below do not encompass all of the perspectives on the nature of the person in the social world, they have made a significant contribution to the study of identity in the context of social networks and have particular relevance to the approach taken in the current study. These theories of identity construction will aid in my discussion of the process of identity formation in relation to sport, with particular reference in this case to American football.

George Herbert Mead is widely considered the originator of symbolic interactionism, a general tradition of theoretical thinking concerned with the conceptualisation of the self as it is influenced by social reality at large. He placed emphasis on the self being a social self, where we individually fashion our identities through engagement with others (Mead, 1934). Within this interaction, we interpret others' actions and base our own reactions on the common cultural meanings attached to those specific actions. These cultural meanings are developed during our childhood and are specific to the society in which we grew up. From this, Mead (1934) pointed out that there can be no clear distinction drawn between our own sense of identity and the identities of others, because, without the other, we have no point of reference for which to define our own experiences. Importantly, Mead described language and symbols, seen as a common currency here, as the basis for which individuals are able to interact with one another. Language and symbols are at the heart of how social institutions are able to construct our sense of identity (Elliot, 2007). He represented identity as a dialogue between the 'I', the more spontaneous and intuitive aspect of the self, and the 'me', the internalized attitudes of others (Stevens, 1996). From Mead's perspective, the self is a social product, an outcome of symbolic interaction.

At the core of Anthony Giddens' work lies the concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity is a self-defining process that depends upon the monitoring of and reflection on information about possible trajectories of life. Reflexive social practices are constantly examined and reformed, based on new incoming information (Giddens, 1991). Thus, these social practices can be read by an individual and life trajectories planned (Elliott, 2007). He saw us as living our lives through the construction of a type of biography that has to answer questions everyday about how we should behave, with whom to interact, and many other occurrences (Stevens, 1996). Giddens was particularly concerned with the increasing interconnections between our personal lives and globalizing social influences. Identity is not inherited or static, according to Giddens; we are constantly reflecting on and working at our identity. It is about the ability to tell an ongoing 'story' about one's self that lies at the core of identity (Giddens, 1991).

While Mead and Giddens both contributed important theories about identity construction, it was the work of Pierre Bourdieu which will feature most prominently in my discussion of British American football identity. I have chosen to reference Bourdieu because his concepts of distinction, capital, and field help explain the characteristics of British American football identity and how they are unique among the British sporting landscape. Bourdieu's theories addressed the false opposition between objectivism and subjectivism or, in his words, the "absurd opposition between individual and society" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.31). He criticized theories which focused solely on objective structures and which ignored the process of social construction by which actors perceive, think about, and construct these social structures and then act upon them (Ritzer, 2008). Bourdieu did not want to lose sight of the agent and, therefore, his work focused on practice, which he saw as the outcome of the relationship between structure and the way people construct their own social reality. In fact, Bourdieu proposed that practice resulted from the relationship between one's disposition (habitus) and one's position in a social field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field) (Maton, 2008).

One way of breaching this divide between objectivism and subjectivism was to create a "dialect of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality" (Bourdieu, 1977, p.72). Bourdieu's habitus

referred to how people are endowed with a set of internalized schemes through which individuals could perceive, understand and evaluate the social world around them (Ritzer, 2008). In his own words, habitus is "internalized, 'embodied' social structures" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.468), and is acquired through long-term occupation of a certain position within the social world (i.e. through class, family upbringing, education, etc…). Thus, this means that not everyone possesses the same habitus, but those of similar background do tend to possess similar habitus. Habitus is a way for people to make sense of the social world and is constructed through a person's own personal, collective history. Also important in Bourdieu's theory is that while habitus constrains thought and choice of action, it does not determine them. People engage in conscious deliberation, although these thought processes will reflect that person's own habitus. "The habitus provides the principles by which people make choices and choose the strategies that they will employ in the social world" (Ritzer, 2008, p.532). Habitus is not a fixed structure, but rather it is adaptable by individuals who are constantly changing in the face of the situations in which they find themselves. While we are not conscious of our own habitus, it manifests itself in practical activities, such as sport.

I now shift focus to 'field' and the network of relations among objective positions within it. Field and habitus co-exist with one another because practice cannot be explained by one or the other; they are interrelated. Bourdieu stated that these relations existed apart from the individual's consciousness (Bourdieu, 1984), and that it was the structure of the field which "undergirds and guides the strategies whereby the occupants of these positions seek, individually or collectively, to safeguard or improve their position, and to impose the principle of heirarchization most favorable to their own products" (Bourdieu, cited in Ritzer 2008, p.532). Each field has its own 'logic of practice' where social agents understand how to behave in the field (Thomson, 2008). Within the field, the various forms of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) are employed or deployed, and the positions of various agents in the field are then determined by the amount of and weight of the capital they possess. In other words, it is capital which allows an agent the ability to control their own fate as well as the fate of others (Ritzer, 2008). Bourdieu used military imagery to explain that the occupants of the field employ a variety of strategies to

purposely act, thus implying again that people have some freedom when it comes to their own social construction.

Bourdieu referred to each social field of practice as a 'field of struggle' in which social agents strategize to maximize their positions. Social agents do not arrive at a field fully knowledgeable about its customs; rather, they learn through experience. He called this learning process acquiring a 'feel for the game'. It takes prolonged exposure to any given field for a social agent to develop this practical understanding of a social field. In his words: "The habitus as the feel for the game is the social game embodied and turned into second nature" (Bourdieu, 1994, p.63). However, one's own past and present conditions enable some to develop more of a 'feel' for some games than others, and for a particular way of playing those games. Social agents tend to gravitate towards fields that best match their dispositions and avoid those which involve a field-habitus clash (Maton, 2008).

Bourdieu's theory of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) examined the aesthetic preferences of different groups in society. He argued that because of habitus and field, the cultural preferences of various groups within society create coherent systems. He focused on taste, which serves to unify those with similar preferences and to differentiate those with different tastes. Therefore, through the practical application of taste, people classify objects and thereby, in the process, classify themselves (Ritzer, 2008). Two interrelated relationships were involved in this study on distinction in taste, class relationships and cultural relationships. Establishing taste, therefore, is an opportunity to both experience and assert one's own position in the social world. Bourdieu linked the acquisition of taste with habitus and field by saying that tastes are shaped more by long-standing and deep-rooted dispositions than by surface opinions. Therefore, the heart of distinction lies in the struggle between the opposing forces in both the cultural and the class arenas, since:

> to exist within social space, to occupy a point or to be an individual within a social space, is to differ, to be different…endowed with categories of perception, with classical schemata, with certain taste, which permits her to make differences, to discern, or distinguish (Bourdieu, 1994, p.9).

Bourdieu dedicated some of his work to the study of sport as culture. He specifically dealt with the relationship between sport and class. He recognized this relationship as a result of the history of sport, and specifically the emergence of sport in seventeenth century England within the elite educational establishments. He also connected the standardization of games into modern sports with the class based philosophy of amateurism; "the modern definition of sport…is an integral part of a 'moral idea', i.e. an ethos which is that of the dominant fractions of the dominant class" (Bourdieu, 1978, p.828). For example, to play certain sports (e.g. tennis or golf) was to bestow upon the participant "gains in distinction" (Bourdieu, 1978, p.835). This was in opposition to the middle and lower classes where participation in sport was "in the form of spectacles produced for the people…more clearly as a mass commodity" (Bourdieu 1978, p.828). Sport and class are interrelated:

> Class habitus defines the meaning conferred on sporting activity, the profits expected from it; and not the least of these profits is the social value accruing from the pursuit of certain sports by virtue of the distinctive rarity they derive from their class distribution (Bourdieu, 1978, p.835).

From this perspective then, participation in sport is not a matter of personal choice; it depends upon the financial resources available to the athlete, the social status of the activity, and the cultural meaning of the sport and the individual's relationship to those meanings (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2000). In this context, sport also operates as a form of social closure where potential entrants are vetted by those already on the inside:

> Class variations in sporting activities are due as much to variations in perception and appreciation of the immediate or deferred profits they are supposed to bring, as to variations in the costs… Everything takes place as if the probability of taking up the different sports depended, within the limits defined by economic (and cultural) capital and spare time, on perception and assessment of the intrinsic and extrinsic profits of each sport in terms of the habitus, and more precisely, in terms of the relation to the body, which is one aspect of this (Bourdieu, 1984, p.212).

For Bourdieu, sport acts as a cultural distinction for the dominant class and, at the same time, represents a source of escape and mobility for the middle and lower classes. His theory of distinction gives us "a way of thinking about how, in a dynamic way, sports participation and sports preference are intrinsically bound up with the production and reproduction of social hierarchies" (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2000, p.319). Bourdieu's concepts can be used to explore British American football identity and its associations with different forms of physical, cultural, symbolic and social capital. Importantly, it can also be used alongside globalization theories which concentrate on the relationship between the local and the global. This link between these two theoretical perspectives will be demonstrated within my discussion located in chapters 5-7. One important capital which will be a recurring theme in relation to the construction of a British American football identity will be that of physical capital in the form of hegemonic masculinity.

Masculinity and Sport

A growing body of scholarship has pointed to the importance of masculinity in considering the reasons participants are drawn to specific sports, especially high contact sports such as American football (Real, 1975; Sabo & Panepinto, 1990; Trujillo, 1995). Trujillo (1995) argues that the male athletic body is both a political and economical instrument used for production of patriarchal ideologies regarding masculinity. Therefore, the construction of one's masculine identity is a relational construct which occupies a key place in gender relations. There is not one, but plural masculinities (Connell, 1995 & 2008). Masculinity is, however, contextually bound and assumes different meanings in different cultures. The masculinity I will be referring to throughout this thesis is 'hegemonic masculinity'. This is the dominant form of masculinity in Western society, which is constructed in relation to femininity. Hegemonic is used here to define the most 'culturally exalted' or 'idealized' forms of masculinity (Connell, 1990). It is the pattern of masculinity "which is most honored, which is most associated with authority and power, and which – in the long run – guarantees the collective privilege of men" (Connell, 2008, p.133). Weinstein, Smith and Wiesenhal defined hegemonic males as

possessing "respect, honor, courage, loyalty, aggressiveness, dominance, independence, occupational achievement, risk-taking, assertiveness, and competitiveness" (Weinstein et al., 1995, p.837). Those that possess hegemonic masculinity are aware of the significance of their bodies as both a personal resource and as a social symbol which communicates something about their self-identity (Swain, 2006). Therefore, a man's awareness of his body and, thus, his masculinity, is a fundamental constituent of identity construction.

Shilling (1991), drawing on Bourdieu's work, argued that the body can be viewed as possessing a 'physical capital'. This refers to the way the body is recognized as having a particular value in various social settings. Masculinity is a part of this physical capital. In sport, an athlete's body becomes the focus of his self and is often seen as his instrument. An important aspect of hegemonic sporting masculinity is competition and winning, and the reward of hard work is a place at the top of the hierarchy (Messner, 1992). Therefore, constant training of the body is seen as necessary in order to 'tune' it for excellence in competition. The masculine body has also been referred to as a machine when sport is treated as work. In this scenario, the sporting body is transformed into a tool of industrialization and a commodity of capitalism (Trujillo, 1995). While physicality is socially valued in sport, sport is also a 'head game'. A successful and respected athlete is often one who has both a command of his body and of his mind. To fit into this traditional description of masculinity, a man must possess courage, sacrifice his body for his team, and be committed to his sport and teammates (Light & Kirk, 2000).

Messner argues that highly aggressive sports often feel psychologically safe for men because they "provide clear-cut boundaries and boys' and men's affiliations with each other" (Messner, 1992). Within the context of sport, men can develop a closeness, while not having to fear the social consequences of having 'feminine' attachments to one another. Men are also thought to develop stable identities, which are intimately linked to the sport they play (Messner, 1992; Pringle, 2001). Some foster the belief that only men can truly understand masculinity because they can "appreciate the importance of sport, fighting, competition, emotional control, and so forth in a way that women cannot" (Connell, 2008, p.132). This is no exception with American football, where the

tendency to use physical force during competition has made the 'hard hitters' some of the most respected men on the team (Messner, 1992).

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the major sociological theories which provide the framework for my study of British American football. Theories of both globalization (more specifically 'glocalization') and Boudieu's distinction, capital, and field, together offer explanatory potential for understanding the position of American football in Britain. This study is primarily concerned with the articulation of the local/global relationship in the context of grassroots level participation in sport. Within this interaction, the hybridity (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995, 2004) of British American football will be explored as it relates to the 'Other' (Mead, 1934), specifically domestic British sports and American American football. Theories of 'American exceptionalism' (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001; Sugden & Tomlinson, 1996) and sport space (Markovits, 1990) describe how sports have cultural meanings and that sociohistorical differences between nations can stand in the way of a sport's internationalism. This study looks beyond, but does not ignore, the popular representations of American football as spectacle in the media (Real, 1975; Rowe, 2003; Wenner, 1998) and focuses on the amateur level of competition. It considers the encoding and decoding process (Hall, 1973; Kinkema & Harris, 1992) and how American football undergoes a 'sea change' (Bigsby, 1975) to become *British* American football. Finally, Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) concepts of distinction, habitus, capital, and field will frame how British athletes have transformed American football to meet their own needs.

Globalization theories were helpful in explaining how American football was initially expanded outside of the United States. However, now that the sport has infiltrated the European sports space, these theories have become insufficient on their own in explaining what British American football has actually become. In order to explore this aspect of the global game of American football, this thesis will center on the need to shift focus to the individual athletes who have chosen to play the sport and how the local level of identity formation co-exists within the context of broader global sport. As I will explore

in my discussion chapters, Bourdieu's concepts of distinction, capital, and field provide a better theoretical framework for a focus on the individual and team experiences of British American football. Next, however, I will carry out a review of the sociohistorical literature surrounding American football's development both in the United States and Britain.

Chapter 3 - The History of American Football: From English Pastime to American Spectacle and Back Again…

This chapter outlines the historical background which surrounds and continues to influence the modern day game of American football. The sociohistorical context in which any given sport resides carries weight within the process of globalization. When a sport has a cultural specificity associated with it, as American football does, it makes the globalization process more complex. This is because local interpretations are not always decoded in the same way; they depend upon individual circumstance. The history of American football can be traced back to Victorian Britain and the sporting revolution which took place at that time. It is important to begin a concise history of the sport at this stage, as the characteristics that were engrained into the English sports of association football and rugby football were the building blocks of the American version of these games, American football. After explaining how and why American football was developed in America itself, attention will be turned to the exportation of the revised game back to Britain.

Development and Globalization of Association Football and Rugby Football

In Britain, the development of 'modern' sport began with the standardization and organization of common recreational activities (Holt, 1989). These processes began during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and were mainly a consequence of Britain becoming the first European nation to industrialize. This enabled interdependency within a society that had, until this time, emphasized the role of the local. Within Britain, there was also a much smaller gap between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, creating a fairly open society with relatively few social mobility barriers (Brailsford, 1992). These groups had close contact within Britain, and, as a result, the social elite became involved in more sportlike activities than their neighbors in continental Europe, who had a much stricter social class system. It was, however, just this involvement of British nobility which promoted the standardization process of these sportlike activities (Brailsford, 1992).

The rise of the middle class in the Victorian era was also a significant factor in the development of sport within England[1], and later in the exportation of their games (Birley, 1993). Sportsmanship during Victorian times would transcend the world of sport and influence aristocratic notions of decorum in society as a whole. "The ideal of sportsmanship…was a symbiosis of the values of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Sportsmanship demanded a competitive attitude and a strong desire to win, combined with dignity in defeat and courtesy in victory" (Van Bottenburg, 2001, p.49). This ideal emerged out of a public school system which used sport to emphasize discipline and build character. Mangan (1981) described the ideology surrounding the English public school system and athleticism as a complex manifestation of idealism, casuistry, and opportunism. Sport became a ritual and a symbol for status and power within the public school system (Holt, 1989). Many followed a muscular Christian curriculum which viewed participation in sport as a means of fostering virtues such as self-control, loyalty, obedience, toughness, and persistence. This emphasis on athleticism coincided with the peak of British imperial power, and the Victorian supporters of this muscular Christian outlook connected the character traits necessary to succeed in sport with those necessary to run an empire.

> Sport was a means of transmitting a set of British beliefs and standards about fairness, honesty and straightforwardness in a context of respect for traditional authority which may have been summed up in the idea of 'playing the game' but which went far beyond it (Mason, 1990, p.142).

The rise of this imperial sentiment put a premium on authority, discipline, and team spirit, all of which were thought to be learned on the playing fields. The general sentiment about the relationship between Empire and the playing of games in schools was summarized by a former headmaster, J.G. Cotton: "If asked what our muscular Christianity has done, we point to the British Empire.

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[1] During this thesis, I will most often refer to the British nation as a whole in regards to the globalization of American football because the British leagues include teams from England, Scotland and Wales. However, in regards to the early development of the different varieties of 'football', the English have had a specific and influential role to play. During the time period which I will be discussing, England was the dominant nation in the British Empire and thus it had the most influence over the development and exportation of sport. Therefore, I will at times use 'Britain' and 'England' interchangeably in reference to the development of 'modern' sport.

Our Empire would never have been built up by a nation of idealists and logicians. Physical vigor is as necessary for the maintenance of our Empire as mental vigour" (Cotton, cited in Mangan, 1981, p.138).

Walvin (1975) provided a history of how association football and rugby football were initially formed from the medieval pastime of 'football' in the English public schools. The split came when rival public schools would not compromise on the rules of their versions of 'football' in order to play competitively against one another or form teams once boys reached university. The Rugby school's variant of 'football' was largely a handling game which involved picking up the ball and running with it. This was in stark contrast to the Eton, Harrow, and Winchester schools' variation, which was strictly a kicking game. The differences in tradition and social background of the opposing schools also impeded the standardization of one game of 'football', so two versions were formed, because neither side had enough influence to impose its variation on the other (Mangan, 1981). Association football spread more quickly and a governing body was formed by 1863, while rugby football formed its governing body in 1871.

By the late nineteenth century, Britain was at a crossroads. It had now embraced economic prosperity, achieved technological advancement, and strengthened its industrial powers. However, Britain's obsession with its historical idealisms had led to disillusionment about where the country should go next (Jones, 1992). A good example of this was the debate over the professionalization of sport versus maintaining an amateur approach. The heavily industrialized, and typically working class, north of England began to support the professionalization of various spectator sports, while the more traditional, and typically upper class, south of England continued to support the ideals of fair play and amateurism. The northern perspective on sport supported industry and trade, while the southern perspective fought to maintain sport as a distinguished form of recreation. For supporters of amateurism, sport for the athletes' own enjoyment was a far nobler endeavor than sport as entertainment or a source of income.

The true amateur was an ideal type and the banal realities of play can rarely have taken on such a high moral tone. The ideologues of sport admitted as much when they criticized not only the fanaticism and

violence of working-class sport but the seriousness and intensity with

which it was taken by members of their own class (Holt, 1989, p.100).

This tension between amateurism versus professionalism reflected the greater tensions of the age between the classes (Walvin, 1975).

The shifting balance of power from the upper classes to the middle class meant that attitudes about participation in certain sports began to change. Specifically, the upper classes turned away from sports which had become 'popular' (Brailsford, 1992). The upper classes continued to emphasize amateurism because of the distinction it brought from the working class. Bourdieu (1978) argued that these ideals had specific economic and cultural capitals, which made engagement in amateur sport a noble endeavor.

The probability of practicing the different sports depends, to a different degree for each sport, primarily on economic capital and secondarily on cultural capital and spare time; it also depends on the affinity between the ethical and aesthetic dispositions characteristic of each class or class fraction and the objective potentialities of ethical or aesthetic accomplishment which are or seem to be contained in each sport (Bourdieu, 1978, p.836).

Despite this upper class objection to the professionalization of sport, association football was the first to give in to the demands of professionalism by 1885. This occurred mainly because it had become a popular sport among the lower classes, and by this time had lost most of its prestige. Rugby football, however, soon followed, but the conflict actually tore the sport in two, creating the rugby union and rugby league versions of the game which exist today (Dunning & Sheard, 1979).

Up to this point, the focus has been on the internal development of English sports. However, association football and rugby were also being exported to other countries. By the mid-nineteenth century, Britain was the dominant European power economically, politically, and militarily (Holt, 1989). The British Empire was vast, and its influence spanned the globe. Charactersitics of the British lifestyle were emulated by the upper classes of other countries. In addition, English sports were seen as highly respectable, prestigious activities, and were both brought abroad by the British and adopted by those countries who wished to follow in the footsteps of the British Empire.

English sport was easily transferable on a global scale because it had been standardized, making leagues easier to assemble and competition between different regions a possibility. Each sport underwent globalization individually, and its success or failure was often dependent upon its social history within Britain. "For every branch of sport Britain had already developed a full complement of traditions, symbols, and rules and regulations for clothing and play, which strongly determined the sport's social significance and the scope for preserving it for a select group" (Van Bottenburg, 2001, p.103). Therefore, various customs, etiquettes, and values of the different social classes all became a part of the globalization of sport, and a country could not adopt a sport without also adopting the history that was tied to that sport.

Association football became the most popular sport throughout Europe primarily because it was less class bound than many other sports of the time (Van Bottenburg, 2001). From the outset of the globalization of English sports, association football was seen as the sport for the masses, and it was able to use a 'trickle-down' effect to penetrate into global society far better than any other sport. Also, association football was most easily able to shed its obvious English origins as each country evolved its own style of play; it was more easily able to adapt to local requirements. Growth of association football continued after the First World War due mainly to the large-scale mobilization which took place, and because people were beginning to earn more and work shorter hours, leaving more time to involve themselves in leisure activities such as sport (Walvin, 1975). British individuals living abroad often had a missionary zeal which not only brought them to play their own games in other countries, but to invite the locals to play with them.

Rugby football, on the other hand, maintained its elitist image as it was undergoing global exportation, and that history influenced its further development outside Britain. Rugby football was exported and adopted mostly to colonies of the Empire, specifically where the British influence was still most prominent (Dunning & Sheard, 1979). As most foreign players of rugby football were of the same social class as those who played the game in Britain, they tried to closely emulate all of their customs and codes. Due to the fact that rugby football was adopted by such an elite group, both abroad and

domestically, supporters were quick to deter any progress towards professionalization.

American intervention in the First World War marked a shift in the power balance which had for so long rested in Europe, and especially with the British Empire. By the Second World War, American influence was unquestionable, and European domination had ended. The globalization of sports, too, began to change because of this new dominant America. Therefore, attention must now shift towards the United States and how sports, and specifically American football, developed there.

The Development of American Football

Van Bottenburg stated that: "Each branch of sport can be classified, on the basis of history, in terms of a certain social milieu and a certain image" (Van Bottenburg, 2001, p.67). What this means is that different sports embody the unique qualities of the nations from which they came. American football's identity was constructed within the confines of an isolationist nation (Greenfield, 1992) which had very little history of its own with which it could identify. In contrast to Britain, America underwent modernization fairly autonomously, and it also took place later than it did in Britain. By the twentieth century, the United States had a self-sufficient economy and domestic market. Many Americans were little concerned with the outside world, as domestic affairs were dominating their existence. As the United States grew in power and prestige on the world stage, the earlier influences of British culture were replaced by self-confidence in the country's own identity (Oriard, 1991). Sport was one area where Americans took the opportunity to reinterpret existing English pastimes into something unique. Bourdieu (1984) argued that identity, in any form, could be adapted through conscious deliberation, and this is what took place with the formation of American American football identity. American football was thus created out of a combination of the country's collective habitus (a distinctively anti-British sentiment), its athletes' preference for certain types of capital (mainly a combination of the physical and mental), and its field (America's geographical isolation).

Britain, specifically England in the case of sport, was considered the 'Other' (Mead, 1934) by which American football constructed its identity. Unlike with baseball, whose creators denied the sport's English roots from the beginning, the architects of American football never denied that the sport had roots in England. Harvard University pioneered the 'modern' game of American football through the development of its own version, called the Boston Game (Watterson, 2000). This form of the game allowed the use of both feet and hands, but showed preference to being able to run with the ball. Harvard would eventually use its stature and prestige to pave the way for a truly American version of football, and thus aid in the marginalization process of the association version of the game. Association football held a monopoly among many American universities, and most had adopted the association rules by 1873. Harvard was the only university which clung to its own version of the game. The remaining universities, however, resisted forming an official league without Harvard being represented. Harvard held out and refused to surrender its beloved Boston Game (Bealle, 1948). This stubbornness was a pivotal turning point in the development of American football. Had Harvard given in to the other universities and their 'football', American football may have never been established and universities may have adopted association football as their official game. This was an example of Bourdieu's (1984) argument that sporting identity is formed through conscious deliberation; Harvard's athletes clung to their desire to play a distinctive version of football, and through this American football had the capacity to develop.

In 1874, Harvard ventured north to Canada to play two games against McGill University, who also played a similar running and handling based game, rugby football (Guttmann, 2006). One game was played using Harvard's rules, the other by McGill's rules. After the contests, the Harvard team unanimously voted in favor of adopting rugby over the Boston Game. They found it a far superior alternative to the variant of association football they had been playing. By 1876, Harvard had convinced its rival, Yale, to adopt the game of rugby and other universities soon followed (Weyland, 1961). Once rugby had become the established sport of the elite American universities, it began to evolve from a quasi-aristocratic English game to one that was quintessentially American. American football was standardized and underwent its most significant changes

between the years of 1876 and 1882 (Oriard, 1993; Watterson, 2000). Most importantly, this was the same period during which association football and rugby football had been officially separated and standardized.

Van Bottenburg argued: "The American sportization of football-like activities could follow a course of its own because the United States had developed into a great nation that no longer needed to bow to the European powers. Americans emphasized their independence and cultivated their national traits" (Van Bottenburg, 2001, p.84). Aside from Americans wanting to create sports which were uniquely American, gaining an explanation of rules for the English games of association football and rugby football was nearly impossible. The games had no longstanding tradition in the United States nor were there many experienced players available to explain the rules (Riesman & Denney, 1954). Therefore, the geographical distance between England and the United States also fueled the creation of a new version of football. "Lack of tradition undoubtedly liberated Americans to experiment with the rules… the process of rationalization reshaped the game of rugby until it became the unmistakably American form of football" (Guttmann, 2006, p.535). As a result, American football was arguably shaped by a number of inter-related factors including geographical distance, the standardization of English association football and rugby, class, university elitism, commercialization, and the push towards creating a distinctly American form of culture. From this stage onward, American football evolved in conjunction with American culture itself. The journalist Paolantonio supported the theory that American football was a direct consequence of American history and culture reflecting itself in sport: "Football seems to have always been in a constant state of reinventing itself – each reincarnation explaining who we were, who we are, and who we would like to become" (Paolantonio, 2008, p.xvii).

Yale provided the game with its 'founding father', Walter Camp, who would almost single-handedly be responsible for many of the modernizations of American football (Riesman & Denney, 1954). It was Camp who was the trailblazer behind the creation of both the line of scrimmage and the first down system. He also created the center snap, the gridiron field design, reduced the number of players to eleven, and most importantly allowed the forward pass to be introduced (Danzig, 1956). His plan was to introduce science into the game;

it was to become a game which focused on strategy and tactics, as much as brute strength.

> It was a game of 'science' requiring intelligence, execution, strategy, timing, and collaboration, as well as strength. The football player was uniquely positioned to straddle the old and the new worlds: he employed his body and yet was able to intellectually grasp and employ new mechanics, methods, and industries (Jenkins, 2007, p.110).

American football thus came to reflect American society's other values of the time, the synthesis of science and intellect with 'manly' strength and daring. Camp and his fellow innovators were constantly modifying the game in order to make it more appealing to a changing market, and more competitive for the players who, too, were evolving in athletic ability. It was this constant reinvention which contributed to the ongoing popularity of American football.

Of course, all of these reforms were not created without some controversy. In the early 1900's, American football violence in some universities was so severe that the game was banned (Guttmann, 2006). In the fall of 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt summoned the representatives of the three leading Ivy League schools for a meeting on how to curb the violence in the game (Watterson, 2000). Teddy Roosevelt loved American football and often referenced it in speeches he made during the so called Progressive Era of American politics. Roosevelt recognized the need for further reforms and gave support to men like Walter Camp, who wanted to make significant changes to the sport. These early amendments to the game were almost immediately recognized as improvements by not only the players, but by the press and the general public.

Baseball and basketball, America's two other sporting 'inventions', were also developing during this time period. Baseball emerged from the rural, agricultural and traditional side of American life (Mandelbaum, 2004). It was likely based on the English game of rounders, but founders of the game perpetuated a myth that the sport was created in Cooperstown, New York, by Abner Doubleday in 1839. The pace of the game is leisurely and the sequence of events in a game unfold in a linear fashion. It is much more individualistic than other American sports, but it acquired the title of 'America's national pastime' in 1856 when the *New York Mercury* called it so because of its general

popularity. Basketball, on the other hand, represents post-industrial America (Mandelbaum, 2004). It requires very little equipment, and therefore basketball players rely entirely on their own body and skills. Basketball was deliberately created in 1891 within the Young Men's Christian Association to occupy time during the winter months. Both of these other sports helped to fill America's 'sport space' (Markovits, 1990). Both baseball and basketball were either adapted from English sports or invented in America to fulfill the country's own specific needs and desires. So, while these other American sports may also reflect American national identity, this study is primarily concerned with how American football is engrained with the characteristics of American identity.

Gems (2000) linked the rise of America as a world power to American football by saying that the national spectacle was rich with rituals, symbols, and meanings which reflected the nation's ability to define itself. He went on to say that America was able to recognize its differences by using American football to help "bridge the gap between such conflicting perspectives as it assumed national proportions. Sporting enterprises…aligned with urban, commercial, and patriotic impulses to forge the American national character" (Gems, 2000, pp.2-3). Therefore, the distinction of American football's creation relates to its ability to be constructed out of a nation's collective identity. In this case, American football was formed as a sign of independence from Britain and its eagerness to show merit as a new nation. Markovits & Hellerman (2001) and Sugden & Tomlinson (1996) called the creation of American identity 'American exceptionalism'; they contended that America had been created differently and thus must be understood differently. American sports are no exception to this, and the narrative which surrounds the game of American football is a good example of this 'American exceptionalism'.

American football was becoming a game of dramatic action because of these above mentioned reforms; there was a storyline. Long before television, Americans were already being sold on the stories and characters of the game. In fact, a person's relationship with sport is determined to a considerable degree by the narratives through which someone learns to read and interpret its meanings (Oriard, 1993). Hall (1973) also argued that events must first become stories before they are able to become communicative events. Therefore,

people interpret sport as a reflection of their social life and relations (Coakley, 2003).

> I find no evidence to suggest that the founding fathers of intercollegiate football realized that a nation with little history and less tradition required mythic narratives of national identity, and sensed that football might provide them: the Great American Epic in knickers and canvas jackets. But following the game's nearly haphazard beginnings, these narrative possibilities quickly became evident. It is important to remember that football began as a game to be played, not watched… (Oriard, 1993, p.34)

America had no centuries of history to call upon, as in Europe, and therefore myths had to be created in order to satisfy the American people's appetite for stories about themselves. Oriard (1993, 2001) described that American football became, despite early resistance, one of the sources for these desired narratives about American struggle and glory. Socially constructed stories helped Americans to define a collective identity, especially in times of social transition (Gems, 2000). This can be seen in the stories of the Wild West, Daniel Boone, and Davey Crockett, as well as in the narratives created by American football. By the turn of the century, the game now had a defined structure and was being opened up; it better allowed for the formation of a narrative and the creation of a set of stories to entertain the American public. Specifically, we can look to the conception of the position of the quarterback as mirroring the desire for the creation of American heroes within a narrative.

In one of the earliest books published on American football, Walter Camp wrote that "the Quarter-back has, from the very outset, been a position in which a small man can be used to great advantage" (Camp, 1891, p.20). His initial vision was that this one man, using the game's innate burgeoning tactics, could prevail over the brute strength of larger men, as in rugby football, or the mass motion of men, as in association football (Paolantonio, 2008). Eventually the game would come to be focused around the quarterback, as reforms encouraged the game to be built on speed and athleticism, instead of mere overwhelming muscle. Most important in the evolution of the game was the legalization of the forward pass. With this, the quarterback now controlled many of the tactics on the field, and in consequence, demanded defenses to respond and develop their

own tactics to stop his advancement. Camp again wrote in 1910: "Personality will be a great feature in the new game. The boys will be trained to be considered a hero" (Camp, 1910, p.137). This quotation suggests that the developers of the sport understood that in order for American football to become accepted outside of academic institutions, it needed to be told just as other American myths, especially about the West, were told. And, with the elevation of the importance of the quarterback and the legalization of the forward pass, the quarterback became the natural protagonist on a hero's journey: "an ideal forum for creating the new American man – half Boone, half Rockefeller" (Adams, cited in Jenkins, 2007, p.110). The prime example of this is Johnny Unitas leading the underrated Indianapolis Colts to win in the first sudden-death overtime game against the league's marquee franchise, the New York Giants. This game epitomizes the timeless story of a hero's journey, who fights against all odds to prevail victorious. The American public, who set a record for largest audience to watch a sporting event, forty-five million (MacCambridge, 2005), was captivated by the unfolding story and now had the perfect medium for consuming this dynamic narrative package, television. After the game, it was written: "This was one for the book, an unforgettable episode crammed to the gunwales with dramatics and heroics" (Daley, 1958).

The ability for American football to be a narrative is important in relation to this study because its story represents its 'Americanness', and this 'Americanness' has become the central defining feature of the sport in regards to its global reputation. The developers of American football encoded the game to meet the needs of a specific group of people (Gems, 2004). The repercussions of this, in terms of the globalization of the game, implies that not every society will decode the game in the same way as it was originally intended with the confines of the United States. Therefore, no single interest controls a sport's meaning globally; the meaning of sport changes depending upon the context in which it sits.

The issues of professionalization and commodification in American football were also born out of this inability for one group to control the meaning of the sport. Oriard argued: "The fundamental dichotomy on which the formula rested - football as contest and football as spectacle - reflected what were in fact two distinct functions that football rapidly came to serve in American life"

(Oriard, 1993, p.116). Due to its rapid transformation and increase in popularity, the once elite sport faced yet another interpretation of its meaning; that of a commodity and a consumer product.

Within American sporting culture there was an all consuming emphasis on winning. This was not only important for masculine pride within the sporting world, but also in defining American distinction, power, and nationalism (Gems, 2000). American sportsmen were known for adhering to only the written 'rules' and not to the 'spirit of game'. This American approach to competition in sport was quite different to that of the British ideal of 'sportsmanship' within athletic competition. So, whereas the adherents to the British code of sportsmanship may have been offended by the modifications made to the American variety of football, American sportsmen considered its innovators great modernizers. "Within twenty-five years football had become a tradition, a weekly anthropological play that celebrated American might and vitality, as it signaled the transition in power relations, both internally and abroad" (Gems, 2000, p.24). The nation had moved from its agrarian roots to an urban, commercial lifestyle, and American football helped to foster this transition, by reinforcing and promoting particular values which were essential to the American character. The key to the growth of American sport became the realization that sport could be a product, and American football was at the forefront of this transformation.

Most of the reforms which were responsible for creating the culturally specific sport of American football happened within the university system. American football increased in popularity as universities used the sport to demonstrate their superiority, as for many of them success on the gridiron was easier than gaining success academically (Watterson, 2000). The collegiate system, which preached the importance of amateurism, saw athletic pursuits as a way of increasing revenue, as well as prestige. As long as their athletes appeared to be 'amateurs', i.e. not being compensated for their athletic skills, then it was acceptable for the university as a whole to commercialize the sport for their own benefit (McChesney, 1989). While this may have been a contradiction (Smith, 1993), especially because many college athletes were, in fact, being compensated for their athletic abilities, American football was still a respected sport by members of the upper-classes. This was because of its elite

university origins and the fact that it was baseball that was considered the 'popular' sport of the people (MacCambridge, 2005).

In the early twentieth century, however, American football's status as an elite sport ended when less prestigious universities began to adopt the sport and American football trickled-down to the masses. The general population was won over by the fierce competition between universities, and there was a growing desire for American football to be played outside of the collegiate system. The next set of American football reformers recognized that amateurism was an outdated concept in a society based on the principles of freedom, opportunity, and egalitarianism (Smith, 1993). The rise of professional American football was also a sign of the quickening of culture, and the sport became a truer representation of American preoccupation with power, passion, technology and teamwork (MacCambridge, 2005).

By the 1900's, sport and work had merged because both displayed characteristics of organization, specialization, and discipline. The same rules changes which had made American football more structured and 'scientific' also stripped the sport of many of its 'play' elements (Oriard, 1993). Sports had become a quest for victory, rather than a leisure pursuit of fun, and its roots in amateurism began to become fundamentally at odds with its new focus on strategy (Gems, 2000). The physical capital of American football held a certain appeal for the working classes who earned their money with their bodies. Unlike the collegiate elites who had started out playing the amateur sport, the working classes saw no shame in accepting payment for their labor, even if that labor was in the context of sport. Therefore, the 'scientific' American football and the 'amateur' American football were in fact competing versions of the same game, the roots of which lay in two distinctly different parts of American society.

The new professional league, which formed as a consequence of this new identity, struggled to overcome the negative stereotypes associated with professionalism in its early years. The professional leagues originally lacked the pageantry and spectacle of the game at the university level, but the athletes at the professional level were performing at a higher technical level (Oriard, 2007). It became increasingly clear, however, that the key to its future success in America's burgeoning urban empire was to provide fans with this collegiate

style pageantry, as well as big stars performing individual accomplishments in a stimulating environment. People would embrace the professional game if you gave them a hero to watch, a story to follow, and a spectacle to entertain them. The man who inspired this for professional American football was Red Grange. A star at the University of Illinois, Grange had had a lot of pressure put on him to turn his back on the world of professional American football upon his graduation. But Grange loved the game and he wanted to be paid to play American football. Signing Grange turned out to be the big ticket the professional league needed, as record crowds began to fill stadiums just to get a chance to see 'The Galloping Ghost'. Professional American football had its first star, and the league's popularity grew as it continued to successfully package the sport for the masses to enjoy. By the 1950's, American football was the most popular American sport, surpassing baseball, which had long stood as America's 'national pastime'.

The professional league chose to further promote their game of American football through the narrative on the field which was played out each week by its players and coaches. Inspired by this narrative structure, league administrators eventually decided to turn the sport of American football into an even larger spectacle through the medium of television (Oriard, 2001). Even before television, the collegiate system had attracted large audiences to its campuses to watch American football games, and in the process generate revenue for the university (Smith, 2008). This was especially true after the 'opening up' of the game made it more interesting to watch and not just to play. However, it was the introduction of sport on television which sparked the true commercialization of American football. Baseball's entertainment value was framed around the drama between the batter and the pitcher, basketball offered fluidity and intimacy, and ice hockey had speed and violence. However, it was the inherent structure of American football which made it the best sporting partner for television and, thus, mass commercialization.

The professional league was set on making the game a grand set piece of American entertainment and a genuine contributor to the world of show business; and American football was a natural. It was live theater with a natural protagonist, where real losers and winners were determined during a finite period in front of a captivated audience (Oriard, 2007). When television was

first introduced in the mid-1950's, American football already had a large and dedicated live spectator following; it just needed to be reintroduced on a mass scale. American football's new image was tailored to attract a broad middle-class audience (MacCambridge, 2005). The professional leagues did this by reinventing the way American football was told, and made it unlike anything else seen in the sporting world. This was portrayed through a show called 'The Violent World of Sam Huff'. Sam Huff was a middle linebacker with the New York Giants, who agreed to be mic'd up during the games to provide fans with an insider's perspective on what it was like to be on the playing field (Paolantonio, 2008). With these technological advancements, American football players became entertainers, and it was Ed Sabol who next recognized the potential synergy between the sport and television. His groundbreaking filmmaking used multiple camera angles and slow motion to bring fans closer to the action. Sabol focused on not only the overarching action of the game, but on players' and coaches' individual movements. "Sabol took the naturally complex and compelling narrative of the game itself, which had already mesmerized generations of Americans, and dressed it up with music and ground-breaking filmmaking techniques, some of which were rarely even used in Hollywood at that time" (Paolantonio, 2008, p.167).

American football and television became increasingly interdependent (Real, 1998). The culmination of this symbiotic relationship came when the NFL and the AFL merged in 1966, resulting in the playing of an annual championship match-up, soon to be known as the Super Bowl. The National Football League was able to combine what Whannel (1992) described as the two most important processes of sport on television, realism and entertainment. More rules changes were implemented to appease a television audience (MacCambridge, 2005). In the 1970's, the defense was dominating the game, which did not make for exciting television. Rules changes, such as disallowing the touching of wide receivers five yards beyond the line of scrimmage, and allowing offensive linemen to extend their arms with open hands in pass blocking to better protect the quarterback, made the passing game more effective and more exciting. Higher scoring games were what the public wanted, and so the NFL delivered it. Between giving the fans a more exciting

game and bringing them closer to the action, television helped to create a blind brand of loyalty to the sport, something which still exists today (Oriard, 2007).

MacCambridge summarized the success of professionalized American football after the merger by arguing: "Professional football ultimately succeeded because it struck a chord with the American psyche. In a time of alienation and urban flight, when a sense of community was dissipating, it unified cities in ways that other civic enterprises could not" (MacCambridge, 2005, p.xviii). Unlike baseball, which was seen as rural and pastoral, American football took on the image of being urban and modern. American football prided itself on replicating the tough, strategic, and determined side of American life (The NFL's Official Encyclopedia of Professional Football, 1977).

> Football prominently featured all of the values central to bourgeois capitalism in the United States: British elite origins to provide the necessary historical legitimacy coupled with American 'robust manliness' to clearly distinguish it from its 'soft', disorganized, Victorian predecessor; individual effort combined with intricate team work; hierarchal control in tandem with corporate cooperation; and equality of opportunity and access accompanied by the survival of the fittest in competition against a dangerous foe (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001, p.79).

Another issue which affected American football's development was that of the emasculinization of American society. Ideas about masculinity underwent a profound transformation in the nineteenth century, as a result of industrialization and the effect it had on the power relationships between people. Men altered their recognition and value of their own physical capital (Shilling, 1991). American football was used as a way of reinforcing male hegemony, and many of the qualities of the sport were linked to characteristics associated with male dominance. It placed emphasis on competition, winning, and training of the body; possessing a combination of which placed a man at the top of the hierarchy (Messner, 1992). In fact, this 'cult of masculinity' was what allowed the brutal 1890's version of American football to survive (Oriard, 1993). American football, in particular, addressed the 'survival of the fittest' principle:

> With industrialization, the closing of the frontier, and the migration to cities, the American male was cut off from the physical demands of everyday outdoor life, through which his manhood had once been routinely confirmed. Thrust into a new world where traditional masculine traits were no longer meaningful, he found vigorous outdoor sports such as football a compensating validation of his manhood" (Oriard, 1993, p.191).

Men also used American football as a way to marginalize women, restricting them to spectator roles. Messner (1992) argued that highly aggressive sports, such as American football, felt psychologically safer for men because they provided them with clear cut relationship boundaries with other males, as well as with females. For men, American football, therefore, defined the characteristics of true manhood; toughness, aggression, competitiveness, virility, and violence (Gems, 2000).

In summary, American football's identity construction was formed along side the identity of the American nation:

> The United States had taken its place as foremost in the hierarchy of nations. To achieve that position it first had to coalesce in a common identity and a common value system. Football helped Americans do so by distinguishing itself as a nationalistic game, distinct from its British forebears, and one that promoted a martial spirit. The sport served as a rite of passage for young males eager to assert their masculinity in the face of a growing feminism. It produced aggressive, competitive, disciplined, and self-sacrificing workers and leaders for a capitalist economy as it merged commercial values with the ideals of higher education on college campuses. Football marked the American coming of age with the closing of the frontier, the transition to an urban society, and the amalgamation of regional differences (Gems, 2000, pp.194-195).

All of these characteristics were engrained into the identity of American football and, thus, accompanied the game to Britain during its expansion. The section which follows gives historical information about American football in Britain, both as a media commodity and as a leisure activity.

The History of American Football in Britain: The British Media and the NFL

The initial global popularization of American sports is an example of one area where the United States differentiated itself from the British version of sports that was being spread around the world. American football also differentiated itself from other American sports in the way in which its global exportation occurred. Until the turn of the century, participation in American football within the United States had been limited to sons of the upper classes who attended the most prestigious universities. This was in stark contrast to baseball, basketball and volleyball. Baseball was taken up by the population mainly due to the presence of the armies during the Civil War, while basketball and volleyball were popularized through the YMCA. The differential popularization of these sports thus had important consequences for their domestic and later global diffusion (Van Bottenburg, 2001).

Like British sports, American sports mainly spread within the country's sphere of influence. Van Bottenburg (2001) argued that the degree to which American sports caught on in other countries depended upon their relationship with the United States, the presence of catalysts of diffusion (for example through migration, colonization, trade, the presences of armies, schools, or churches, or the media), and through the potential for receptiveness to new sports on the part of specific groups within the local population. Baseball, as a part of American mass culture, mainly followed the laborers and the military abroad because of the game's association with having fewer class-specific characteristics. On the other hand, in countries which adopted the American education system or the Christian religion, the YMCA sports of basketball and volleyball tended to flourish (Guttman, 1994).

American football, however, largely remained a domestic sport throughout this initial period of global sport diffusion (1870-1930). Unlike baseball, basketball and volleyball, it did not have the proper catalysts of diffusion because American football remained under the control of the universities. Popularizing the game was not a goal of those who played American football in those days. In fact, just the opposite was true; the game was meant to be elitist and only available to those lucky enough to be born into the upper ranks of American society. Since the United States did not have a

colonial empire like the British, it lacked an elite global network to which the sport could easily spread.

However, things began to change in the second half of the 20th century because former European powers became more dependent upon the United States. The international electronic media also began to magnify and glorify American culture, and most importantly to this thesis, highlighted that American football had become the undisputed number one sport within the United States (Van Bottenburg, 2003). This combination of events would lead to the eventual global exportation of American football to Europe immediately following World War II.

The following sections are a history of American football in Britain, which has been compiled mainly through journalistic sources, websites, and popular historical narratives. The exportation of American football to Britain has thus far been given little attention by academics, with the exception of Maguire's work in the 1990's. While I have already stated that Maguire's work falls short on a number of accounts, it does give ample background information on the early history of American football in Britain. My study aims to address this gap in the literature, but in order to orient the reader, a popular history of British American football must be undertaken utilizing the sources available.

The first ever American football game played on British soil took place on December 21, 1910 (Richards, 2009). Two groups of United States servicemen played in front of a crowd of about four thousand people. Games continued to be played by United States servicemen throughout the early twentieth century, especially during the Second World War, when a large number of these military personnel were stationed in Britain. In 1946, the United States Armed Forces-Europe (USAFE) league was officially formed, and British military bases started entering teams in 1951 (Richards, 2009). This was the first time games began to be played in front of larger crowds, including a crowd of twenty-two thousand at Wembley Stadium in 1952 (Richards, 2009). However, it was not until 1982, when Channel 4 began its weekly coverage of the NFL, that the sport took off domestically.

Up until the 1980's, American football had been considered just a 'zany' American pastime, that most Britons did not understand. Richards quotes a 1953 voiceover which sums up the general British attitude: "Back to the fray,

with hurling bodies straining nerve and sinew to score more points. English fans just wracked their brains in trying to find the point" (quoted in Richards 2009, p.11). The infiltration of US servicemen during World War II and the Cold War period forced a cultural exchange. One result of this exchange was that American football began to be played and reported upon more frequently. Maguire (1994) insisted that sports represented individuals, as well as whole nations. Due to the fact that the 'sports spaces' (Markovits, 1990) of the two nations were so different, the American servicemen found a way to make themselves feel more at home by playing American football.

Prior to 1982, American football was infrequently reported or watched in Britain, but during this year the crucial phase of American football's globalization began. Maguire (1990, 1991, 1993a, 1999) researched this phase in American football's globalization to Britain. He argued that there were three interdependent components of the media sports production complex which supported American football's attempts to infiltrate the British sports space. They were Channel 4's decision to screen American football in a particular style on a regular basis, the marketing strategy of the NFL, and the involvement of Anheuser-Busch as a major sponsor (Maguire, 1993b). The influx of American football media was also vital to the initial start-up of the British American football leagues. Due to the fact that the focus of this study is on these British leagues, attention must be given to how the media influenced the opening up of the British sports space.

In 1982, the new terrestrial Channel 4 decided to screen American football for 75 minutes per week, in an American style production. The appeal of American football to Channel 4 can be linked to the qualities that characterize sport in general: its low cost of production and the potentially high audience ratings (Whannel, 1992); this is why Channel 4 chose American football as part of its television lineup. In addition, American football is highly spectacularized as a media sport form, and, as a result, in the 'society of the spectacle' (Debord, 1994) it has an even higher potential marketability. The decision was made to screen NFL highlights with commentary from American networks, rock music, and colorful graphics. The marketing strategy and packaging of the game in an American style was different from the journalistic approach of traditional British sports media, and provided a distinctive and

appealing character (Maguire, 1990). These 'American' characteristics added to the sense of spectacle and made the game more marketable. In this sense, the media were mostly responsible for creating the spectacle which surrounds NFL American football (Ritzer, 2001). The NFL highlight reel is the perfect example of this media influence on American football as it provides this spectacle to audiences on a daily basis.

The composition of the audience watching American football was essential to Channel 4's success. The viewing audience was largely young, affluent males:

> Cheerleader [Productions] have clearly found the advertisers' nirvana – a young, rich and enthusiastic audience… It's almost as if the yuppies of the world were waiting for a spectator sport they could feel was theirs – something that was at its best when watched on the small screen in the warmth of their home (*Sunday Times*, January 18, 1987, p.49, cited in Maguire, 1990).

American football was also able to temporarily infiltrate the British sports space by taking advantage of a gap left by association football being blacked out by a strike. Association football in Britain was in a state of turmoil during the 1980's; attendance was dropping and hooliganism was at its peek. American football was a fresh new sport for British audiences, where violence was kept contained on the field, and where a great variety of teams were atop the league during any given year. Most importantly, it gave sporting audiences variety.

During 1987, coverage of the NFL was increased by adding an additional one-hour broadcast. This was necessary as the number of people tuning in to watch had tripled in size, from about 1.1 million to 3.7 million (Maguire, 1990). These numbers increased further during playoff weeks and peaked with annual coverage of the live Super Bowl. However, after 1987, viewing numbers reached a plateau and eventually decreased. During the first year of screening, Anheuser-Busch underwrote the coverage of American football for Channel 4. They invested £100,000 in the production cost of televising American football in Britain, in exchange for advertising during the commercial breaks (Maguire, 1990). Many of these commercials featured American football stars from the NFL in an attempt to introduce and promote them to a British audience. As will

be discussed later, Anheuser-Busch also became involved in sponsoring the British American football leagues.

In order to educate the people of Britain about the game, the NFL teamed up with Licensing Management International to produce publishing agreements and to distribute licenses for the use of the NFL logo. The merchandise bearing the NFL logo was vast and was seen in multiple retail stores, while endorsement deals were also secured. All of these avenues proved successful, mainly because of the crossover between the audiences reached by Channel 4. The young, affluent audience was willing to not only watch the sport on television, but they sought out publications and products bearing the NFL logo.

All of these aforementioned developments were reinforced by the marketing strategy of the NFL. Maguire (1990) outlined the NFL's key objects towards developing their product and influencing a British audience. First, it wanted to promote the game abroad on a long-term sustained basis. Additionally, it wanted to create and educate a new fan base, as well as establish and protect the NFL trademarks on a worldwide basis for commercial application. Finally, it wanted to generate revenues. The NFL's relationship with Channel 4 sought to achieve these objectives. The advantageous viewing hour, Sunday evenings, was crucial to attracting a young audience. The NFL recognized that American football was a television sport, and that its packaging and distribution in Britain needed to follow that trend. Within my study, this attitude towards American football being thought of as a television sport will remain important in terms of the current relationship between the NFL and the British grassroots leagues.

The History of British American Football: The Rise and Fall of British Grassroots

The NFL's presence on Channel 4 was the inspiration for the start-up of the British American football leagues. On August 6, 1983, a British entrepreneur hired out Wembley Stadium and brought over two NFL teams to play an exhibition match in front of thirty thousand people (Richards, 2009). This event would soon become the American Bowl, and it was a second source

of inspiration for the initiation of a domestic league. Military bases continued to be the dominant arena for American football until 1983, when non-military associated domestic teams finally began to form. The first all British game was played in October of this year in London's Hyde Park between the London Ravens and the Northwich Spartans (BritballNow, 2008). A former British American football player, Steve Marsh, offered his explanation of why American football took-off when it did:

> American football was a novelty. It was new, exciting, and different from any other sport. It was something cultural at a time when the world was just beginning to become global and the interest in the US was high. Traditional sports in the UK such as football and rugby had become boring – people were looking for an alternative to the mainstream and wanted a more family-orientated viewing sport and didn't want to fear being abused at a football game (Marsh, quoted in Richards, 2009, p.35).

Official leagues were formed in 1984, after a succession of meetings were held between representatives of the prospective teams. The creation of British American football was now taking place from within Britain itself, rather than being transplanted by the American run NFL. The British themselves were attempting to alter their own sports space. However, agreement could not be reached about how to organize a single British league, so four leagues were eventually formed; the British American Football Federation (BAFF), the American Football League United Kingdom (AFLUK), the United Kingdom American Football Association (UKAFA), and the American Amateur Football Conference (AAFC). All were scheduled to begin play in 1985 (BritballNow, 2008; Richards, 2009). As will I will later discuss, these divisions would harm the sport, and would be a leading cause of the 1990's demise of British American football.

British American football clubs often had plenty of interest from potential players; however, many clubs struggled with the cost of starting-up. Despite these hardships, there were approximately seventy teams ready to play in the inaugural season of British American football, spread out over the four leagues. Having four leagues meant that all levels of ability could be catered to, but each league acted independently. Despite the incongruity, at the end of the 1985

season, British American football had attracted enough attention to secure sponsorship from Budweiser. The company made £250,000 available for the development of American football in Britain; however, they adopted a sport which was divided and had no central representation (BritballNow, 2008; Richards, 2009). Rather than address this separation, the solution was to once again divide and reshuffle the American football clubs. Under the influence of Budweiser, two leagues were created; the Budweiser League and the British American Football League (BAFL). However, this reshuffling was not straight forward, as the European American football governing body claimed it would not recognize the Budweiser League. This was due to previous membership negotiations with the AFLUK, which had now merged into the BAFL (BritballNow, 2008). The agreement meant that only BAFL teams could enter into European competition. Clubs had to make a choice between European recognition and sponsorship.

While the BAFL was officially recognized by the rest of Europe, not having sponsorship forced the league into liquidation at the end of the 1986 season. British American football was almost unanimously united under the Budweiser name, and over a hundred teams were now registered. Only regional minor leagues continued alone, and an un-kitted youth league was formed in order to more safely introduce British American football to young athletes. The national team, the GB Lions, was created in 1987, along with university associated British American football teams. In 1988, Budweiser committed another one million pounds over three years to the development of the sport, but decided to do so for only the top tier teams. This left the rest of the club teams with the responsibility to once again reorganize themselves into newly established leagues. Five leagues competed that year; the Budweiser League, the British National Gridiron League (BNGL), the United Kingdom American Football League (UKAFL), the Southwestern American Football League (SAFL), and the Caledonian American Football League (CAFL).

While British American football seemed to be at an all-time high, with 166 teams registered in 1988 and the British National Team winning the Eurobowl, Budweiser dealt the sport a huge blow. They announced that they were withdrawing their sponsorship. This once again launched British American football into a major reshuffle, this time producing two dominant

leagues; the National Division Management Association League (NDMAL) and the British National Gridiron League (BNGL). Over the next few years, the number of registered clubs began to dwindle, along with the numbers of audience attendance figures.

In 1989, throughout all of this domestic league chaos, London was chosen to receive a franchise within the new professional World League of American Football (WLAF). By 1992, however, the WLAF also announced that it was suspending operation. Reasons listed for its rapid demise included significant money loss, not playing the World Bowl in America, not striking a lucrative television deal, interference with player allocation, game day cutbacks, and not enough big name players (BritballNow, 2008). The WLAF did not act as a mediator between what Featherstone (1991) called 'local-global interplay'. The European professional league simply did not capitalize upon the global opportunity, as fans of American football remained transfixed with the general spectacle of the NFL. The existence of the WLAF also did little to support the domestic American football leagues, possibly even hurting them by tearing resources, players, and supporters away. The World League of American football did return for a second attempt at infiltrating the European sports space in 1995, and was eventually renamed NFL Europe in 1998. British involvement in this professional European league was short lived, as teams ended up relocating to Germany and Austria, where they had the most European support.

Even with the unification of the British leagues, the 1990's saw the decline of British American football; the American Bowl series ceased operation, USAFE games stopped, the WLAF had failed in Britain, and eventually even Channel 4 stopped showing games. The sports image had changed in that it no longer retained the fresh, new and interesting persona it had once had (Richards, 2009). In 1995, Sky took over the screening of NFL American football, but at this time satellite television was in few homes, so the exposure was just not the same as it had been on a terrestrial channel. The disinterest in American football was also aided by the fact that association football had cleaned up its act and had rebranded its top flight the FA premier league. The sport also became more exciting due to rules changes, and it was as if association football had suddenly become a new product. There also seemed to be a new sense of pride and identification emerging (Richards, 2009). Britain

began to turn away from all things American and looked to their own nation for inspiration and pop culture beacons: "As the nation moved towards the end of the Nineties and the start of a new century, American football seemed, well, just so Eighties" (Richards, 2009, p.109). The novelty of American football had worn off.

The British American Football Association (BAFA) became the single amateur organizational body for the sport in 1996, and British American football was finally united under a single governing body. In 1998, the British American football community saw the creation of an adult flag league, allowing people to participate in an organized, non-contact version of the sport for the first time. The number of registered teams was still in decline, however, reaching an all time low of 28 teams in 2001 and 2002. In 2005, the British Senior League (BSL), the adult contact version of American football, rebranded itself as the British American Football League (BAFL). It had also divided itself into a three tier league, allowing for the greatest level of competition amongst its members. The rebranding echoed a renewed spirit amongst supporters of British American football to bring stability to the grassroots leagues. While the first attempt at altering the British sports space to include American football may have failed on both the media and participatory fronts, those involved with the sport have not yet given up.

The BAFA was not the only American football organization interested in attempting to break through the 'frozen' British sports space. A new partnership between the NFL and Sky would mark the beginning of a new global strategy by the NFL. Past attempts at exporting their product via television and through sponsorship had had varying levels of success, but none of these ventures proved profitable or sustainable. The NFL's latest global strategy, however, highlights American football's ability to be a spectacle in a way in which neither television nor NFL Europe could provide; it offers both realism and entertainment in the same sporting event. The following section will give background on this latest global venture by the National Football League.

The NFL International Series: A New Global Strategy

In 2007, NFL Europe closed as the NFL decided to change its international business strategy:

> The time is right to re-focus the NFL's strategy on initiatives with global impact, including worldwide media coverage of our sport and the staging of live regular-season NFL games…We will continue to build our international fan base by taking advantage of technology and customized digital media that make the NFL more accessible on a global scale than ever before and through the regular-season game experience (Waller, quoted in NFL, 2007, paragraph 2).

The NFL has resolved to play two regular-season games outside of the United States, setting up a sixteen year rotation that would have each NFL team playing abroad twice in that time period, having to give up only one home game. This could also potentially lead to an expanded regular season, consisting of up to 18 games, starting as soon as the 2011 season (although this is looking less and less likely due to ensuing labor disputes within the league). Increasing the number of regular season games opens up the possibility of further international contests. The first of these regular season games held outside the United States was played in 2005, when the Arizona Cardinals took on the San Francisco 49ers in Mexico City.

Due to the success of this match and the new international business strategy of the NFL, London was chosen as the host for the first ever NFL regular-season game played outside of North America, and given the title of the International Series.

> London was selected based upon several factors, including general fan interest, current NFL visibility through existing media agreements, the range and quality of large, world-class stadia, including Wembley and Twickenham, the size and value of the overall sports and entertainment market, and the potential to build year-round marketing, sponsorship and fan engagement (NFLUKa, 2007, paragraph 9).

Between the years of 1986 and 2005, 40 American Bowl games had taken place outside of the United States, in cities such as London, Tokyo, Berlin, Barcelona, Toronto, Vancouver, Sydney, and Osaka, but they were all exhibition matches.

London had hosted one fifth of those games, far exceeding any other city. This new strategy, however, aims to create a larger fan base by bringing a top-tier game, along with the entire spectacle that comes with it, to a live international audience.

NFLUK had high hopes before the first game in 2007: "We've got aspirations ultimately to be a top-five major sport behind football, cricket, rugby and formula one" (Kirkwood quoted in Gough, 2007a, paragraph 12). The managing director of NFLUK also set out three bench marks to judge the success of this venture:

> The first, in the short term, is whether logistically everything went OK because I know there have been some concerns… Secondly, you measure it on the day of the game with the level of fan interest, the noise as the teams come out, all that kind of thing. And the third measure is over the next three to five years to look at this game and ask what did it lead to? (Kirkwood quoted in Gough 2007b, paragraphs 18-20).

The first International Series game that pitted the Miami Dolphins against the New York Giants on October 28, 2007, was deemed a success, with 81,176 people in attendance (Gough, 2007a). The quality of the game, though, was affected by the rainy British weather. It was enough, however, to secure London a regular-season NFL game through 2010 (Gough, 2007b). The second International Series game took place on October 26, 2008, between the New Orleans Saints and the San Diego Chargers. Once again, the stadium sold out, and this time the weather allowed for a much more exciting display of American football. The third International Series game took place on October 25, 2009, between the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the New England Patriots. The fourth game in London, took place on October 31, 2010, between the San Francisco 49ers and the Denver Broncos. While American football has not reached a spot in the top-five UK sports chart after three years of International Series games, it does have significantly more exposure in the media as a result of the NFL's international agenda. The sport now has two terrestrial TV partners in the BBC and Five, as well as a deal with Sky Sports that offers daily in-season NFL programming and over a hundred live games.

The NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell, said that his biggest challenge in selling American football worldwide was education. It is thought to be a complicated game to explain to novices, but the NFL is hoping to persuade the British public that its speed, contact, and strategy are entertaining enough to keep them interested (McKnight, 2007). While NFL personnel are cautiously optimistic about the global expansion of the NFL brand and the sport of American football, some journalists are more skeptical. Lyne-Austen (2008), for example, sees the new International Series as an admission by the NFL that it is the only league that is a viable product in Europe. This comes as a response to the cancelling of NFL Europe and other feeder leagues, such as the World League of American Football:

> Goodell's solution to expanding the NFL in Europe has been to give us regular season games. As these are the games that matter it makes sense that they will be the biggest draws outside of the post-season NFL games. It also means the feeder league concept is dead for now. The middle tier of American football – that between amateur club games and the NFL – is no longer on the table… (Lyne-Austen, 2008, paragraph 5).

He sees issues arising with making American football a majority sport in Britain, even if the UK is the 'safe' option for global expansion. Without a feeder system, such as NFL Europe, international brand expansion cannot fully tap into the international talent pool. Rugby has been undergoing international brand expansion similarly, but they have a system in place to develop talent in the emerging markets of places such as Latin America, Japan, and Russia. A very small secondary market exists for the NFL; in fact, the number of non-US players involved in the NFL is minimal at best:

> Indeed, the development of the game in the UK at all has been based primarily on TV coverage in the 1980's, a period when sporting competition was minimal thanks to soccer's apparent implosion and other team sports not filling the void. The NFL didn't capitalize on the reach of its brand in the 1980's and is now pushing again, but is in a much more competitive market in the UK (Lyne-Austen 2008, paragraph 11).

Once again, NFL American football seems to be neglecting the importance of the 'local-global interplay' in relation to the globalization of sport. Barnett (1953) argued that displays of American professional sports were actually ineffective in the globalization of sports; that more modest means of imitation by locals was actually more effective. From a management perspective, Voigt (1977) agreed, arguing that a sport's expansion should be negotiated by equals and not dictated by one side.

Journalists were not the only people skeptical about the NFL's plan to continually play regular-season games abroad. A 'die-hard' Green Bay Packers fan said, when asked about the potential of his team playing abroad: "We would not like it – to Europe, to Madison in Wisconsin, anywhere. People build their fall weekends around games and tailgating with friends and family. And I don't think most fans care too much about the NFL going global" (Hendricks quoted in Jackson, 2008, paragraph 29). Another criticism of the NFL's global initiative was that: "The hope is that by staging more games between US teams in the UK and other European countries the sport will be able to gain more of a foothold, but it will never command the same interest as sports such as baseball in the Far East and basketball in China and Europe" (Jensen quoted in Mahmud, 2008). The NFL is constantly being compared to the other top American sports and has thus far been lagging behind on global expansion: "The NBA is already a global brand while the MLB and NHL are regarded as international brands with limited appeal. But, the NFL is neither an international nor a global sport. It's an American sport. Football has a big education process ahead of it" (McGovern quoted in Mahmud 2008, paragraph 7). British journalists also perceive the International Series as having a long way to go:

> Because, for all the attractions of American football…there is no substitute for the integrity of a sporting event or the context in which it is played. That comes with history and tradition. You can't invent it. Which is why next Sunday's NFL game, although a 'real' fixture, is still an imported oddity (Mitchell, 2008, paragraph 5).

The new initiative by the NFL is yet another attempt at creating a global American football audience and culture. The NFL is first and foremost a business whose main objective is to bring in profits and promote its own brand of American football. It has affected the grassroots leagues in Britain, but this

thesis will later explore just how successful this relationship actually is in terms of expanding the appeal of participation in the sport, not just at the level of NFL fandom. It is not yet known whether the International Series will continue, in London or in any other city, after the 2011 game (scheduled for October 13th between the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Chicago Bears). This decision will be the ultimate verdict on whether or not bringing live regular season NFL games was inspiration enough for Europeans, and Brits in particular, to make room for NFL American football within their sports spaces.

The Recent Effects of the NFL's Global Expansion on the British Grassroots

While the International Series has its critics in Britain and in the United States, the relationship between the BAFA and the NFL is supposed to have become stronger as a result of the NFL global initiative. Due to this apparent increase in exposure for the sport, the BAFA has outlined their development plan for American football in Britain in a document entitled 'The BAFA Whole Sport Plan' (BAFA, 2008a). It provides details of the types of programs necessary to develop the sport at all levels across the UK. Some of the key programs that have or will develop from the BAFA Whole Sport Plan will be discussed below.

One of the first large-scale initiatives that took place within the UK was the 'Get into American Football' campaign:

> The objective of the campaign is to recruit players, referees, coaches, volunteers, and fans to participate in grassroots American football. We know the interest is there, we simply want to show people how they can get involved through getintoamericanfootball.com (Walters cited in, BAFA, 2008c, paragraph 4).

As far back as 2004, an international player development scheme was set up through which a selection of foreign players, who had not had the opportunity to play American football in US universities, were signed to NFL practice squads. As of 2008, only one player had made it onto an active NFL roster as a result of this program, but it does give the most highly skilled international players an opportunity to try-out for the NFL. Once NFL Europe had been shut down, it was one of the few international feeder systems still available for

American football talent to be recognized outside of the American collegiate system. However, in November 2007, the BAFL announced that it was planning to investigate the potential of a professional or semi-professional competition in the UK (BAFA, 2007). The development plans to address the issue of not having a 'middle tier' of American football between the grassroots level leagues and the NFL by extending the 'player pathway'.

Young people were also a target group for BAFA and the WSP. In 2008, a feasibility pilot was run at Filton College in order to determine whether running an American football academy was achievable (BAFA, 2009a). The pilot year saw fifteen students, aged sixteen and over, participating in the American football academy. The scheme allows youths to train fifteen hours per week, along with receiving a full-time education. The academy provides sport specific training in conjunction with strength and conditioning, nutrition, and strategic planning advice. The overall aim of the program is to give the best young talent in the United Kingdom the opportunity to develop their skills so that they may enter the American collegiate system and play American football in the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association). Due to the fact that the NFL drafts most rookies directly from the NCAA system, this American football academy also addresses the need to create a player pathway for British athletes to gain entry to the NFL. Due to the success of the pilot program, September 2009 was marked as the official launch of the Filton College American Football Academy (The PRIDE, Filton Academy, 2009). The Academy already claims to have made ties with universities in the United States who will look to Filton Academy for potential recruits. Also, in November 2008, the NFL-Youth Football Fund, a non-profit foundation to promote the game and the universal character values it instills in young people, approved a grant of over two million dollars to the international development of the sport at the youth level (BAFA, 2007). The money will go towards programs which include development tours, coaching schools, player academies, and equipment grants.

While the above mentioned effects of the NFL's presence have been positive for British American football's grassroots expansion, the sport has also experienced some developmental set-backs. In February of 2010, during the broadcast of the Super Bowl, the BAFL announced on its website that it was

withdrawing from the national governing body of BAFA (BAFA, 2010b). This broke progress towards a single organizational structure which the sport had been working towards for years, and also raised many questions about the future of British American football. Initial reaction from players on the BAFL forum was overwhelmingly negative about not just the secession, but also the way in which the break occurred. Teams were not made aware of the possibility of a break, and the decision seemed to be made on behalf of everyone by a very small group of individuals. In fact, the whole situation was labeled a sort of coup on the existing structure.

The BAFL listed a number of reasons for their decision to split, mostly focusing on the BAFA's supposed inability to provide key business and national governing body strategies. These included matters to do with a central registration system, criminal record checks, financial management, and slow progress towards single association status (BAFA, 2010b). The BAFL believed that BAFA's unsatisfactory progress had hampered their own ability to deliver services to their members. As a separate entity, the BAFL stated they would offer an alternative plan to deliver a full 2010 season of both senior and youth British American football. With this new plan the BAFL would have been a single independent organization, thus causing a divide amongst the British American football community.

The BAFA responded to the withdrawal of BAFL by stating its surprise and disappointment in the decision. They declared that the decision was taken without prior discussion or notification of members (BAFA, 2010a). Backlash from this decision included much anger from the wider British American football community, expressed primarily through online forums, and many questions to be asked of what it meant for not only the 2010 season, but also for the future of the sport. Luckily, the situation was resolved before the start of the season, and the players were allowed to go on competing without much disruption. The BAFL, however, lost confidence and control of the teams it represented and eventually was forced to fold. The shock waves of this event were felt mainly at the administrative level with a new organization, the British American Football Association Community League (BAFACL), having to be formed under the umbrella organization of BAFA. This new branch essentially took over both the youth and senior levels of American football from the now

defunct BAFL. The influence of these recent developments will be addressed in more detail within the discussion chapters of this thesis.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have outlined the history of American football, first as a British pastime in its earliest forms of association football and rugby, then as a distinctively American invention which reflected the country's own growing identity, and finally as an exported product of sports globalization back to Britain. In combination with the previous chapter, I have given background on the sociological and the sociohistorical components which have both inspired and informed my own research. In light of this review of the literature, I set out to answer a key question about the British American football culture; how do local and global processes influence the construction of the culture of British American football? This research question was explored through an ethnographic study of one specific group of British American football athletes and was then answered through three themes which will be developed within my discussion chapters. Next, however, I will discuss the methodological underpinnings for the research and my methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 - Methods: A Qualitative Approach to the Study of Sport

I have spent many years watching American football from different perspectives, both as a fan and as an athletic trainer. This research, however, required me to observe American football from yet another perspective, that of a sports sociologist. When I began this project, I knew I wanted to study the British American football culture from a qualitative standpoint. I wanted to interact with athletes on a personal level and understand their perspective. I wanted to see how American football was being globalized from the point of view of those who chose to play it in Britain. I wanted to use my skills and knowledge of the sport to become an insider and tell a story about British American football and the athletes who play it. This chapter outlines the epistemological and methodological techniques I utilized in order to produce the forthcoming data and narratives about British American football.

An Epistemological Position

This research project was constructed using an interactionist approach to the study of sports sociology. It focused on the interpretation and meaning of human action, specifically how and why identity is influential in the participation of British American football. The choice of ethnography as my methodology also reflected this epistemological position, in that it focused on the need to collect rich data in order to address the complexities involved in American football's globalization to Britain and athletes' participation in it. This method also allowed me to gain insight into how participants understand and give meaning to their experiences in the context of broader social influences. I specifically wanted to conduct research which would add to the qualitative ethnographic research in this field. My study aimed to pay close attention to one specific group of athletes in order to gain a depth of knowledge about a developing sport at a crossroads in its globalization.

The interactionist approach is based on the interpretation and understanding of human meaning and action. Donnelly stated that it "…is

about meaning, and in the sociology of sport we are beginning to attain a powerful sense of what sport means, and how sport means, in the lives of human beings" (Donnelly, 2000, p.85). Interactionist theories focus on issues of meaning, identity, social relationships, and subcultures in sports. It stresses that interpretation is the basis for all sociology, and that human behavior involves choices which are based on a reality that people form as they interact with one another. Interactionists believe that humans do not simply respond in an automated fashion to the world around them; they believe that people actively make decisions about their behavior. We act and react based on a perception that those expressed behaviors will have an impact upon our lives and the lives of the people around us, as well as within the social world as a whole. Therefore, as human beings interact with others, they create culture and society (Hewitt, 2000).

According to interactionist theory, this ability to reflect on our decisions and actions aids in the process of identity construction. Humans are, thus, able to develop a sense of who they are and how they fit into the broader social world. Identity, then, is never permanently formed; it changes as the relationships we make over a lifetime change and we encounter new situations. When researchers use interactionist theory, they study human beings as choice makers and their research is focused on seeing the world through the eyes of the people they observe, interview and interact with (Coakley, 2003). Haggard and Williams (1992) contended that sports have a perceived identity attached to them and that that influences the way people consume and participate in them. With this emphasis on how athletes identify with the sports they play, interactionist theory is well suited to explore aspects of sport which investigate the experiences of athletes and how athletes themselves make sense of the sports in which they participate (Rock, 2001). Interactionist sociology may also be defined by what it is not; it "differs from the view that social life is governed by objective cultural and structural characteristics of social systems (external to individuals, and relatively independent of them), and from the view that it is possible to construct rigid scientific laws to explain patterns of social behaviour" (Johnson, quoted in Donnelly, 2000, p.78).

The interactionist perspective opts to follow individuals in everyday situations and deals with the way individuals produce culture. The emphasis

here is on the individual and how that individual interprets his or her environment and then acts on the basis of that interpretation. Bryman (2001) references Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) when describing interactionists because their sociological perspectives reinforce the idea of the social self drawing attention to the individual as a complex mix of biological instinct and internalized social constraint. Due to the focus on the individual social self and because of my desire to focus on the meanings and interpretations of individual athletes within a team setting, this epistemological approach was deemed appropriate to use in this study.

Researching the culture which surrounds American football in Britain combines many of these aforementioned interactionists' approaches because this research required me to become an insider and study the British American football culture through the eyes of those who participate in it. Therefore, exploring why these athletes identify with and play this 'outsider' sport is congruent with the beliefs of interactionist theorists. Bryman (2001) and Rock (2001) both make connections between interactionism and ethnography, arguing that the two are suited for one another because of this need to focus on meanings and interpretations of individuals. When considering methodologies, "interactionists use research methodologies designed to gather information about how people see their social worlds and their connections to those worlds" (Coakley, 2003, p.43). Methods such as participant observation and interviewing are, therefore, the most commonly utilized ways to gather information about how people define and form identities and make choices about their sporting preferences. These techniques are often chosen because theorists wish to emphasize the complexity of human action, and, particularly in this case, the complexity of human relationship with sport.

One of the major criticisms of using an interactionist approach is that it down-plays large scale social structures (Ritzer, 2008). Stryker argued that the micro focus of interactionalism serves "to minimize or deny the facts of social structure and the impact of the macro-organizational features of society and behavior" (Stryker, 1980, p.146). This traditional use of interactionalism, focusing on the micro, will be useful within this study because my ethnographic study will focus upon a collection of individuals within one British American football team. Initial theories of American football's globalization to Britain

were introduced and critiqued in Chapter 2 of this thesis; however, given their inadequacy to properly explain British American football culture, I have chosen to retreat from using these macro-centered globalization approaches and move towards studying the local, grassroots initiatives. Instead of focusing on issues of globalization at the macro level, I will be analyzing the cultural meaning of British American football through the exploration of the athletes' individual experiences. The use of Bourdieu's theories also provides me with a bridge between structural theories and individual experience. Sport is both a product of micro and macro processes, and while I will focus mainly on the micro level within this thesis, I will utilize these general principles of interactionists' theory, combined with broader sociological concepts, such as theories of 'glocalization', to ultimately lead back to a global, or macro, discussion of the globalization of American football.

Ethnography as a Methodology in Sports Sociology

Ethnography can be simply defined as "the work of describing a culture" (Spradley, 1980, p.3), where the culture an ethnographic researcher aims to explore "refers to the knowledge members of a governed group are thought to more or less share; knowledge of the sort that is said to inform, embed, shape, and account for the routine and not-so-routine activities of the members of the culture" (Van Maanen, 1988, p.3). Ethnography encourages the researcher to "immerse his- or herself in a group for an extended period of time, observing behavior, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the field-worker, and asking questions" (Bryman, 2004, p.292).

The aim of ethnographic research is to understand the culture of a particular group from the perspective of the group members (Krane & Baird, 2005). Said another way, ethnography enables a researcher to "understand parts of the world more or less as they are experienced and understood in the everyday lives of people who 'live them out'" (Crang & Cook, 2007, p.1). It requires the researcher to participate in the social life of the subjects, while at the same time maintaining a sufficient cognitive distance so that they can perform their scientific work. Ethnographers employ multiple methods, with participant observation and interviewing often at the foundation of their

research, although additional methods of data collection may also be involved. Through these multiple research methods, ethnographers can record the individual meanings attached to everyday activities. It involves extensive fieldwork and an intense familiarity with a specific social group. Tedlock (2000) stated "by entering into close and relatively prolonged interaction with people…in their everyday lives, ethnographers can better understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of their subjects than they can by using any other approach" (Tedlock, 2000, p.456).

The epistemology and methodology surrounding ethnography varies widely, but some common beliefs do guide it. Fundamentally, ethnography is nonpositivist. It is inductive, does not engage in assumptions of value-free or neutral observations, it is historically and situationally bound (i.e. it may not be replicable or generalizable), and it realizes the influence of the researchers on the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Typically, this research method also includes the consideration of values, power, social structures, and human agency (Krane & Baird, 2005). Ethnography implies that there are no absolute truths (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000); rather that each person socially constructs, interprets and reacts to social settings. To determine a 'correct' reality is not the goal of an ethnographer; it is to develop an understanding of a social setting through the perspectives of its participants.

I will be utilizing 'interpretive' ethnography (Denzin, 1999; 2001) which will provide data that is both emic, that is supplied directly from the participants, and etic, which is the ethnographer's interpretation of what the participants did or said. This specific method is used because I wanted to explore the relationships between the individual athletes on the London Bombers team and British American football. I wanted to know how these athletes became involved in the sport and what sparked that personal interest that lead to involvement in British American football. It was the desire to write this thesis from the personal experiences of these athletes, alongside my own experiences with the team, which inspired me to utilize this type of ethnography.

An important part of ethnography is to understand people's experiences. To do this, one must acknowledge that people experience and act in the world in multiple dimensions, and that these are strung together throughout their lives.

These experiences together shape a person's self-identity and therefore cannot be understood without understanding the histories and impacts of certain categorizations, such as race, class, gender, etc… (Crang & Cook, 2007). Therefore, reflections of this self-identity can be seen, for example, in the sports a person chooses to play because that choice reflects and promotes certain self-conceptions. Crang and Cook (2007) summarize the importance of engaging with history and social constructions throughout ethnographic research by saying:

> Ethnographic research is not therefore only a matter of finding out what a spuriously pure subject might think and do but, through tracing these connections and critically engaging with these stories, it is also one of trying to get at both why this has come to be the case and what wider causes and effects this might have (Crang & Cook, 2007, p.11).

The recognition of these multiple social realities lends itself to ethnography being an inductive research approach. When beginning an ethnography, researchers generally have a sense of what they want to investigate, but precise research questions may not exist. In fact, this vagueness is often encouraged. The ethnographer can thus enter the field and begin observation with an open mind, allowing the specific design of the project to emerge as more knowledge is gained about the chosen setting. However, this does not suggest that ethnography is without its theoretical base. Qualitative research should still be grounded in a conceptual or theoretical framework through which one observes, interprets, records, and analyzes social settings. Ethnography was the chosen methodology for this study of American football in Britain primarily because of its ability to provide focus for my broad research question. It provided me with the flexibility to be able to understand the participants' experiences and to let those experiences shape the direction of my data collection. I chose ethnography for its ability to allow the project to blossom as I became more and more embedded into the culture itself. I wanted the data to dictate the direction of the project. I also recognized that the relationship between national identity and sport was a complex one, and that it was only through extensive qualitative research that I could begin to make sense of the influence they have on one another in the realm of British American football.

> What ethnography can contribute is a disciplined unraveling of the breadth and complexity of relations: it can ask questions unasked by actors on the social scene; it can pursue problems of little interest to those on the social scene; it can compare and contrast in ways that insiders do not do; and it can be rigorous as others are not (Rock, 2001, p.31).

Ethnography has recently gained recognition in the world of sports research, as it possesses greater flexibility and latitude, both of which are necessary to encourage the creative explorations needed to answer complex questions. This is precisely the reason why ethnography was chosen to collect data for this thesis. Ethnographies are characterized by their "focus on a particular group, or subculture, the collection and use of extremely 'rich' data, and depth of information…" (Gratton & Jones, 2004, p.175). In ethnographic research, the researcher takes on the role of an 'insider' and spends a significant amount of time within a selected group. Wacquant (1992), for example, took up boxing and spent time with athletes in Chicago in order to investigate the sub-culture of inner-city boxing. Weed (2006) undertook an ethnography about watching the World Cup in a pub, and how the communal experience of watching the game impacted upon fans. Ollis, Macpherson, and Collins (2006) used ethnography to research rugby refereeing and how expertise was acquired in this job.

It was only through immersion into the American football culture of Britain that distinctive values, beliefs, and behaviors of these sportsmen could be uncovered. On choosing ethnography as a methodology, Krane & Baird stated:

> Considering that sport has its own culture and within that larger culture, each type of sport, as well as each individual sport team, has a unique culture, ethnography is well suited for investigating sport settings…the goal of understanding the lived experiences of athletes through greater understanding of sport culture (Krane & Baird, 2005, p.88).

Ethnography supports the call for greater methodological diversity in the field, and, as such, has already been used to research gender relations and identity in windsurfing (Wheaton, 2000), skateboarding (Beal, 1996), and ultimate frisbee

(Thornton, 2004). As these references suggest, ethnography can and has been used to research many aspects of sport.

The Ethnographic Process

The process of conducting an ethnography began with identifying an area of scholarly curiosity, but then progressed into an actual study. The process for me began with identifying a group capable of providing me with the information I sought. With the case of studying British American football culture, this meant identifying a team which would allow me to join their sideline staff for the duration of an entire season. The criteria for the selection of the BAFL team were that it was closely located to central London and that the team was of the highest possible ranking. Collection of data from this team was focused on individual players who have enormous athletic talent and have chosen to play British American football at this high level, as opposed to another, more conventional, British sport. I also required the team to allow me full access to all aspects of their organization throughout the entire 2009 season. This lasted from early February until mid November and included all practices, games, meetings, and social events.

I chose the London Bombers[2] as my first choice team to conduct research with because they met the above mentioned criteria. Once this group had been identified as a potential research group, gaining entry was the next step. This was granted through making initial contact with a 'gatekeeper'. These are the people who control access to other group members, group activities, and sources of information (Gobo, 2008). Gaining entry involved establishing rapport, developing trust, and demonstrating an interest to these gatekeepers. Gatekeepers, in this instance, were the head coach, assistant head coach, and chairman of the London Bombers. I made initial contact by email addresses listed on the team's website and followed up on these email conversations with a face-to-face meeting. These men were experienced in not only coaching their team, but with the organization and development of the team. Therefore, they

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[2] Names have been changed throughout this thesis in order to allow for anonymity

controlled access to not only the players, but also the management and staff surrounding the team.

While the decision to allow the researcher access to their group may lie in the hands of the gatekeepers, so called 'key informants' also became crucial to this process. Key informants are people who are respected and knowledgeable, and possess clout and influence over other members of the group (Gobo, 2008). Because of their position, key informants could convince other members of the group to participate in the study. In the first few weeks of my data collection, I made connections with some of these key informants. One was a veteran player who had just finished his master's degree in sports sociology, and, thus, understood the type of research I was conducting; he became a comfortable liaison between me, as a researcher, and the rest of the team. A second key informant was a team captain, veteran player, and the team secretary. He went out of his way to include me in practice, made sure I was properly introduced to the entire team, and that I had London Bombers clothing to wear. Through players such as these, I was able to quickly settle into the London Bombers' culture.

It is important for the researcher to fit into whatever society they are studying, in order to maintain a high comfort level regarding their presence. Thus, initiating relationships within the culture was not enough; those relationships had to be sustained over time in a positive manner in order for me to collect the necessary data. Without developing this trust, the participants would have been less willing to share their lives openly (Gobo, 2008). To establish a rapport, researchers should be sincere, communicate empathy, break through communication barriers, establish common ground, assist in routine activities, and be humble (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This rapport with participants often takes time to develop, as they become more accustomed to, and comfortable with, the researcher's presence. The mere presence of a researcher may affect behavior, and therefore the researcher must blend in as much as possible in order to assure that their presence has not changed the 'normal' culture dramatically (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). By becoming a member of a group, a habitual presence was established, where I was seen to have an invested and committed role to play in the group. Obtaining this habitual presence thus enabled me to interact with individuals, have discussions,

and acquire knowledge about the group while minimizing disruption (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000).

Entering into my field research, I knew I possessed certain skills which I could use to my advantage in regards to fitting into the team. I have a degree in athletic training and sports medicine, with experience working for a Division 1 college American football team. I was able to use these skills to become an immediately useful member of the London Bombers' medical staff. As the season progressed, I also became a useful member of the media team as a game day videographer. This dual role allowed the members of the London Bombers to see me first and foremost as a member of their team, and second as a researcher. A participant observer seeks to become some kind of member of the observed group. This, therefore, involves not only a physical presence and a sharing of experiences, but entering into their social and symbolic world by creating a valuable role for themselves within the group. Specific to this research project, taking on the role of a participant observer required me to join the team without the intention of participating as an American football player. This was firstly due to the fact that complete participation in the sport would not allow me to properly observe all the social behaviors of the participants, because my focus would have had to be on learning the game and dedicating myself too much to the physical side of American football. The other reason for not choosing to participate as an athlete myself was due to my gender. While BAFA does allow and encourage women to play the sport, there still exists a stigma that American football is a game for men. Confronting the stereotype that American football can only be played by men falls entirely outside the scope of this project, and any attempts made by myself to address this issue would certainly have alienated some potential informants.

The feature that distinguishes ethnography from other methodologies is its use of observation as its primary source of knowledge about a social phenomenon. Often, however, this goes slightly beyond simple observation to include participant observation or, as Crang and Cook (2007) describe it, 'deep hanging out'. To be a participant involves an immersion into the everyday rhythms and routines of the community, and to develop relationships with people who will tell the researcher what is going on. Conversely though, being

an observer implies observing culture in a detached setting as if the researcher wasn't there (Gobo, 2008). Rock also observes this by saying:

> Participant because it is only by attempting to enter the symbolic lifeworld of others that one can ascertain the subjective logic on which it is built and feel, hear and see a little of social life as one's subjects do, but observer because one's purposes are always ultimately distinct and objectifying (Rock, 2001, p.32).

While these two may seem to contradict one another, ethnography aims to strike a harmonic balance between participation in society and observing society. It is important to incorporate both subjective and objective elements into this type of research. Thus, the role of the participant observer is taken in order for the researcher to do their best to fit into the setting, but still have their identity as a researcher known to the participants. This 'researcher-participant' role is described "whereby the ethnographer participates in a situation but is only semi-involved, so that he or she can function fully as a researcher in the course of the situation" (Bryman, 2004, p.302).

According to Gobo (2008), ethnographers should focus on three aspects of culture while in the field: social structures, the common-sense interpretations/explanations given by participants in their conversation, and the context of the action. Social structures are essentially social conventions, which are not directly observable, but assume a material form in everyday rituals, and in the social practices which are produced and reproduced everyday within the group. These were often the minor actions which sustained everyday activity, and I was careful to observe and record these actions, as they were crucial for understanding the culture. For example, I observed the style of dress of the players on the team in order to understand how players identified themselves as British American football players through their attire. While observing this action was important, equally as important was listening to the speech that preceded, accompanied, and followed it. Listening to this talk helped to clarify the potentially diverse meanings of specific actions. An example of this was that I always made sure I was a part of post-practice team huddles to listen to what the coaches and captains had to say about the practice, an upcoming game, or the team in general. Combining these two allowed me to also better understand the culture. Finally, the third dimension took into account the

context of situations. Social practices were always situated practices, in that they took place in an organized situation comprising an array of both resources and constraints upon them. An example of this final aspect of observing culture was the timing in terms of where the team was in the season. Attitudes about the team and the sport in general changed depending upon what part of the season we were in; pre-season, regular season, play-offs, or post-season.

Observations and the Ethnographic Record

My observations occurred during a ten month span and included pre-season, regular season, post-season, and rookie session training. I attended all games, located both at the London Bombers' home ground and away. I also attended the three day pre-season training camp held in Essex. On the team we had about 80 players, plus 10 coaches, and 6 sideline staff members[3]. In total, I attended 55 sessions, and observations made during these sessions were all documented during or within 24 hours after the session took place. I finished with 124 pages of typed and handwritten notes which detailed my observations of my time with the London Bombers.

The composition of the senior team included all male players who were between the ages of 18 to 36. The players ranged in skill level, both in terms of overall athletic ability and in sport specific skills. The team was also composed of men from varying backgrounds, both in terms of physical geographical location and class background. Most were British citizens born in England, but there were also representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Those who held passports of other nationalities, such as an Australian born rookie and four north American born veterans, were either students who were or had studied abroad, had been relocated earlier in their childhoods by their parents, or have moved to London for work. The men had varying levels of education, although most had obtained a bachelor's degree. In fact, it was within the university setting that most of these men were first exposed to the sport of American football as a participatory activity. While I observed all members of the senior squad throughout my time with the team, I constructed a

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[3] These numbers fluctuated during the season because of the amateur nature of the club.

purposeful sample of individuals for the interview portion of my ethnographic research. This selective sample of 22 individuals from the London Bombers took into consideration the athletes' skill level, as well as their personality and position within the team. My objective was to talk in depth with a variety of individuals who would give me the most comprehensive picture about what British American football was and what types of individuals took part in the sport. These interviews focused on how the athletes became involved in British American football, why they continue to play the sport, and what their opinions were on the grassroots league, as well as the influence of the International Series.

My initial observations focused on the physical actions which took place during practices. I wrote up notes about each drill which was performed, how many people were in attendance, the weather, what was said in meetings, etc. My main objective was to take down as much information as possible about what I saw. As my project began to develop, I focused on different aspects. For example, I would observe how the men interacted with one another and responded to their environment. I began to ask more questions about why things were being done or said in a particular way. My data collection became not only about what was happening, but why it was happening. I was able to transition into exploring this 'why' aspect through my early analysis of the ethnographic record.

During field work, I created an ethnographic record of the culture observed. This record vividly recreated the observed culture and all of its players. This ethnographic record contained all the different methods used over the course of the study, including observational notes and interviews. The observational notes were in the form of field notes, primarily written up within 24 hours after time spent in the field. Ethnographic interviews conducted in the field were subjected to this same type of recording, but some field notes were taken on the spot in order to reduce the potential for forgetting any vital information. Ethnography employs multiple methods in order to lessen the gap between what people say and what people do; therefore, it was important to pay close attention to both, and record both with equal vigor. Formal interviews were recorded using audio equipment in order to accurately record what was said, and then were transcribed. Ethnographic research also needs to be

cognitively open so that the unexpected is expected. It involved following leads, adapting to contingencies, and redesigning research. Thus, the chosen method of recording allowed for such unexpected diversions.

Spradley (1980) describes three criteria for taking ethnographic notes, which include identifying language, the use of verbatim note taking, and describing basic practices. He emphasized that: "When doing ethnography in your own society…it is easy to overlook language differences and thereby lose important clues to cultural meaning" (Spradley, 1980, p.65). Each social group has a particular kind of discourse organization. It has a hierarchy of topics, an account of events deemed significant, expressed judgments, classifications, and categorizations. Therefore, accurate recording of what informants say, including verbatim use of words used by the participants, will aid in the ethnographer's ability to reconstruct the meanings attributed to actions. Condensed or amalgamated ethnographic notes may, therefore, introduce distortions to the culture being described.

Four types of notes were taken during the course of the study (Gobo, 2008). The first were in the form of observational notes, and these were detailed descriptions of events and actions directly seen or heard by the researcher while in the field. They contained very little interpretation and adhered to specifying spatial positions and relationships during the time of observation. These observational notes were the most extensive, as they were taken everyday and gave a detailed description of the physical events of any given day. An example of this was that on the day of a game, I would document the routine of the team, which included field set-up, pre-game rituals and drills, weather conditions, crowd turn out, game results, etc. Methodological notes were made to reflect upon difficulties that arose within the field and how to go about remedying them. They therefore included questions the researcher wanted to answer, as well as recommendations and strategies for implementing other methods. Methodological notes provided the researcher with a constant source of feedback throughout the observation. An example of a time when I made these methodological notes was when I needed further explanation about a team tradition, such as when the team lines up prior to kick-off. The Bombers had a systematic approach to this pre-game ritual, and, after seeing it, I made a note to myself that a further conversation was

needed with members of the team in order to explain why this ritual was important.

Theoretical notes were made when ideas, hypotheses, or interpretations entered the mind of the ethnographer. The theoretical notes developed the more general theoretical meanings of the observational notes, and, therefore, plotted the cognitive path of the future research. These notes often came while writing up my field notes from the previous day, and I began to see patterns developing between different observations. For example, when I paired the above mentioned pre-game ritual with the fact that the players wore nameless jerseys, I began to see the importance of camaraderie. Finally, emotional notes were kept to capture the ethnographer's feelings, sensations, and reactions to the experienced events. These notes aided in the awareness of the researcher's biases, beliefs, and fears about the participants being studied. These emotional notes were important when events such as taking a minute's silence to honor a recently lost player occurred, and where personal emotions may have affected my perceptions of an event. Taking these notes allowed me to reflect on my emotional attachment to the team and how that may have influenced my data. These notes remained the researcher's private material.

I utilized multiple coding techniques throughout my analysis of my field notes because I wanted to have data that was systematically gathered and analyzed. I would collect data for a few weeks and then begin data analysis on that fragment of information. After initial analysis of that data, I would amend my data collection plan and return to the field to gather further data. Through this process of going back and forth between data collection and data analysis, I refined my emerging theoretical framework throughout the ethnographic process. Specifically, I utilized the process of coding because it allowed me to review my field notes and give labels to component parts that seem to be potentially significant to the social world being studied. Coding in qualitative data analysis tends to involve a constant state of revision and fluidity because the data is treated as a potential indicator which is constantly compared to other data (Bryman, 2004).

I utilized a two-step coding system that consisted of open coding and selective coding. Open coding yields concepts which are later grouped and turned into categories. This tends to be more detailed, resulting in a line by line

coding of the text. At this stage, it is crucial for the researcher to be open minded and to generate as many new ideas as possible to encapsulate the data. Selective coding builds the central issue around which all other categories integrate. Selective coding then narrows down the data to emphasize the most common codes and to make comparisons between those emerging themes. In addition to coding the data, memos were also used as reminders about what I was thinking while sorting through the data line by line. Memos help to crystallize ideas and not to lose track of various ideas while sifting through piles of data (Bryman, 2004). They bring analytical focus to data analysis and to the researcher's ideas by allowing the researcher the chance to free-write while coding (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). The aim is to go beyond mere sorting of data and to begin to explore ideas[4].

Interviews

Another essential component to my ethnographic research was the use of interviews. While the research may have begun with observation, over time certain aspects of the culture stood out and required answers to specific research questions. Interviews played the role of following up on information first obtained through observation. Ethnographic interviews can be described as "a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants" (Spradley, 1979, p.58). Using these unstructured interviews often allowed for unexpected and important data to emerge from the athletes themselves, but separate semi-structured interviews were also undertaken in order to allow for the collection of predetermined data.

In an ethnographic interview, the interviewer and the interviewee already know one another and have talked before. Often this familiarity meant that the interview had a different emotional climate than a typical informal interview. Secondly, ethnographic interviews were not often scheduled and were normally conducted during the course of the participant observation. This usually meant they were briefer than a standard interview, because they focused

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[4] See Appendix 6 for coding chart

on specific topics. I often asked a few brief questions about a scene recently observed, for example, in order to understand the reasons for a particular action or reaction. Finally, ethnographic interviewers were not concerned with obtaining all of an informant's knowledge during one interview, as I had multiple opportunities to follow up with subsequent interviews. These types of interviews were often of great value in the intermediate stages of the ethnographic process, as they were exceptionally helpful for identifying meanings within the culture (Gobo, 2008).

Aside from these informal and unstructured ethnographic interviews, formal semi-structured interviews served to refine and develop the analytical themes which emerged during the ongoing participant observation. Participants for these interviews represented a diverse sampling of British American football participants. These ranged from rookies to veteran players and included some key members of the coaching staff and the administration, as well. Interviews were scheduled in advance, either by personally approaching a candidate at practice or by email. Interviewees were reminded of the purpose of the interview, were asked permission for the interview to be recorded, and were asked to sign a confidentiality form.[5] I collected 22 formal interviews during my time in the field, and each of these lasted anywhere from 10 to 60 minutes, depending upon the individual circumstances. Most interviews were conducted at the London Bombers' home ground; however, a few were conducted on bus journeys to away games. The primary focus of these interviews was to refine and develop analytical themes which emerged in the study. The participant observation and informal interviews, therefore, provided the background for the content of these interviews. Setting up these formal interviews also took into account many of the pitfalls surrounding ethnographic interviews, such as the inability of the human memory to record all the details of the conversation, the time constraints often placed upon them, and the potential for the interviewee to misinterpret the objectives of the conversation.

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[5] See Appendix 4 & 5 for sample interview questions and confidentiality form

Narrative Analysis and Ethnography

As was mentioned briefly in the literature review section, American football itself can be thought of as a narrative. Oriard (1993) supports this by saying that American football tells a story, and that ultimately it is this ability which gives the sport its cultural power. However, he also emphasized that this story is read differently by different groups and individuals, and that these different interpretations can change over time. Therefore, meaning resides not simply in texts, but in the negotiations between texts and the readers. While Walter Camp and his colleagues may have given American football its initial narrative structure, it was the media who taught the American public how to interpret the game as a cultural text. "Rule makers made rules, which rewarded certain strategies, which were interpreted by storytelling sportswriters according to available paradigms, with the purpose of entertaining a huge audience of readers" (Oriard, 1993, p.119). All of the media resources have combined with personal experience over the years to give individuals their own personalized experience and their own unique relationship with the sport.

> The very experience of playing the game is determined to a considerable degree by the narratives through which boys and young men consciously and unconsciously learn to read its meanings. Boys today learn what football means through television, magazines, newspapers, and books; they learn from parents and peers, coaches and teachers, relatives and friends and strangers, all of whom in turn have learned from a similar range of possible sources. Actually playing the game can alter their understanding, these revisions then contributing to the available interpretations of the cultural text. Yet these 'available interpretations' must also confront the individual's own experiences (Oriard, 1993, p.xxii).

When we speak of American football in the global context, however, we must consider an added dimension to the decoding process, that which Bigsby (1975) called a 'sea change'. Different cultures will interpret culturally specific sports differently than they are interpreted in their country of origin. American football has important traditions, for example, which may not directly translate into the British culture (the ties between the sport and the Thanksgiving holiday

being one example). Therefore, when discussing American football in Britain, one must take into account how the British are exposed to, negotiate, and interpret different narratives about American football. How do British American football players place themselves within the sport's cultural space; what is their story? Being faced with this question, I decided that the best way to explain my ethnographic experience with the British American football culture was to also use a version of narrative analysis.

Narrative analysis can be broadly understood as the search for and the analysis of the stories that people employ to understand their lives and the world around them. It is the way subjects organize and make connections between events, and then make sense of those events, which provide the raw material most important in narrative analysis. In narrative analysis, emphasis shifts from 'what actually happened' to 'how do people make sense of what happened' (Bryman, 2004). In conjunction with ethnography, Cortazzi makes the following statement:

> Therefore, a careful analysis of the topics, content, style, context and telling of narratives told by individuals or groups under ethnographic study should, in principle, give researchers access to tellers' understandings of the meanings of key events in their lives, communities or cultural texts (Cortazzi, 2001, p.384).

Every narrative is a version of what actually happened in that a subject gives their perspective of the meaning, relevance, and importance of the culture of which they are a part. Importantly, narratives share 'the meaning of experience' (Cortazzi, 2001). In recounting events, subjects directly or indirectly give their own interpretations and explanations of the events. Simply, it gives a particular group of people a voice to share their experiences.

The telling of narratives can have a role in identity formation; through the telling and repeating of stories, groups and individuals can make sense of themselves. In the form of field notes or interview transcripts, narratives cannot speak for themselves; they require interpretation by the researcher. In this interpretation, narrative analysis can include not only a story, but the explanation of emerging themes. Polkinghorne (1995) described different types of narrative inquiry, including the one I have chosen to use in this thesis, paradigmatic analysis of narrative. This form allows themes and concepts to

emerge out of the stories collected from the field. As my coded field notes were essentially a story retold by me about the 2009 British American football season, this form allowed me to inductively analyze my data while still embracing the importance of re-telling the narrative.

During the course of this ethnographic study, I took on the role of an interpreter of the narratives which surrounded and were produced by the British American football team. As a researcher, I not only listened to the narratives being told to me, but I have also constructed my own narrative about the people and the culture in which I became submerged. I have chosen to describe specific events which took place throughout the season as part of my following chapters. In conjunction with this, I have used paradigmatic analysis of these narratives to also discuss the themes which emerged out of my interpretations. This is the basis of the following chapters, as using this method allowed me to help tell a story about the British American football culture from the perspective of a group of individuals on one team over the course of one season[6], and to explain some of the issues surrounding the sport's globalization to Britain in general.

Theoretical and Methodological Criticisms

Critiques of the dominant theoretical position behind this research come from opposing positions which take a social system approach, or maintain a view that some aspects of social reality are unproblematic in terms of meaning and may be directly understood, or believe that it is possible to discover standard laws that govern human behavior (Donnelly, 2000). It focuses attention almost exclusively on relationships and personal definitions of reality, and, because of this, much of the research done in this style neglects issues of power and power relations in society as a whole (Coakley, 2003).

Methodological critiques overlap with the theoretical ones, but are most often aimed at the quality of data produced. No 'scientific method' is used in an ethnographic approach to data collection; therefore, researchers can be accused of subjectivity, 'going native', and of producing unreplicable results.

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[6] A narrative about the 2009 London Bombers' season is located in Appendix 2.

In order to combat these points, interactionists insist that research in the social sciences must be reflexive. As Giddens points out: "We cannot approach society, or 'social facts', as we do objects or events in the natural world, because societies only exist in so far as they are created and re-created in our own actions as human beings…" (Giddens, 1982, p.13). Therefore, those undertaking ethnographic research are expected to deal with these issues in an open and reflexive manner in order to disclose their potential biases and influences.

Ethnography's main weakness is that its empirical bases are difficult to verify and that the information it collects can be easily manipulated (Gobo, 2008). The dominant question in ethnography is that of what degree of correspondence can exist between an ethnographer's interpretation and the phenomenon observed? Since an interactionist's position pushes aside the notion that there exists an objective reality outside of the observer, the legitimacy of the ethnographer's work must, therefore, not be based upon finding the truth, but that the researcher has credibility in relation to their conclusions. Even with qualitative methods, the research must have reliability and validity.

Limitations of ethnography as a methodology relate to the need for an evaluative criterion for quality amongst studies. This would include trustworthiness, credibility, and confirmability, all of which present problems to the legitimacy of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Often qualitative researchers rely on trustworthiness to accurately portray a project. Trustworthiness incorporates the subjective nature of qualitative research into its evaluation, yet provides support for the quality of one's data collection and analysis (Sparkes, 2002). It is suggested that approaches such as triangulation and member checks be used to authenticate findings.

Another issue to contend with is that the ethnographer does not approach the study completely unbiased. He or she brings their own personal histories, conceptual dispositions, and epistemological perceptions. Researchers socially construct the data they collect, and, thus, the researcher can never fully be separated from the data collected, and this influence must be considered. Thus, reflexivity should be used to address this issue. "Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as

instrument'" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.183). This process simply forces the researcher to be aware of how they may affect the course of the research. By disclosing epistemological and theoretical perspectives, personal descriptions (race, age, gender, etc.), and relationships with the participants, the work produced can be better judged.

I believe that I have potentially affected my data in a number of ways. First off, I was a woman researching a dominantly male sport. I had the company of two fellow female medical staff volunteers, which made my presence less significant, but we were still 'outsiders' in a male dominated society. Secondly, I have never played American football. I have spent countless hours on the sidelines, in medical rooms or on team buses, playing flag football in the park, and watching the sport on television; however, I have never put on the pads and participated in the way the athletes I was researching have. Finally, I was an American researching an American sport in Britain. I have been involved with American football for a number of years, both in America and in Britain, and a fan of the sport my entire life. Therefore, before entering into this research, I had many preconceived opinions about the sport in general. While my sociological and historical knowledge was limited before beginning my research, having these lifelong associations with the sport brought some level of inerasable bias.[7]

All of these issues - fair representation, impact of the research on participants, aesthetic appeal, reflexivity, and ethics - emerge as areas of concern when conducting and publishing ethnographic research. However, there is no one standard technique for supporting the 'goodness' of an ethnographic study. There is not a single criterion for trustworthy and credible data within this type of research. The most appropriate strategies seem to be those which are consistent with the epistemological perspectives of the researcher, and, therefore, are judged based on the criterion related to that specific epistemological perspective.

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[7] I will engage in further reflexive analysis within the conclusion of this thesis.

Conclusion

The methodology I have chosen reinforces an interactionist approach to the study of sports sociology. I have utilized this epistemological position because of its ability to allow me to focus on the individual athletes and their own personal sporting identities in relation to being a part of the London Bombers American football club. These identities collectively have given me an overview as to what qualities drive British athletes to adopt and then adapt American football to fit into the British sports space. By focusing on this micro-level, I am differentiating my research from that of previous academics who have focused on the globalization of American football from a more macro-level perspective.

The following chapters will give a detailed narrative and analysis of the data I collected over one season with the London Bombers. I have outlined here the methodology by which I have collected, analyzed, and interpreted this data. What I aim to create through the chapters that follow is both a story about the London Bombers as an organization, a team, a collection of individuals, and a promoter of British American football, as well as an analysis of the current condition of British American football as a recently imported sport. I have integrated excerpts of my field notes alongside quotations from interviews and analysis of the culture. I wanted all of these aspects of my methodology to be present in the final presentation of my research because the journey I took gave my project its originality.

Chapter 5 – British American Football as a Distinctive Sport within the British Sports Space

Bourdieu (1988) stated that a sport's intrinsic definition was subject to elasticity and thus could change its meaning depending upon the social situation in which it was placed. This is precisely what has happened with British American football; while its external characteristics may have remained identical to that of American football in the United States, the social field which it occupied in Britain gave it a different meaning. Mead (1934) argued that in order to form one identity there needs to be an 'Other' to which comparisons can be made. The American variety of American football, as well as the British sports of association football and rugby football, were the most prominent 'Others' by which most comparisons were made when defining the British variety of American football. Understanding these relationships was important in discovering British American football's own unique identity as a *British* sport.

British American Football as a Distinctive Sport

In the United States, American football has been closely associated with many of the values of American society as a whole (Gems, 2000; Paolantonio, 2008). Support for this was shown through just how much professional American football athletes were paid; in 2004 Falk (2005) stated that the average NFL player earned $1,164,000. Williams (1970) identified individualism, achievement, activity, work, material comfort, and efficiency as the core values of American society, and American football is said to reinforce all of these. During my participant observation of the London Bombers, I encountered these 'American' characteristics still embedded within British American football. In fact, the presence of some of these 'American' characteristics was precisely the reason behind the athlete's decision to adopt the sport over other more traditional British pastimes. However, I also encountered other characteristics which gave the sport a distinctively British feel. It was the combination of both these sets of national characteristics which

made British American football an interesting case to study in terms of the impact of globalization on sport and national identity.

Bourdieu's theory of distinction (1984) examined the aesthetic preferences of different groups in society. The social field which encompassed British American football consisted of "the socially pertinent properties that make for an affinity between a given sport and the interests, tastes, and preferences of a definite social category" (Bourdieu, 1988). Taste serves to unify those with similar preferences and to differentiate those with different tastes. Therefore, through the practical application of taste, people classify pastimes and thereby, in the process, classify themselves (Ritzer, 2008). I have already stated that the American version of American football should be considered as the 'Other', alongside British sports such as association football and rugby football, which are also influential in the development of the British American football field. Therefore, an athlete who chose to play American football was differentiating himself from someone who played an alternative sport, such as association football or rugby football. This distinction was traceable all the way back to the earliest rules changes in American football which deliberately made the sport emphasize the qualities of teamwork, science, and machine-like efficiency, all of which separated American football from its English sporting heritage.

While distinction may have played its part throughout the sport's history in both the United States and in the hype surrounding British American football during its first wave of popularity in the UK, it also continued to play a role in the present day British American football culture. One player, Don, who decided to take up the sport in university, had this say: "For me, it was about experiencing something new and different. I played a lot of sports, a lot of rugby and a lot of [association] football, and it got to the stage where I was tired of that and wanted something new". Forrest, who also took up the sport in university, said:

> I went originally to sign up for rugby and then after doing so, I didn't get a good vibe from them. I didn't think they were the kinds of people I wanted to spend time with. I still wanted to play a sport and I got picked out of the crowd by the American football lot… I thought it would be fun to try out and trying new things was a big part of it.

These two quotations are an illustration of the distinction present within the culture of British American football. The benefits of participation in a distinctive sport vary based upon the expected capital which an individual values (Bourdieu, 1984). In this case, participation in British American football demonstrated a dislike for the physical, cultural, symbolic, and social capital often associated with other sports clubs as a prominent reason for initially choosing British American football as a sporting pastime.

This chapter, and the one which follows, will highlight some of the characteristics of British American football which emerged from my data collection and which the participants emphasized as the driving forces behind their decision to play British American football. I emphasize that these characteristics possess an overarching theme which runs through them; that of distinction. This distinction exists between British American football and the British sporting landscape because the sport provides athletes with an alternative to the mainstream sports they are exposed to on a daily basis. Distinction was also prevalent when comparisons were made to the American version of American football. In short, I determined that many of the 'internal' British sporting characteristics were intermingled with the historically 'external' American ones to form a distinctively hybrid British version of American football.

Pairing the Mental and the Physical

Camp was a yearly tradition which allowed the team to leave London and travel together to an isolated location where they could concentrate solely on the sport and preparations for the upcoming season. I believed it was important for me to attend this three-day camp because it would place me within an intense and data rich environment. The individuals who attended this camp confirmed their dedication to the team and to the sport. It was also within this camp environment that I began to document the two distinct component parts to American football, the mental and the physical. The following excerpt was compiled through field note entries written during camp:

I arrived at my first London Bombers camp early on a Friday evening.

The committee members were collecting money and handing out

schedules while players were rushing around the rented school trying to find the best rooms. This training camp is held every year in April, and its purpose is to provide an intensive and contained environment for the team to immerse themselves in American football and each other. I calculated that the team spent six and a half hours in meetings, and eleven and a half hours on the field training over the course of the weekend. Each training session began by congregating in the recreational room of the school where, even though the team had only been occupying the school for a few hours, the distinctive smell of grass and sweat filled the entire room as American football pads were being placed on bodies. The atmosphere was one of excitement mixed with exhaustion, as the men looked forward to training hard and improving their skills; but their bodies slowly began to fail them as they pushed through the hours of grueling practice. Positional meetings gave players the chance to physically relax, while they exercised their minds by reviewing film and discussing playbook formations. This sequence of on-field practice and off-field meetings continued throughout the weekend until it was made clear to everyone that American football is both a physical and a mental sport. That, in order to succeed in this game, players must not only spend time honing their skills on the field, but they must also take the time to study their positions off the field as well. (Field notes, 3/11/09-5/11/09)

These next two sections which follow will concentrate on illuminating the two most distinctive component parts of American football, as they were recognized from the perspective of the individual British athletes on the London Bombers team.

American football is a sport which is often compared to war because both the military and an American football team invoke physical dominance and mental strategy in order to defeat an opponent (Oriard, 1993). Early on in American football's history the game was thought to produce tough, disciplined men who were trained in the strategic tactics necessary for conquest. It became an alternative training ground for restoring masculinity and aggressiveness, and thus helped to define national characteristics. This emphasis on physical prowess defined manhood during American football's initial development as it

provided men the opportunity for public acts of bravado with less chance of death than actual combat (Gems, 2000). Even the terminology of American football grew to reflect its close association with the armed forces. Quarterbacks throw 'bombs'; linebackers 'blitz'; and linemen fight it out 'in the trenches'. As was discussed earlier, it was through international military bases that American football first penetrated the UK sporting market and eventually trickled down into the British domestic competition which was the focus of this research.

Bourdieu (1984) argued that various forms of capital are employed, depending upon the specificity of a field. Two of these forms of capital make American football both a unique parallel to militarism and also a distinctive sport in Britain. This is the combination of both the mental and physical capitals associated with the sport. Marcus, a defensive player who got involved in British American football at university, summarized the unique blend of both the physical and mental components of the sport which drew him to the sport: "To put it bluntly, the violent nature of the sport, the practical prowess, the fact that it requires a great blend of skills. To be able to play competitively you need a variety of skills. It focuses you and you don't get that blend in any other sport". A rookie player, Chad, an Australian studying Law in London, described it to me this way: "American football has an element of mental aptitude and mental strength. There is a lot more forethought and a lot more to learn. It's the kind of game that you can always keep building and you are always learning". Wacquant (1992) also discussed the importance of the combination of the mental and the physical in relation to creating a pugilist habitus in boxing. While these two sports rely on different relationships between mental and physical computation, they both define themselves on this symbiosis. Stereotypically, American football conjures up images of men engaging in physical battles; however, it is the much overlooked mental aspect on which I want to first focus.

British American Football as a Mental Game

The importance of mental strategy was often an undervalued aspect of the British American football field. In order to adopt the identity of a British American football player, an athlete must consider the value of this mental component as part of the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) associated with the sport. In fact, Walter Camp, one of the earliest developers of the game of American football, always placed the intellectual side of American football above its physical requirements. He believed that brains would win out over brawn, and that it was the mastery of strategy and command that would characterize the sport. While the physical side of the sport may be the most prominent upon first glance, those who know the sport understand that it is still the mental component which is the most central.

I first want to emphasize the importance of coaching and hierarchy on a British American football team. Many American supporters of the game see the head coach as the central figure on any team. The following excerpt was taken from my field notes which were written on the first day of practice:

> My first impression of the head coach of the London Bombers was that he was a quiet, intense man with a deep commitment to his role within the team. He was courteous during our introduction and reassured me that he was happy to have me join the team, and that he was available to talk to at any time. After this brief introduction, he continued on with his coaching duties, which included setting up the field and organizing equipment for the first practice of the season. (Field Notes, 1/2/09)

The head coach's role within this team is important to mention because players are taught to perform the plays called by the head coach with very little improvisation. The importance of the coach developed because individual effort was ineffective within the game. Teamwork was what was necessary to become successful within the confines of the developing American football culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In relation to European sports, however, this American emphasis on the coach was peculiar because games were orchestrated almost entirely from the sideline (Oriard, 1993). In British American football, the teams retained the importance of the coach by imitating these roles and requiring strict coaching qualifications. This emphasized the existence of a specific type of competence and respect for authority within the

social field of British American football. Within the London Bombers organization there was an acceptance of a meticulous hierarchy which existed between the coaches and the players. This American football hierarchy embraced the necessity of relinquishing all play calling and decision making to the sideline, a concept which was foreign to many of the more familiar British sports. Bourdieu (1977) argued that social agents do not arrive at a field fully knowledgeable about its customs, but that they learn through experience. He called this acquiring a 'feel for the game'. To develop a British American football identity within their own personal habitus, then, an athlete had to learn not only to rely on their own 'feel for the game', but also their coaches' 'feel for the game'. This excerpt demonstrates how coach Andy took command of the team by not only providing them with a physical game plan for winning, but also with emotional support as the team was about to participate in the biggest game of the season, the British national championship:

> Head coach Andy completed each practice with a motivational speech about what next faced the team. We all formed a circle around him, some kneeling with one arm resting on their helmet, while others stood behind them. It was our last practice before the Britbowl and everyone was staring at Coach Andy, as if asking for him to say something that would reassure them that they deserved to win this game on Sunday. He started off by reminding the team of last year's defeat in the final minutes of play and how it felt to sit on that long bus journey home afterwards. He congratulated them on their undefeated season so far, but emphasized that this was the game that really counted, the one that they had all been working towards since last year. He thanked the other coaches for all of their hard work and told the players that these men had done everything in their power to teach them how to play this game; that they now had all of the tools necessary to go out there and win a national championship. He ended by saying that he had complete confidence in the skills this team possessed, and he promised that if each and every one of the men on that field played their absolute best, we would walk away from that stadium as British national champions. (Field notes, 24/9//09)

Coaches need to not only devise and control the strategic side of the game, they are also often times the people who motivate the team. The head coach was the patriarchal figure of the organization, someone who was expected to be both a teacher and a clinician. The coaching team which surrounds him was also responsible for instilling hard work and discipline in their players. They served to gather intelligence about the opposition and spent countless hours devising practice schedules and game plans. The mental component really started 'at the top' with the coaches. Going back to the camp example, the head coach had devised a timetable for the weekend which sequentially laid out the entire schedule. It depicted, in ten minute intervals, just what each unit should be doing. He was also responsible for making sure this timetable was known and followed by the rest of the staff and players. The entire weekend was regimented in this way in order to instill discipline into the team and to make sure everything was accomplished.

After the three day training camp experience, it was clear that this unique American football hierarchy structure, and the regiment of discipline which complimented it, was the epicenter of the strategic personality of the London Bombers. My observations into further understanding how this mental component of the sport was important to the social field of British American football became concentrated on two interrelated components; playbooks and film. The players hit a milestone in their quest for a 'feel for the game' during camp, but this process continued through intensive exposure to the playbooks and film analysis throughout the season. Both of these elements were coordinated by the coaches and were utilized for the quantitative breakdown of the sport. The coaching staff had the job of determining their team's overall strategy, which consisted of all of their offensive, defensive, and special teams' schemes. They drew up detailed plays and plans which determined how the team would approach specific game scenarios. In doing this, they drew on as much information as possible about themselves and their opponents, which was where the use of film came into play. Therefore, the London Bombers actually spent far more time preparing for their sport than actually engaging in it.

As I made my way towards my room with the other members of the medical staff, I passed one of the meeting rooms where all of the coaches were sitting around a large projector screen. They all had a

pen in hand and their playbook in front of them. It looked like I had walked in on a college lecture, the way these men were studying the screen in front of them and then engaging in a debate over how to interpret the play they just saw. (Field Notes, 4/11/09)

This excerpt was another example of how important mental preparation was for the coaching staff. This dedication to the mental preparation was then passed down to the players by giving them copies of the playbook and requiring them to learn the plays and prepare for practices, as any student would be expected to do in any given classroom scenario.

Playbooks were constructed according to each coach's philosophy and then tailored to the team's strengths and weaknesses. The London Bombers, like most, had three different playbooks, one for each facet of the game; offense, defense, and special teams. Each of these playbooks began with a general explanation of the types of formations the team would run, and was then followed up by descriptions and detailed drawings of all of the plays, adjustments, and signals. Each relevant player received a copy of their unit's playbook and was expected to learn their positional assignments in preparation for practices where they could be finessed. Playbooks were also constantly edited and added to over the course of the season, as the team adapted to the circumstances they encountered. While other sports do require off-field preparation, British American football was unique in requiring this level of academic preparation. Participants recognized this investment of time as necessary in order to develop the requisite cultural capital for the sport. As Don, a graduate student in philosophy, whose American grandparents first introduced him to the sport, pointed out to me: "It's not a sport you can pick up quickly, so you have to invest".

Film and film analysis took the planning component of the cultural capital associated with British American football one step further, and it was also another example of where the sport paralleled military tactics. It was customary to gather intelligence on your own team by filming some aspects of practice and all games in order for the footage to be viewed, broken down, and studied by the coaches and then passed along to the players. It was also customary in the British American football league to share this footage with other teams so that everyone was on a level playing field. This film, therefore, not only allowed the

coaches to dissect their own performances, but those of their opponents. Of course, some tactics were always concealed and never shared; most important were the signals used to communicate formations and plays from the coaches on the sideline to the players on the field.

The importance of, and subsequent abuse of, filming reached the headlines in the broader American football world when the New England Patriots were accused of filming the New York Jets' sideline in an attempt to steal play calls. Espionage is an acknowledged and time-honored tradition in the National Football League, but this directly violated NFL rules about gathering intelligence. Roger Goodell, the commissioner of the NFL, described the incident as "a calculated and deliberate attempt to avoid longstanding rules designed to encourage fair play and promote honest competition on the playing field" (Goodell quoted in Paolantonio 2008, p.110). This event portrayed not only the fine line which exists between the gathering of intelligence and cheating by spying, but also just how important pre-game preparation is. The British American football leagues obviously did not have the same resources available to them as the NFL teams, but they still relied on film to prepare for their season.

I became personally involved in this aspect of the team's preparation as I took on the role of game day videographer. I, therefore, not only observed this aspect of the game, but was an active participant in it:

> We were away at Bristol, and I was instructed to film the game from atop a scaffold and wood tower construction which had been erected by members of our staff. As I climbed to the top of the constructed tower, I was reminded by our offensive coordinator what they expected of the film. They wanted to capture as much of the field as possible in each frame in order to see the formations of players on both sides of the ball. I was to begin recording as the teams left their respective huddles and pause after the officials whistled the play dead. The coach made sure to thank me and emphasized the importance of the film for analysis one last time, before I was left sitting on a piece of wood in the cold wind for the next three hours. I now had another important role on the team, one that brought me a step closer to being considered a part of the Bombers family. (Field notes, 3/5/09)

While my role was confined to the games themselves, the coaches would then spend hours every week going through footage in order to plan practices and prepare for upcoming games. The more time spent on understanding opponents, the greater the chance they had of giving their own team an edge on game day. They would also format and copy each game onto personal DVD's for each of the players, so that they could spend time reviewing their own performance. Outsiders may view all of this scouting and analysis as just cheating called by another name; maybe so, but it has become a large facet of the game and one which certainly makes it distinctive within the British sports space.

What the individuals on this team demonstrated to me was that they were aware of the importance of being mentally prepared to take the field each week; that, in order to become proficient and successful at American football, each individual had to be committed to the sport and to the team, not just during physical practices, but also in their spare time in their personal lives. This is significant in the characterizing of British American football because this acceptance of the sport's mental components makes those who play British American football active participants in defining what the sport is within the British sports space. They recognize it and define it as a sport which requires mental strategy and the acceptance of a pre-determined hierarchy. While these two qualities alone do not set British American football apart from other available British sports, it is the combination of these qualities with the traits I continue to discuss next in this chapter which gives the sport its distinction within the British sports space.

British American Football as a Physical Game

Of course, we cannot neglect the physical capital involved in the sport as it, too, played a significant role in the defining of the British American football field. The importance of masculinity, specifically, was crucial when discussing high contact sports such as British American football. While masculinity is contextually bound and assumes different meanings in different cultures, one specific type of masculinity was important in this context; hegemonic masculinity. This type of masculinity was the Western idealized form of

masculinity in which men were associated with power and authority (Connell, 1990). Those that possessed this type of masculinity were aware of the significance of their bodies as both a personal resource and as a social symbol (Swain, 2006). Shilling (1991) draws on the work of Bourdieu (1984) to argue that the body can be viewed as having 'physical capital,' which means that the body is recognized to have certain values in particular social settings. Male athletes often construct part of their identity by 'tuning' their bodies to fit in with the hegemonic masculinity, in order to work their way up the male hierarchy. Often times, highly aggressive sports, such as American football, feel safer for men because psychologically they provide clear-cut boundaries within which they can interact with other men (Messner, 1992).

Bob, the team chairman, who first became interested in American football while serving in the Navy, acknowledged the importance of physical capital in the game: "This to me is the ultimate in collision sport; I wouldn't even call it contact sport, it is collision sport and that appealed to me… There just wasn't another sport with this level of intensity that I could have played". In almost every interview, players and coaches both described enjoying the physical side of the sport as a main reason why they played British American football. The most commonly used words to describe the physical aspect of the sport were 'physical violence', 'brutality', and 'hitting'. Albert, still a university student, summarized it simply as: "Hitting people, it's very physical". Unlike its brother sport, rugby football, all eleven players on the field came into contact with opposing players on every single play. A former rugby player, Forrest, had this to say on the subject:

> What I found more than in rugby was that a player didn't have to be on the ball to get hit. It doesn't matter if the play is anywhere near you, you can still be a big element to the game play… I was a big hitter in rugby, but I would only get a dozen hits a game, whereas in American football, I hit every single play at least once.

The excerpt from my field notes also reinforces how important the physical contact was for these athletes:

> The men on the field never get more excited or hyped up than when they must go one-on-one with an opponent in a tackling drill. This type of drill requires each man to physically exert himself 100% in

order to overpower a teammate in friendly, but fierce competition. Those standing around watching the spectacle are all just as involved with the drill, as they are cheering on their brothers to give everything they've got to these few seconds. The importance of demonstrating their masculine physical prowess is never more prominent than during these moments of practice. (Field Notes, 24/5/09)

However, in reference to the physical capital involved in British American football, others described enjoying the 'training' aspect and the 'gaining of muscle mass' that came with playing the sport. This process enabled the players to develop the requisite 'bodily hexis' for the sport. Bourdieu (1977) defined this 'bodily hexis' as a practical way of experiencing and expressing a person's own sense of social value. Wacquant (1992) also discussed this physical duality in regards to the habitus of inner city boxers. Physical to the London Bombers was not just about violent contact with another human being; it was about strength, disciplining the body, and creating a work ethic. For example, James, another university student studying architecture, said: "I joined the American football team because it gave me good training and it gave me a work ethic while I was studying at university". American football techniques were taught and mastered by breaking them down into their component parts and then repeating them constantly. This next excerpt was from one of the earlier practices I observed with the team. It describes a tackling drill which was done at the beginning of practice for almost two months, in order to ensure that the members of the team were tackling with the correct form:

This was the third practice which began with a tackling drill. The coaches were once again devoting most of their time to the rookies, but the veteran players were also improving themselves by revisiting basic techniques and working their way back into the physical requirements of the British American football season. (Field Notes, 15/2/09)

The hope was that eventually players would develop a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1977) and be able to perform them instinctively and proficiently under the duress and severe pressure of a game situation.

A reliance on physical strength and proper physical technique implied both a dedication to individual and team training. Team practices were held for

four hours every Sunday afternoon and for two hours every Thursday evening. These were usually held in full pads and were scripted by the head coach during the prior week. Team practices focused mostly on play installation, individual positional drills, one-on-one match-ups, and scrimmages. The team also held conditioning sessions on Tuesday evenings where the focus was on footwork, ball handling skills, and sprint training. Aside from these team based activities, many players were also dedicated gym members where they trained to increase strength, especially explosive strength, and to increase their cardiovascular endurance. Reggie, who had never played a team sport before joining the London Bombers, said this about the commitment to training in British American football: "I found something special, something that is all about focus and training…" Another rookie player, Ray, who was actually one of the oldest players on the team, said: "From a training perspective it is hard, hard work… It is probably one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, but I really like the hard work".

The individual athletes who made up the London Bombers all had a desire to participate in a sport which required them to physically exert themselves both in terms of aerobic fitness and body-to-body contact. The mental component which I discussed previously is combined with this physical need to define the sport of American football. In Britain, this necessary combination was continually recognized and desired by these athletes. They strongly believed that British American football provided them with a mental and physical combination that no other sport could. Returning once more to the camp example, the culmination of that weekend was an inter-team scrimmage, offense vs. defense. This scrimmage would be talked about for the rest of the season as the best moment of the pre-season for many reasons, but mostly for its mental and physical intensity:

> The scrimmage was set-up just like a game, with coaches and players on opposite sidelines and coaches calling plays from those sidelines. A score was kept based upon a points system tailored for each unit, which gave both teams an incentive to play hard. I sat atop the scaffold tower and watched as all aspects of that weekend, both physical and mental, were put together in a game-like scenario. Everyone, players, coaches and support staff, seemed to feed off that

combination as the game came alive on that afternoon. It didn't matter that they had already spent two days practicing American football; their competitive spirit drove them to put whatever they had left into this scrimmage. It was so competitive, in fact, that the winning play came on the last play of the scrimmage. A defensive back intercepted a throw and ran the ball back, making the defense winners of the 2009 camp scrimmage. The London Bombers really came alive to me during this half an hour on a grassy field in Essex. They loved this game and relished the opportunity to finally play it at the intensity it should be played, after a long off-season and pre-season. (Field notes, 5/4/09)

Reggie again emphasized his admiration for the sport and of being a part of the London Bombers team by commenting about his experience at camp: "Camp was probably the best experience of my life. I actually cried a little on the way home because I had never experienced anything like it…" This entire camp weekend, but in particular the scrimmage, demonstrated that it was the putting together of the component parts, both mental and physical, which made British American football such a distinctive game within the British sports space. It was the combination of Bourdieu's (1984) cultural and physical capitals found within British American football that sharply differentiated it from other British sports the players may have encountered previously and give it its distinction.

Diversity in British American Football

It was not just the presence of mental strategy combined with physical prowess which made British American football a distinctive sport amongst its British sporting rivals; it was also the requirement to have men with diverse skill sets. The cultural and physical capital which these athletes possessed was not congruent throughout the team and across positions. This was because British American football required a distinctive combination of athletic talents in order to exist. This excerpt was taken from the end of my ethnographic data collection period with the London Bombers, but at the beginning of their preparation for the 2010 season. Rookie sessions are held during the off-season to allow anyone interested in the sport of American football to come out and

give the sport a try. This was the most prominent example of how diverse the potential athletic pool was for the sport. These rookie sessions attracted men of all disciplines, sizes, and athletic ability:

On a cold winter Sunday, a group of men gather in a North London park to experience their first taste of British American football. The primary purpose of these sessions is to allow potential players the opportunity to experience British American football before the start of the regular season. Most have only ever seen the game being played on television or spent time playing *Madden* on their video game consoles. Either way, these potential new recruits arrive to the field expecting to learn about the game of American football and about the London Bombers. The first thing that strikes me is the contrast between the rookies and the veteran players; you can tell immediately who is a Bomber and who is not yet. The veteran players are dressed in Bombers gear and *Under Armour*, while they casually throw a football around on the practice field and engage in friendly banter with one another. The rookies, on the other hand, are relatively quiet, looking nervous and uncomfortable in their rugby shorts and varied sporting t-shirts. Upon closer observation of this group, what strikes me most prominently is the diversity of athletes present; they are of varying heights and weights, and of varying athletic experiences. This variation in physical size is common in American football because it is designed to cater to a diverse set of men. I can already see and hear the veteran players and coaches 'sizing up' the new talent based upon their body shape alone. But, that is natural in American football; these athletes have yet to touch a football and they are already falling into predetermined positions based upon physical appearance alone. The remainder of the practice is spent putting these new recruits through a series of drills which will further divide them based upon natural ability and skill. Groups of about 15 athletes rotate through three different stations, each of which focuses on a specific set of American football skills. One group works on offensive and defensive line work, another on tackling, and a third on catching and running routes. The head coach floats in between the groups, carefully observing the

potential new recruits, while veteran players attempt to help out by correcting their form and giving them tips. This goes on for almost two hours and at the end of the afternoon, the rookies have had their first taste of what British American football is all about. Many will decide that they do not want to commit to the team for varying reasons, but a few will fall in love with the sport and dedicate themselves to spending the next 10 months with the Bombers. (Field notes, 8/11/09)

When I observed these sessions, what struck me most was the diversity of athletes who turned up. I had become accustomed to those men who already made up our team, but this influx of new individuals refreshed my appreciation of how the British American football community was made up of multiple types of athletes. While the term diversity is often associated with racial or ethnic differences present within a social field, diversity in this context refers to the varying types of personalities and the different physical statures of the individuals on the team. My use of the word 'diverse' specifically refers to the unique demand for variety in terms of physicality and athletic skill on a British American football team. Originally, American football players had to be masters of many talents; they had to kick, catch, throw, run, and tackle. As the game evolved, however, specific positions developed which demanded that athletes only needed to master one or two of these skills. London Bombers rookie sessions emphasized this opportunity for anyone to give the sport a try, and that if a person was willing to dedicate their time to the sport, they could find a position to suit them.

This level of diversity within a social field was a unique characteristic of British American football which attracted many of the athletes. Coach Jerry found that his physical capital acquired new value when he discovered British American football because, as a child, he had played association football and always felt out of place as a 'fat kid'. He realized that his size could actually be used as an asset and now tries to pass this ideology along to other young athletes:

It's like, whatever shape or size, there is somewhere you can put them. In soccer, for example, you sort of have to be that six foot, 170 pound guy... All other sports tend to have a specific look to them. In

American football, you can pretty much grab someone and they can do something; at least they can have a go at something.

A second coach, Coach Jim, a special needs teacher, also found that British American football's openness to a diverse set of physical types was an attractive feature of the game:

Everyone has a role on the field; it doesn't matter what your size is or what your speed is, it doesn't matter how smart you are, or your mentality. In [association] football, they all look the same; they are all built the same. Whereas in American football, we've got linemen that are 280 going up against defensive backs who are 175 and that's a great thing about [American] football.

Players often referred to the physical diversity of athletes, but also occasionally they referred to diversity on the team in terms of the social backgrounds of the members. They conceded that if it had not been for the London Bombers, they would not have had the chance to meet these other people, as they all have different backgrounds and interests outside of the British American football community. Reggie, a rookie player in 2009 and a freelance artist, was initially attracted to the Bombers and the sport because he was able to meet people with varying types of both physical and social capital: "There are so many different opportunities for an athlete; from D-line to wide receiver… People will be totally different here, and there are more characters. I like that there are more chances to meet different people". These players and coaches encountered British American Football as what Bourdieu (1984) described as a 'distinctive social field' and welcomed the necessity for a range of personalities and body types. Forrest, who started to play in university because he didn't like the culture associated with the rugby team at his school, also tried to emphasize to people outside of the British American football culture that it was a game for all sorts of people to become involved. He tried to break through the typical British American football stereotype by telling people about its need for diverse physical and social capital: "I want to emphasize the point that anyone can get into it, and it's not just for the bigger more built players; every attribute can be put towards the sport".

It can be said that the field of British American football, therefore, requires not just a concentration of people, but a concentration of a diverse set

of people with varying degrees of physical and social capital. It also involves a strict division of labor where each position demands a unique set of skills. As early as 1887, Walter Camp viewed English rugby as chaotic and wanted his rules changes to bring about order to the sport. He wanted athletes on the American football field to have a purpose; he wanted a rationalized, bureaucratic, and specialized corporate work force (Oriard, 1993). Certainly, the modern game of American football demands a strict division of labor. Within these rookie sessions, each and every new athlete was able to experience how inclusive British American football was. That there is no one 'type' of British American football athlete and that, in fact, the game demands multiple 'types' of athletes. The players had yet to experience this degree of inclusiveness with other British sports in regards to the necessity for a variety of physical and social capitals, hence the distinctive appeal of British American football.

We are Family: Camaraderie and British American Football

The final British American football characteristic which I will describe in this chapter is that of camaraderie. I start off with an excerpt from my field notes which describes my favorite pre-game ritual. This ritual symbolizes the unique bond these men had to one another, to their team, and to their sport:

> My favorite part of the Bombers pre-game ritual is seeing a line of sixty British American football players all dressed in white and blue awaiting the coin toss. In front of them are four of their compatriots, also standing shoulder to shoulder. The referee blows his whistle and motions to the sideline. Both sets of parallel bodies move forward as a unit. The back line stops a few steps into the march, while the four captains make their way to center field where they meet the captains of the opposing team. After a few words from the officials, the coin is flipped and possession is established; the captains shake hands and return to their respective sidelines. As the Bombers captains rush back to their teammates, the entire team begins to jump up and down and shout out motivational phrases. The final part of the pre-game ritual is a players' huddle where the captains say a few more words and a team

cheer is said while these gridiron brothers grasp one another's raised hands. Now it is game time… (Field notes, 21/6/09)

This was the scene before each and every game, and this ritual was designed to emphasize the importance of team and of camaraderie. It illustrated what Bourdieu (1984) called social capital, and it was another valued component of British American football identity. In fact, it was camaraderie which was the most commonly mentioned form of social capital that emerged from my time spent with the team. Camaraderie has always been a big part of American football, and that recognition of the importance of camaraderie in the sport has trickled down into the British grassroots. Shawn, who once played for a professional association football club, but left because he enjoyed American football more, stated it in this way:

> The one thing I will say is that the camaraderie of American football is so much stronger than in any other sport I have played. I've played a lot of rugby and [association] football at a high level, but American football just tops it because you really do rely on your teammates to save your neck, there is so much more riding on it… That's just something you can't get anywhere else.

So why was it that the London Bombers players claimed that their sport was the ultimate team game? One reason goes back to the origins of the sport in the time of the Industrial Revolution. American football is a game which consists of a sequence of collective acts in which all players participate (Mandelbaum, 2004). Every one of the players on the field had a specific assignment, and failure to carry out an individual duty could have had detrimental results for the entire team. The British American football players were, therefore, always a part of a group.

Without strong team bonds, the game would never work. As discussed earlier, British American football attracts people of varying sizes and shapes. While it was importantly a game of teamwork, it was also a game of specialization. Players not only specialized in terms of offense or defense, they also further specialized into individual positions, each of which required a distinctive set of skills. Some players throw the ball, others catch it, some run with it, while handling the ball at all is forbidden for others. While specialization does exist within British American football, with it came

interdependence as each specialized player is part of a larger taskforce (Mandelbaum, 2004). No individual player can win an American football game by himself; they depend on their teammates. Harry, the team's media officer who writes articles and game summaries for the website, made this comparison to association football:

> It's all about teamwork. Everybody has to go and do their bit; otherwise the whole thing falls apart. There is no other sport like it where everyone has to go and give 110% or it doesn't work. You have other sports such as soccer where you will have one player that can literally win a game by himself. In American football, everyone has to be on top of their game, because without everyone it doesn't work.

Another, a team captain Troy, had this to say:

> I think it is the ultimate team sport. That's the way I see it because you need your guys to watch your back so you don't get blindsided… In rugby, you know when you are under attack is when you have the ball; in [American] football, you've got to have your boys having your back the entire time and that's what I really like about it.

A second reason was the finality that accompanied the structuring of the season. British American football had an abject sense of finality associated with the game. A team loses a game on Sunday and they have to wait an entire week to play again. That kind of intensity brings out relationships with one another, and brings out a sense of commitment to each other and to the game itself, which you don't always see in other sports (Paolantonio, 2008). There were so few contests in the British American football season and, therefore, each of those contests became much more important. The London Bombers only played 10 games in 2009, 8 regular season games, a play-off game and the Britbowl final. It was the intense pressure that resulted from so few opportunities to play that contributed towards the reason why camaraderie was so important on the team. To succeed in British American football, the players also had to be accountable to their teammates. Even if one individual did everything right, the success of the team still depended on the ten other players in the unit also doing their parts right.

A third reason for camaraderie being so important was the physical sacrifice made by teammates. British American football players endured

discomfort and danger on a regular basis out on the field for, among other reasons, a disinclination to 'let down' their teammates (Mandelbaum, 2004). Part of the game was sacrificing yourself for the good of the team. This is an example of the existence of what Bourdieu (1984) termed symbolic capital and how the personal physical sacrifice of individuals was a part of acquiring a 'feel for the game'. It could be observed on almost every play; for example, a teammate may put in a block so that the ball carrier can gain a few extra yards. In some scenarios, players were literally relying on their teammates to keep them safe, such as when the offensive line had to protect a quarterback from receiving a blind-sided tackle, which could have resulted in a turnover or, more severely, a number of injuries. Emphasizing this point, Kirk, a surveyor who first began playing in university under the influence of his brothers, said: "In particular, I love the team aspect… You can get that in other sports, I know you can; but putting in a big block for someone else, you are just really playing for each other. The whole team unit, the family thing we have going on here, is just really special".

Within this acknowledgment of the importance of camaraderie was the recognition of athletic identity and how this athletic component of one's personal identity can produce the intimacy which was involved in being a part of a sports team. Symbolic interactionists argue that people define themselves as athletes based upon not just their own perceptions, but those of others (Mead, 1934). As a social construction, athletic identity is often determined by those surrounding an individual, and, in the case of an athlete, it is often coaches and teammates who reinforce any internalized perceptions of a person's own identity with being an athlete (Horton & Mack, 2000). Therefore, sportsmen reaffirm their identities as athletes by surrounding themselves with like-minded people. This like-mindedness is projected as camaraderie, and that camaraderie emphasizes the importance of not only the team, but the specific sport as well.

Another noticeable nod at the importance of camaraderie on this team was the decision to not have players' names on the back of jerseys. Something seemingly as insignificant as the lack of a person's last name on a jersey, was actually very symbolic. This decision echoes that of the Pennsylvania State University American football team, whose uniforms are instantly recognizable as they, too, have left off players' names in an attempt to emphasize the

importance of the team. When combined with the pre-kickoff ritual I described at the beginning of this section, the team looked streamlined, disciplined and homologous. That singular act strived to echo the family atmosphere created in the London Bombers American football club.

This conscious effort to emphasize the importance of team also translated itself into social capital outside of the game, such as in friendships off the field. A social solidarity developed among the British American football players because they had their own rules and customs, cooperated closely with one another, and underwent common stressful experiences (Mandelbaum, 2004). Social events were arranged both at the beginning and at the end of the season, with smaller groups of players and coaches frequenting the local pub after many practices and games. This excerpt was taken from my field notes written after my first official team social at a bar in North London. These nights out served multiple purposes, including fundraising and promotion, but they were most importantly about team bonding:

> This evening the team gathered at a north London bar for one of many team socials. Even on this casual night out, the team traditions continued on from the choice of venue, a Bombers regular hangout, to the team cheers said before rounds of drinks were consumed. The most notable tradition which I was exposed to during the evening was the performing of the team dance, the 'Apache'. The song was a pop favorite some years back and has been adopted by the team to be played during moments of celebration. It is a silly tradition which reflects the camaraderie of the Bombers. (Field notes, 22/5/09)

In fact, the word that was most often used to describe this group was 'family'. As will later be discussed, participation in modern day amateur sport is not just about the games people play; it is also about surrounding themselves with a group of like-minded people and making friends. Basically, becoming a member of a sporting community means one learns to 'talk the talk and walk the walk'. This was exactly what was demonstrated by uncovering the shared symbolic and social capitals of the members of the London Bombers. British American football players have their own distinctive identity which translated into their own set of vocabulary, dress, and ways of addressing one another. The word 'family' was used often to describe their group, and even though the

individual athletes all came from different backgrounds and possessed different forms of physical capital, they all came together to identify themselves as British American football athletes. It was the opportunity to form a cohesive team from amongst a diverse group of individualized athletes which gave British American football its level of appeal to the athletes I interviewed and observed. They had not found another sporting outlet which allowed them this prospect to combine mental and physical struggle on the sporting field with diversity and camaraderie.

Using Bourdieu to Understand British American Football as a Sport of Distinction

Bourdieu (1984) argued that each social field has distinction, which is expressed in the volumes and types of capitals at stake in the social field. I have found that British American football distinguished itself from other British sports mainly through a merger of the externally visible American influenced characteristics discussed in this chapter. (By which I refer to the fact that these characteristics were instilled in the definition of the game of American football within the confines of the American development of the sport. They were then exported to Britain and adopted by the athletes whom I observed. These aforementioned characteristics are not distinct to the sport of American football, but they are distinctive within the wider British sports space.) Taking all of this into account, then, it can be said that those who chose to play British American football were different from those who chose to play other sports, such as rugby football or association football. To the British American football player, their sport was somehow worthy of distinction, while the other sports were considered 'vulgar'. In a later paper, Bourdieu (1988) acknowledged that "a sporting practice which, in its technical, 'intrinsic' definition, always presents a great elasticity, thereby allowing for very different, even opposed, uses, can also change meanings" (Bourdieu, 1988, p.158).

Bourdieu (1984) also stated that sports practices are part of a larger lifestyle choice which is based on not only class, but on gender, age, and socialization, among other factors. An actor's habitus embodies their ways of acting, feeling, thinking, and being. It captures a person's personal history and

determines future choices based upon this history. This is an ongoing and active process which is both subjectively and objectively influenced. Due to the continued presence of British American football, even after its decline in the 1990's, it can be said, then, that there was a need for the sport; that it was a social field which complemented the long established British sports fields. Social agents do not, however, arrive at a social field with infinite knowledge of the state of play. The players on the London Bombers team were drawn to that social field because of their habitus, and because of their past and ongoing conditions of existence, which enabled more of a 'feel' for British American football than for others. These athletes made a choice to dedicate themselves to learning the tempo, rhythms, and rules of a once foreign game because they valued the different types of capital mentioned in this chapter. This process of committing themselves to a distinctive field and attempting to maximize gains in capital was coined acquiring a 'feel for the game' by Bourdieu (1977).

The social meanings attached to a sport are not always clearly defined; they can have multiple meanings, depending upon the actor. Sport is, therefore, open to interpretations. Referencing the above mentioned characteristics, athletes interpreted their participation in British American football to reflect a number of different needs. Bourdieu himself said: "One would be likely to make serious mistakes if one attempted to study sporting practices…without replacing them in the universe of practices that are bound up with them" (Bourdieu, 1988, p.833). Based upon my findings, the appeal of American football in Britain stems from its capacity to be interpreted as an imported American sporting pastime which fills a void in the British sportscape.

Conclusion

The distinctiveness of British American Football within the domestic sporting landscape can be understood in terms of the variety of capitals that make up its social field. First, there was the unique combination of physical and cultural capitals. The cultural capital was specifically distinctive in that it

emphasized the strategic elements necessary to play the game successfully, while the physical capital emphasized the importance of hegemonic masculinity. Second, distinction existed because of the diversity present within this physical capital and social capital. British American football was a sport which required athletes to have diverse physical assets and skill sets. Finally, social and symbolic capital was expressed through the possession of a family-like camaraderie. I do not suggest that these characteristics are not present in other British sports, just that they are unavailable in the same balance.

What this chapter importantly points out is that British American football retains many of the characteristics of American American football, which when compared to the traditional British sporting pastimes, make it a distinctive sport. Those involved in British American football have adopted the American pastime as their own because they value the characteristics I have listed above, and they believe that other British sports do not offer them in that same unique combination. However, while this may be the case, those same people have put their own stamp on the American pastime. Therefore, it can be said that not only was British American football distinct from other British sports, it was also distinct from American football in the United States. As I will continue to discuss in my next chapter, this uniqueness importantly made British American football a hybrid sport. It was a cross between long-standing American influenced traditions, rules, and characteristics with British sporting identity.

Chapter 6 - The Amateurism of British American Football: A Process of 'Glocalization'

Bourdieu (1978, 1988) suggested that it was possible to consider sporting activities as a supply intended to meet a social demand. What he was pondering was how the demand for sport was produced and how individuals acquired a 'taste' for a specific sport. What this chapter will explain is how British American football was a supply that filled a demand set forth by British athletes. This follows from the previous chapter which demonstrated how British American football was distinctive within the British sports space because it retained many of its 'American' characteristics. Here I will present data which will highlight how British American football has appeased the demand of the local and adapted the sport supply to fit within the British sports space. Specifically, I will utilize the concept of amateurism to demonstrate how British American football has been adapted from the global stereotype to fit the local requirements and become a hybrid sport.

British American Football and Amateurism

American football has always had a unique structure within Britain, compared to how the sport is structured in the United States. The most recognizable difference is the amateur system under which the British American football league operates. As I alluded to earlier in this thesis, the league has united under a single governing body and has officially labeled itself as an amateur sport. Certainly, the sport still contained many American characteristics, as outlined in the previous chapter, but the culture which surrounded its participants and its league structure became a uniquely British construction. However, carrying this label has not always been a unanimously favored aspect of the sport's identity, and this organization and decision to remain amateur has not brought complete stability. As the 2010 split, referred to in chapter 3, demonstrated, the administrative debate continues over the structuring of British American football. The remainder of this chapter will focus on this British amateurism and how it has contributed to the formation of

a distinctive British American football identity, as demanded by those athletes who have chosen to play the sport.

Amateurism in Britain can be traced back to the 19th century, where it was both a means for the exclusion of social inferiors and an important arena for young men to acquire positive cultural values (Gruneau, 2006). The definition of amateurism was most often associated with the term 'never' to indicate what it was not (Smith, 1993). For example, an amateur never competed in an athletic competition open to all; they never competed for public money, or against professionals, or used sport as a means of making a living. Turning this into a positive definition, amateurism can thus be said to be a state of mind where an amateur is one who does something for the sheer love of it (Schneider & Butcher, 1993). Because of this, there is often a certain virtue attached to the amateur label. Professionalism, on the other hand, can be defined as the conception of sport as a vocation worthy of one's undivided attention in which one's livelihood is the primary focus of the sporting activity (Morgan, 1993). While these definitions may have been developed over a century ago, they are still very much a part of contemporary sports discussions.

In my chapter on the history of American football, I traced the origins of the game back to the split which occurred when the elite colleges of America decided to break with standard British sporting traditions in favor of developing their own sports. Since the American university system rejected the English definitions of amateurism early on, but yet retained the word, hypocrisy exists around 'amateur' sport in the US (McChesney, 1989). This was especially the case with American football since the game was created within the elite universities of late 19th century America. Winning became more important than remaining true to the original amateur principles of playing only for the love of the sport. That was the lure of the modern professional sports model; to turn out winners in the spirit of *American* competitiveness (Smith, 1993).

These are, of course, some of the abstract moral philosophical opinions which continue to surround the amateurism vs. professionalism debate in sport. The interpretation is often that amateurism is inherently good, while professionalism is inherently bad. In the end though, it is not easy to get a firm grasp on these two concepts as completely separate entities in terms of their relationship to modern day sports. Most individual athletes are a hybrid version

of the two extreme definitions of what an amateur athlete is (someone who plays only for the intrinsic love of the game) and what a professional athlete is (someone who plays only for the extrinsic rewards). Aside from these philosophical opinions, amateurism can also be viewed as "a shifting set of social practices and socially-produced discourses" (Gruneau, 2006, p.561). This goes back to the aforementioned history of amateurism as both a tool for Muscular Christianity, in regards to class distinction, and moral guidance, in the form of character building. While true 'amateurism' may no longer exist, the importance of 'fair play' and participation in sport as a positive social activity is still alive in organizations like the London Bombers. From my research, I have discovered that British American football draws in more participants who value intrinsic rewards, than those who would want to participate in sport for external rewards only. In this way, the sport has undergone a 'sea change' and it has differentiated itself from American football in the United States.

Referring back to the 2010 split, which had quite an impact on the members of the London Bombers because it put their 2010 European and domestic league competitions in jeopardy, the most popular response was that athletes did not care who ran the league, only that they got to play American football. It was this type of response which made the British version of the sport different from how it is organizationally structured in the United States. This 'we only want to play' response reflected the amateur principles which are still very much alive in the British American football community. James, still a university student and a rookie on the London Bombers team, felt passionate about his participation in British American football: "It's almost like an addictive drug. Like when you are not playing football and you see other people playing football you want to play no matter what. And it's just that feeling, that atmosphere, the intensity that you feel; it's like no other." For the London Bombers athletes in particular, British American football was an enjoyable pastime and nothing more. Nick, one of three American born players on the team, said: "It's all love, it's not like anyone is making anything out of playing it." The participants whom I interviewed did not care how large the sport grew or how many people came and watched them, just that they had the opportunity to put on the pads and play on a Sunday afternoon. Even Jim, a coach and another American born member of the team, said: "I'm just a football

junkie. That's it, I just love the game...Whether I would be in the States or be in Japan or be in England, I would still be involved, I would still coach." While some dreamed of athletic success and recognition through playing British American football, most were content without these things.

The following excerpt from my field notes was written prior to our first home game. It was the first time I was observing how our team transformed the venue into something that was British American football specific:

> Sitting on the paved steps leading from the changing rooms out on to the American football pitch, I watched the game day transformation. Blue fencing went up to surround the players' box, padded goal post covers were placed at each end zone, a score board was being erected on the far side of the field, tables were set up for music and merchandise, and the grill was being fired up. Our field is only 90 yards long, and, thus, not the standard for American football. However, like many teams who must make due on former rugby grounds, 90 yards is acceptable in the UK. We at least have proper American football goal posts. The boys slowly trickled into the park, collecting their uniforms or talking with the physios. The track which surrounds the field was also in use by the local running club, emphasizing the harsh reality that the London Bombers were only guests at this facility, despite their best efforts to transform it. I must give the team credit though, because this set up is by far the best I have seen to date. However, this was not the spectacle an American girl is used to. This is simply British American football doing its best…
> (Field notes 21/6/09)

My primary observation here was that while the set-up was the most reflective of American football venues I had experienced in the past, the value was still of an amateur quality.

The ultimate goal for British American football was to work towards becoming a single, sustainable organizational structure by 2013, which was based on legislation by Sport England (BAFA, 2009b). The British American Football Association (BAFA) was the recognized National Governing Body (NGB) which oversaw all aspects of British American football. This included

the BAFL[8] (senior and youth), BUAFL (university), BAFCA (coaches), and BAFRA (referees) factions of the sport. This structure was the traditional model for amateur sport and worked off the principles of hierarchy (Morgan, 2002). The NGB made all of the key decisions on the structure, conduct, and marketing of the sport. Its authority was based upon its legitimacy as the elected governing body, with positions being filled at each level by elected volunteers (Morgan, 2002). Most of these board positions were unpaid volunteer roles, although a few paid positions did exist. Also, under the regulations of BAFA, none of the players, coaches or staff were to be paid for their participation in the sport at the club level. Thus, British American football was an amateur sport operating in an amateur association.

The BAFA has made a commitment to focus on continuing to develop the sport under an amateur framework in order to comply with legislation outlined by Sport England. This included being mainly self-funded and relying on the dedication of volunteers to run the organization and clubs. A 'Whole Sport Plan' (WSP) was implemented in 2007 which outlined the management, development, and partnership programs associated with the sport of American football in Britain. This document outlined all of the initiatives which the BAFA has or hopes to implement over the coming years. This plan was important in creating continuity amongst the different factions of the sport. Its implementation and publication was a major step forwards towards creating a successful single organizational structure. Having this unified structure and solitary governing body was an essential component in receiving recognition from Sport England and UK Sport (Sport England, 2010). Sport England defines sport as "all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels." While British American football has successfully fulfilled the criteria to become a recognized member of these government bodies, this does not mean that the sport has stabilized in the British sporting landscape.

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[8] The BAFL ceased operation on April 1st, 2010 and was replaced by the BAFACL.

While this amateur set-up currently differentiates British American football from the American football played in the US, it was constantly under scrutiny. The London Bombers interviewees emphasized that in the early days of the development of the sport, leaders were criticized for attempting to make money off the sport by professionalizing the leagues too quickly. Many were caught up in this potential for profits or athletic fame and, in the end, British American football as a sport suffered and nearly dwindled all together. In fact, Bob, who has been involved in American football in Britain since the 1980's, alluded to this in his interview: "I got quite disillusioned with the way the game had gone in the early 90's because there were too many sharks in there that thought they could make a lot of money out of people and it was one of the reasons why I stopped playing." Jerry, who also started playing as a youth in the 1980's, also offered this more detailed opinion on why the sport failed administratively during its early days in Britain:

> What hurt the sport when it took off in the 80's was that the sponsors literally gave out X amount of money to the major player teams. Those teams then went abroad and bought in players. They didn't buy in coaches or player coaches; they literally just got players. Those players would literally turn up, play, and leave. So two years down the line they didn't have a youth structure, they didn't have any decent coaching, they didn't understand the sport. As those players left, and the sponsors suddenly said, OK can you show us your statements and where this money is going, they couldn't do it and within five years those major sponsors pulled out and lost interest. So, that sort of hurt the sport because in the 80's you had it picking up and picking up, and then in the early 90's it died, and now it's trying to pick back up. So maybe it is starting to try and turn a corner, but you know there is a lot of work they need to learn from the past, and it concerns me that we aren't doing that.

Justin, one of our Scottish born players who began playing in university, also added:

> As I understand it, it was very popular back in the 80's when the game exploded and teams had sponsorship from Budweiser. I think it all fell in on itself because there wasn't the correct infrastructure in place. So

I think it was in the late 80's or early 90's when it faltered or collapsed, and the people who are in charge of the league are now slowly but surely building it back up.

My data illuminated the complexity bound up in the identity of British American football as an amateur sport. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the duality of opinions which existed on the London Bombers squad about the amateurism of British American football. On the one hand, members of the London Bombers were supportive of the amateur ethos and the distinction it gave to the sport. Its ties to being an amateur sport set it aside from many of the other sporting choices available in Britain. A culture existed around British American football which focused on 'the love of the game', as well as on fierce competition. On the other hand though, these same members of the community complained that the sport was not administrated in the most efficient manner and that the development of the sport was not expanding quickly enough. Through my time spent with the London Bombers, I found that the managerial structure of British American football was still evolving, as the sport tried to find its bearings within the British sports space. While unification of the sport under the BAFA has turned fortunes around for British American football in terms of recent increases in participation, according to the London Bombers the BAFA still have a way to go before they become a steady and trusted national governing body for British American football.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will define British American football through its specificity in terms of its relationship with amateurism and interaction with 'glocalization'. British American football operates under an amateurism which distinctly combines aspects of the traditional British definition of the word with the expectations of a sport that has roots in a fully professionalized system in the United States. British American football still has strong ties to its physical and social construction as an *American* pastime. However, this identity has not been transported and adopted completely intact; there has been a 'sea change' in how British athletes decode American football.

Class & Amateurism in British American Football

American football in Britain is a "supply, i.e. the particular definition of sporting practice and entertainment that is put forward at a given moment in time, meeting a demand, i.e. the expectations, interests and values that agents bring into the field, with the actual practices and entertainments evolving as a result of the permanent confrontation and adjustment between the two" (Bourdieu 1987, p.833). What Bourdieu was arguing was that the appearance of a new way of practicing a sport, such as American football being played in Britain, causes a restructuring of the 'space of sporting practices' and a redefinition of the meaning attached to the sport. Bourdieu begins to link sporting practice with class habitus. He argues that the reason agents are inclined toward one sport or another is because of their disposition towards sport based upon their particular relation to their body. This relation to the body is class and life-style based because possession of a system of tastes and preferences is a part of class habitus. Therefore, it can be said that a link exists between historical class-based characteristics in relation to sports and the modern day appeal of any given sport because of its lasting character values.

Bourdieu (1978) drew attention to the importance of class when he talked about the social significance of sport; he stated that different social classes expected different effects from bodily exercise, and that the classes had different relationships with their bodies. The relation one has with his own body was a fundamental aspect of habitus which distinguished the classes. The lower classes tended to participate in sports which emphasized outer body strength, such as the acquisition of visible strength in prominent muscles, while the upper classes tended to emphasize sport for its internal benefits, such as general health and well-being. In addition to this external difference between the classes, Bourdieu also discussed the intrinsic or social profits which were expected from participation in certain sports. Here he was referring to the sociohistorical significance attached to various sports by the classes, the 'characteristics' which aided in the construction of our own identity construction.

Bourdieu expanded his model for the distribution of sporting practices amongst the classes by emphasizing that multiple determining factors existed;

the more important of which were spare time, economic capital, and cultural capital. Part of my data collection was centered around creating playing profiles consisting of how, where, and why these athletes became involved in British American football. I found that almost all of the players were college educated and middle class. Therefore, a link can be drawn between the class and education background of the players and their valuing a particular form of sporting embodiment. Historically, the middle class has consisted of people who value some form of education and have a professional occupation which gives them economic capital with a certain amount of flexibility in terms of leisure time (Holt, 1989). The possession of this cultural and economic capital, therefore, seems to reflect their 'taste' for British American football. A university experience also allowed for many of these athletes to become exposed to diverse sporting experiences, including American football. As I described in the previous chapter, British American football requires a financial commitment, a combination of the mental and the physical, an investment of time, the memorization of plays, and as I will explore further in this chapter, an appreciation for amateurism. All of these components reflect how British American football resonates with a primarily middle class habitus.

Class habitus aids in defining the meaning conferred on a sporting activity, but so does national identity. The social value accruing from a sport comes from its distinctiveness, or as Bourdieu classifies it, its 'intrinsic profits'. These intrinsic profits include what the body demands from a sport, as well as what social profits are consumed through participation in the sport. While these factors did aid in creating a model in which sporting practices could be compartmentalized, Bourdieu also emphasized that thought must also be given to the variations in meaning and functions sports had among the classes. Therefore, no simple model can exist for classifying who plays any given sport; it is based upon a combination of factors including class habitus, historical association and, in this case, national identity.

The relationship between sport and class is complex, as is the relationship between sport and national identity. There is no direct relationship between sport, social position or national identity. What they both have in common is that characteristics must be identified which make an affinity between a given sport and the interests, tastes and preferences of definite social categories

(Bourdieu, 1978). Specifically, this relates to the body and how a person associates their sense of self within a social position and their experience within the social world.

One feature of national identity which is directly related to the history of class and sport development is that within British American football a north/south divide exists. The BAFA is divided into three divisions; the premier, 1st division, and 2nd division. In 2009, only five teams were worthy to play in the premier division, so they established a schedule where each team played the others twice. The remaining two divisions were also subdivided into regions based upon geography. Within the structure of British American football in 2009, all of the premier clubs (the most elite teams) were based in the south, while the other two divisions had teams from throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The fact that the most talented clubs were all located in the south suggested that the population of the south was somehow more suited to the sport, or had more opportunities, than those athletes from the north.

While the best British American football talent may reside in the south of England, the majority of the BAFA board members reside, and are associated with, clubs in the north. This indicates that while the athletic talent may be biased towards the south of England, the interest in it is not localized to just that area. While this may be the case, the London Bombers who spoke on this subject found it counterproductive for the administration to be separated from the epicenter of the British American football community. Jerry discussed his frustration with the geographical set-up of the British American football management:

> I mean, you've just got to look at where everything is set up, i.e. the coaches' conventions, the finals, all that stuff is right in the far north of England. Surprise, surprise, where do they all come from, they come from right around the corner… And then you look at the teams that are having success and growing and most of those have been south…but everything they structure is all towards the north. So you would think you would try and structure things that would help your strongest area.

Troy also addressed the north/south divide that existed in British American football. He was originally from the Newcastle area and has recently relocated

to London. He has seen significant differences in not only the standard of play, but also in the attitudes of people towards his participation in the sport:

> Geographically, I think the Bombers are very fortunate being here in London. I played for a team up in Newcastle where Americana is much less accepted… It is more accepted down here, because it is more cosmopolitan. Where I am from, it is quite backward; they don't understand and they don't like anything that's different in any way.

The north/south divide which exists within British American football is not just a geographical divide between the premier teams the other divisions; it also reflects the class, economic, and cultural divisions which separate the sporting preferences of these two areas of England (Holt, 1989). The frustration from players stemmed mostly from the lack of focus on the part of the league administration about where British American football was most marketable.

This divide between the north and south of England has proven important in other sporting histories as well. In rugby, for example, the sport took on two different identities as it spread out from its birthplace in the English public schools to the rest of the country. In the south, it generally retained its gentleman attitude and emphasis on the importance of amateurism, while northern towns adopted the game for its physicality and potential profit making ability (Dunning & Sheard, 1979). These moral differences, combined with a southern attitude of superiority relating to their 'standards', eventually led to the split in sport of rugby football into Rugby Union and Rugby League. While British American football may not be in danger of this type of split, the sport still seems to suffer from the same class divisions over the acceptance of different sports. In the case of British American football, it has more easily infiltrated the cosmopolitan south in terms of numbers of participants.

Therefore, what this chapter does is take the sociohistorical background of American football and combine it with concepts of Bourdieu's definition of distinction through identity formation. This will be reinforced by the ethnographic data I collected about the experiences of modern day British athletes, in order to define what British American football was in 2009. This process references back to the globalization theories I discussed earlier which deal with the 'glocalization' of culture through the combining of the local and the global. This is a process that American football has undergone and while

previous academics, such as Robertson, have used alternative theories to explain these processes, I will remain with Bourdieu's theories of distinction, capital, and field in order to theorize my perspective of British American football. The next section gives a number of specific examples of how British American football was adapted to fit within the local demands of the British athletic population.

The 'local' influence on British American Football

Bourdieu (1978) argued that it was first necessary to consider the historical and social conditions of any given sport before attempting to 'define' it. I have addressed this argument within chapter 3 of this thesis where I gave a detailed sociohistorical description of American football in America and in Britain. What a study of the history of American football in both America and Britain has uncovered is that American football is a combination of an English game with historical ties to the British Empire and a 'new construction' which is the product of American exceptionalism. It is both a branch of association football/rugby football development and a distinctively American sport. This unique history makes researching American football in Britain about more than just the globalization of a sport; it makes it about understanding what characteristics individual athletes identify with and why they have chosen to play American football over other more established British sports.

As I have already pointed out, one of the most prominent differences between American football as played in the United States versus as played in Britain, is its status as a professional versus an amateur sport. Bourdieu (1978) stated that amateurism is one dimension of an aristocratic philosophy which affirmed the manly virtues of men from the upper classes and formed the character of those who would become leaders. However, this definition of amateurism reflects its historical roots and, as with any sport, it has adapted with the times. In modern times, amateurism is defined by international and national institutions and combines the essential assumptions of the previously described bourgeois ethic with the demands placed upon modern day athletes.

What British American football is doing is keeping alive the debate about what is the legitimate definition of American football. Is it the

professionalized, media driven spectacle that the NFL produces in the United States, or is it an amateur sporting activity played for the sheer intrigue of the structure of the game, the benefits of physical fitness, and team camaraderie? Bourdieu (1978) claimed that sport still bears the marks of its origins, but what origins in the case of British American football; the historical American origins or the newly created British origins? British American football clearly still bears the mark of its origins as an American sport, but what my research has uncovered is that the grassroots leagues also bear the origins of British sporting history. It seems as if the exaltation of the 'manliness' and 'popularity' of playing American football has very different meaning within Britain, where players are ridiculed for wearing so much protective equipment, and the national championship goes relatively unnoticed amongst the sporting public and the media. Sports have different meanings in different national and social situations; American football is a testament to this.

Understanding British American football's economic, physical and cultural capitals helps in constructing a definition for what the sport is in Britain and how it has adapted to local demand. The first example of the influence of cultural capital on the definition of British American football is the time commitment which went into participation in the sport. On the London Bombers' 2009 roster, we had four North American players (three Americans and one Canadian) as well as one American coach. In my interviews, two of these individuals offered up the following opinions on the difference which existed between American football played in the US and in the UK. Nick, one of these American born players who relocated to the UK for work, said:

> The big difference, I guess, is the level of commitment. The athletes in the States are not any better than the athletes here…The athletes in this country are tremendous, just as good as many of the players you would see in the States, just on a smaller level. But the difference is the amount of time that they have to dedicate to the sport in the States.

Jim, the American coach who moved to the UK with his wife, also spoke about the level of time commitment:

> In the States, if you do [American] football, it's year round and they practice everyday from pee-wee on up. Here, you have to fit everything into two sessions a week. We are lucky here [the London

Bombers] that the guys are really committed, they hit the weight room on their own, they hit the track on their own; we even put in an extra practice session a week on Tuesday. But it is definitely just about the time and that commitment.

Both of these individuals stressed the importance of time commitment to the playing and coaching of the sport. The amateur structure influenced the amount of time athletes had or wanted to dedicate to the sport creating part of the uniqueness of the British American football culture. This type of amateurism follows the aforementioned positive definition of the word that has to do with an athlete's intrinsic love of the sport, and not necessarily its potential external rewards. Therefore, the player's reward comes in the form of mastering a skill, executing a difficult play, or the elation that comes from playing a hard fought game.

The time commitment component reflected the importance of the sport as a pastime, a leisure activity to which a group of men volunteered their spare time. British American football's difference was contingent on the level of dedication most participants gave to it. My observations of participant attendance reinforced this because turnout would fluxuate depending upon the day of the week, the weather, and the importance of the upcoming game. The attendance of the players was contingent on the potential reward (the beating of a tough opponent, or making the play-offs) which the players would receive compared to what they were giving up (time with family and friends, over-time at work, etc.) to attend practice or a game. The London Bombers players and coaches were only involved with British American football because they enjoyed the camaraderie of the team and the physical and mental demands of the sport. What my participant observation revealed about the amateur culture was that it worked because of the value attached to the intrinsic benefits of being a part of a team and playing a sport they loved.

In the American system, most athletes in this same age group were playing the game in university or at the professional level, or they have dropped out of playing all together. American athletes have an agenda to use American football as a source of gaining cultural, social or economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984), specifically in the form of an education or a career. These avenues were not available to British participants; hence, their involvement was relational to

the pursuance of pleasure through this amateurism. The fact that British American football could provide no potential career path dictated how much time participants felt they could sacrifice for the sport. Therefore, this decrease in time committed to the sport (as compared to American athletes of the same age) was a defining feature of British American football's identity.

Bob has been involved in British American football since its beginnings in the 1980's, so he has experienced first hand the necessity for the sport to be adaptable and maneuverable. His view was that the current league structure has recently made some improvements, but that it still had quite a few challenges to face:

> It's better organized than it was when I first started playing. The league structure sort of works and I suppose it doesn't really matter how you try to reorganize it; you wouldn't please everybody… I think by and large they do a pretty good job under really difficult circumstances. They are underfunded, much the same as most clubs in this country are underfunded. They are fighting for recognition with the government bodies, and it is listed as a development sport; that doesn't mean the government is paying loads of money into it, unfortunately.

While this amateur system may be innovative for the sport of American football, it has its critics. Jerry was one of the coaches who had a more negative opinion on the management of the league:

> My opinion is that the league structure over here is awful. I think maybe, maybe this year they are starting to turn a corner, there are changes. If I have a think back ten odd years or so…the top people in it are all the same people. It's that sort of boys club, they all vote each other in and they stick there and I think that's a bit lazy sometimes.

During this interview, Jerry commented on something that had continually been brought up in most of the conversations I have had about the structure of the management system; that those involved in the administration of the sport are all part of a 'boys club'. The way in which the league administration was run is an example of the economic capital available in British American football. These men volunteered to develop the sport at this level, and in doing so created a 'boys club' system of control based upon relationships and not qualifications.

Jerry tried to explain the reasoning behind this label during the aforementioned interview excerpt, but Jim also mentioned the fact that the same group of people tend to occupy all of the positions of authority:

> The other problem is who runs the league because it's the same guys all the time. Sometimes things go by the wayside, and it's hard to overview everything with a voluntary system. Nobody here gets paid, it's just what you want to do on your own, and that's a really hard structure to overlook and run.

And it was not just on the national level where board positions are occupied by volunteers. Each individual team has a committee which functions to run the club. This is often made up of a mixture of coaches and players who offer their time and expertise to organize every aspect of the club. Troy, a player, captain and administrator, commented on how tough it is to have the dual role: "But there is no secret to it, it's just about being organized… Balancing that and playing is tough, if I am being honest… I think that teams struggle with the administrative side of it and just try to make excuses". Due to the fact that the organization of the sport is done by volunteers, British American football struggles to balance its identity as a hybrid sport. While it may have the capacity to adapt, innovate, and maneuver, it does not always have the capability to do so.

I wanted to explore this area of volunteer/player-run administration within the London Bombers. To do this, I asked if I could attend a committee meeting early in the season. Within this meeting I was privy to the administrative side of organizing a British American football team. The individuals who made up this administrative panel were all serving dual roles within the team, which only reinforced the amateur status of the league:

> I was invited to attend a committee meeting by the chairman of our team. The meeting was held in the café of the park where our team plays games. This was the first time I was experiencing first hand the administrative side of British American football. Those in attendance were mainly coaches and a couple of players who all volunteered to take on these dual roles. I found out that teams are able to create administrative positions and fill them as they see fit. The Bombers have created a number of positions including chairman, vice chairman,

secretary, treasurer, sponsorship coordinator, and fixtures secretary. The meeting had a set agenda and the group systematically made its way through each of the points. While a structure did exist, the tone of the meeting was relaxed. (Field notes, 1/3/09)

No one within this committee ever complained about taking on the responsibility, but frustrations could be detected when the administrative responsibilities got in the way of their playing the game. Due to the fact that each team must fend for themselves, under the direction of the league, of course, having these individuals give up even more of their free time was of pivotal importance to the success of the London Bombers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of any club not only hinges on the physical talent on a team, but the ability for individuals to have a specific form of middle class capital which allows for them to administrate, promote, and fund the ambition of British American football to become a sustainable British sport.

From the perspective of the London Bombers, British American football should continue to be an amateur organization; however, it needs to continue to evolve as the sport grows. Cameron, a Northern Irish born coach who has been playing American football since he was a youth, emphasized how the current committee is letting the sport down:

There is such a disparity across the three divisions that are in this country. The top division is five teams, which means four go to the playoffs; it's just a bit silly… It makes it a little redundant in terms of giving the guys a challenge and giving them an opportunity to strive for something… So I think the league could do with taking a step back. I think what they can do is stop being so pedantic about their own egos and their own press and focus more on the realities… So, I think not necessarily an overhaul, but a re-think and a re-jig of where we are going needs to happen.

This opinion mentions another one of the components of the structuring of British American football which has been adapted to better fit into the British sporting culture. British American football uses a relegation and advancement system which moves teams around from year to year. As teams in the lower divisions become more successful, they have the opportunity to move up a division. The other side to this is that those teams who have the worst records

are often demoted a division. This system does not exist in the US, but it does echo that which already exists in British association football.

Cameron understood that it would take some time for the administration to figure out to what extent the sport should be adapted to fit the British sporting culture:

> I think, from a sports standpoint, we are at a crossroads…The league did a good job in the early 2000's trying to build it back up again, but it is still very much fledging. In recent years, I think the league as a whole has kind of lost sight of where they were supposed to have been headed. They don't stick to the rules, or at least they don't enforce the rules, which are good rules, I think. And that's where I am tied so much to the team, because we are so focused on the rules. So they have lost their way a little bit and there needs to be a bit of a re-jig.

Here Cameron calls attention to another type of economic capital, that of the monetary value of playing British American football and 'the amateur rules' which exist. Through this relationship with amateurism, British American football has adapted the internal structure of the sport to complement the British sporting habitus. The hot button issue concerning these rules is the barring of teams to monetarily compensate any players; under current rules, no one should be paid to play British American football. However, rumors swelled during the 2009 season about certain teams bringing in paid imports. The London Bombers pride themselves on following the amateur rules of British American football, and, thus, got quite upset when it seemed the league had overlooked this sort of behavior. It was not only unfair, but it also compromises the sport's status as an amateur sporting organization in the eyes of Sport England and other government based sports institutions from which British American football already has or hopes to gain recognition.

The excerpt which follows highlights the emotion which surrounds the issue of trust within the amateur status of the British American football league. Many members of the London Bombers were feeling betrayed by this point in the season due to rumors of other teams breaking with the amateur code to monetarily compensate players to persuade them to play for their team:

> It was the turn of our team captain to speak. As we all stood around him, he tried to instill in the team just how important the next three

weeks were in preparing ourselves for the national championship game. His first emphasis was on continuing to train hard, and that it was important that the boys took care of themselves in order to be at their physical best. He then went on to emphasize the importance of the team, and that everyone should remember that we were playing for each other. And then he said something I wasn't expecting; he said that we were also playing for 'doing things the right way'. By this he meant doing things by the amateur rules which are supposed to govern American football in Britain. He yelled out that our opponents could not buy what we had in camaraderie. This got an enthusiastic cheer from everyone, as they proudly clapped in response to the last statement. (Field notes, 6/9/09)

This topic was a major issue throughout the entire season, and reflected the battle which British American football faces as it attempts to grow within the British sports space. This battle is between continuing to grow as an amateur organization or when to take the necessary steps to make American football in Britain a professionalized or semi-professionalized sport.

Players in heavily commercialized sports often lose control over the conditions of their own participation. Within the amateur structure this is not supposed to happen. While the BAFA has adapted itself to better fit into the British sporting landscape, there seems to be a misbalance of representation. In response to the 2010 split, London Bombers players made a stand that they should have more of a say in the direction of British American football. From the content of my interviews and field analysis of the British American football leagues, the sport appears at a crossroads. While many players and coaches seem to be content with a purely amateur league, the execution of this amateur system has not yet satisfied the participants. What was conveyed to me through my discussions with members of the British American football community was that the players do not want to be cut out of the decision making process. They want to have control over their sport and, as Robertson (2001) theorized, have the individual power to adapt, innovate, and maneuver within the globalizing world.

Therefore, while British American football has undergone 'glocalization' to a certain extent, the challenge for British American football is

creating the right balance between retaining its uniqueness in relation to its American characteristics and adapting itself to carve out a niche within the British sports space. The next section gives a specific example from the London Bombers about how they were trying to adapt to the amateur ethos while still maintaining their high standards as a premier level British American football club.

The London Bombers Culture of Amateurism

My experience with the London Bombers provided me with information about one team's approach to the adaptation of British American football to British Amateurism. By and large, the members of the club supported the amateur organization of British American football, despite its pitfalls. As the following excerpt points out, the London Bombers operated with an open-door policy to anyone who wanted to try American football.

> I arrived at Thursday's practice to find a new face standing amongst the team. He immediately stood out as he was wearing rugby shorts and an association football jersey. I wandered over to the group where he was explaining that he had been in the park last week and saw the team practicing. After watching for a bit, he looked the team up online and then decided to come along this week and give it a try. He admitted that he had never played American football before, nor had he ever watched it on TV. He was a complete novice and looked intimidated by our team. The boys tried to make him feel comfortable by emphasizing the fact that he was welcome anytime. Throughout the practice, I observed him struggle to keep up with the drills. It was the middle of the season and the rest of the team was focused on our upcoming game. Coaches and players occasionally took him aside to go over necessary skills, but he was obviously finding it difficult. The scene got me thinking about the difficulties that surround the team's open door policy. (Field notes, 21/5/09)

This example specifically details how a new athlete was welcomed at practice, but struggled to keep pace with the veteran players who were focused on the upcoming games and were incomparably more experienced than this newcomer.

It demonstrates the often overlooked pitfalls of the amateur, open-door policy which the London Bombers had towards the sport. American football is not a familiar game to most British athletes and, thus, each new player requires a certain amount of attention in order to learn how to play the game safely and effectively; something which this new player could not receive in the middle of the London Bombers' competitive season.

A pro-amateurism culture was promoted and fostered in multiple forms within the London Bombers organization. Nowhere was this view more prominent than with the team's acceptance of walk-on players throughout the season. The London Bombers' website specifically states:

> Our aims are simple. We want to win football games. We want to offer a stable, enduring American football team for London, giving our whole community the opportunity to play and enjoy our sport. We want to continue to develop our young players to help them realize their full potential, on and off the gridiron. We are not a team for expert football fans only. Our experienced coaches take care and effort to teach the basics of the game to all-comers.

True to their amateur principles, the London Bombers did allow anyone interested in British American football to join the team at any point during the year. They held rookie sessions in November and January, which allowed special attention to be focused on the basics of the sport and those most in need of coaching. This was a team of inclusion and there were, of course, pros and cons to having this all-inclusive attitude. On the positive side, it allowed for talent and money to come in throughout the year; without these, the club would not have existed. It also nurtured a special kind of camaraderie amongst the team, as those involved knew that they were all there for a common goal; to play British American football. It was simple; if you loved American football, then the London Bombers were happy to have you as a part of their family. In turn, this aided in the development of the sport by continually embracing curious athletes and welcoming them into the British American football brotherhood.

On the other hand, the London Bombers were one of the best British American football teams in the country. They have won the national championship twice, and were runners up twice in the last four years. They had

goals to win American football games and develop the best talent. Therefore, conflict inevitably arose between the interests of the rookies and the veterans. American football is not a game that is easily picked up; it takes time and effort in order to become proficient enough to play in competition. There was also a safety issue involved, and a new player must learn how to play safely before they could be fully involved in competition. While the rookie sessions at the beginning of the season aimed to address this need to cater to the new players, those that joined in the middle of the season were left in a difficult situation. How could the coaching staff concentrate on preparing for upcoming opponents and drilling the veteran players, while at the same time tending to those new players? The answer was they could not. They did their best to give individual attention to new players, but their ultimate focus was on the veteran players.

This dichotomy did not go unnoticed within the London Bombers organization, and during the 2009 season an idea arose to create a development squad. This squad would ideally have its own coaching staff, and its primary goal would be to develop rookie talent in a safer and more appropriate environment. It would give newcomers to the sport the opportunity to learn the basics and become proficient in their American football skills before moving up to the 'main' squad. The ultimate goal would be to recruit other teams to create similar programs and schedule friendly match-ups between teams, in order to give the players the opportunity to play in a competitive game. While this new venture did not get off the ground in time for the 2010 season, the coaching staff has pledged to play up to 4 developmental games during the upcoming season. These games would be for rookies only, and would allow them the opportunity to play in a live contest. It is still a future goal for the London Bombers to have a proper development squad, but something like this will take time to implement.

Robertson (2001) argued that the sporting world is growing more pluralistic. Therefore, developing sports, such as British American football, have multiple identities available to them. Developers are more conscious of the global world and, thus, the existence of the hybridity of sports. As a result of this plurality, British American football has the ability to offer a variety of 'American' cultural, physical, and social capitals to athletes within the confines of a familiar amateur setting.

'Glocalization' and British American Football

Robertson (2001) argued that social processes were relational and contingent when describing 'glocalization'. In order to create this hybridity, British American football has become both relational and contingent on certain British sporting traits. Robertson (2001) also argued that individuals and local groups have the power to adapt, innovate, and maneuver within the globalizing world. The British American football community has done this by forming a league structure which is unique to their own national culture. Specifically, it has tried to adapt to fit within the British code of amateurism, while still maintaining its fundamental American exterior structure (for example, the sports rules, regulations, image, etc.). British American football has had to be innovative in terms of how they address the different levels of participation, and has had to out maneuver other British sports to find a small gap in the British sports space.

While this may be true of the current state of British American football, it has not always been the case, as I discussed in chapter 3. The game had gone through multiple phases as it was developing during the 1980's and early 1990's. However, by the time this study was conducted, British American football had settled into its amateur system. Looking forward though, the game has aspirations to change once more and to mimic the course of the development of the sport in the United States. Specifically, the future professionalization of British American football was a topic of interest amongst participants. It was also a topic that the NFL had proliferated as it argued for the possibility of a London based team (although this team would most likely be made up of professional American players and not British athletes). This obsession with the potential professionalization of British American football brings the discussion back to the influence of the global. While British American football has found some success in the adapted version of the sport I analyzed earlier, it is still drawn to the image of what the game could be by American standards. In a way, British American football seems unsatisfied with its 'Britishness' and still strives to retain even more of its 'Americanness'.

As I have specified in chapter 4, my focus was not on the macro-focused questions about the general effect of globalization of American football; it was about the micro and the perceptions of individual athletes. I have followed the perspective of theorists such as Castellis (1997) who argued that an individual's sense of national identity is not crushed by globalization, but that it offers the ability for individuals to resist capitalist globalization in favor of what Houlihan (1994) labels a 'dual sporting culture'. This dual sporting culture is a mixture of the modern *American* American football culture and a historically British sporting culture. Houlihan (1994) posed the question of whether American football in Britain was sitting at the periphery of British sporting society or whether it had penetrated that society. Has American football challenged British sports' core identity, or had it merely passed through as a cultural oddity? I believe this thesis has so far shown that British American football is more than a cultural oddity, but yet has not substantially changed the British sports space. What has happened is that American football has altered itself to fit within the British sports space.

Due to the fact that American football exists in an already highly professionalized cartel environment in the United States, there has been a desire for British American football to professionalize in a similar manner. As Robertson (2001) pointed out, the sporting world is growing more pluralistic. Based on this logic, sports can have multiple meanings depending upon their social context. With the case of American football, it has not been able to transition into the global market with that professionalized system intact. It has essentially had to begin the process of development all over again. However, this amateur status may not be enough for the participants of British American football.

Houlihan (2008) also argued that sociologists must be concerned with the social embededness of a sport; that a sport which expands to a new nation will likely hold deeper meaning with the individuals who play it than mere frivolous entertainment. This idea that the individuals on the London Bombers American football team had a deep personal investment in British American football is at the heart of this thesis. The remainder of this section will concentrate on data which centered on the potential of a future professionalization of British American football. This focus on the potential professionalization emphasizes

how global processes cannot be separated from local practices and how there is an imagined 'other' way of doing the sport of American football.

The following excerpt references a pre-season game that was supposed to be played against Team Canada. The highly anticipated contest was meant to bring attention to the London-based team and be a good catalyst for the sport in general. These types of high profile games have the potential to highlight the athletic talent that is invested in British American football. However, as the date approached, communication broke down between the teams and the fixture was cancelled:

> The early part of the London Bombers season had been focusing on a friendly game scheduled with Team Canada. The Canadian team was meant to fly to London in mid-April to play this fixture. The Bombers hoped to promote this game around London and make the international competition a spectacle that could promote not just the London Bombers, but also the sport of British American football as a whole. However, the grand plans started to crumble a few weeks ago when the committee could not confirm travel plans with Team Canada. According to the chairman, phone calls and emails were not being returned, and no details disclosed about arrival, departure or hotel stays. Tensions began mounting between the two teams as communication deteriorated in the weeks approaching the fixture. Finally, the week before the game, Team Canada pulled out. When I asked about why Team Canada had cancelled, the administrators answered that there had been communication errors on both sides which ultimately resulted in distrust between the two clubs. The chairman's tone seemed quite bitter about the whole ordeal. The Bombers missed out on not just a crucial pre-season game, but also all of the publicity that would have surrounded the game. It was a real shame that the Bombers and British American football lost out on this opportunity because of administrative failings on both sides. The good of the sport was certainly not a priority in this situation. (Field notes, 9/4/09)

The loss of this game was felt at all levels because British American football has so few opportunities to promote itself to the British public. An international

game would have certainly brought some press attention and drawn a decent crowd to the Bombers' facility. The season was dotted with incidents like this, which turned out to be lost opportunities for the team to promote themselves and the sport. Once again, the amateur administration and code seemed to be blamed for the missed opportunity.

While the amateur structure was taking some blows during the 2009 British American football season, the issue of potential professionalization was on the minds of the athletes. The disappointment of cancelling an international competition did not seem to deter athletes from belief in the potential for professionalization, when, in reality, the chances of any venture into professionalization succeeding were low. This confidence in the ability of British American football to expand into a professional sport was based upon a number of factors, including the history of the game in the United States, the recent development of the International Series, and talk of the NFL looking into expansion to London. In fact, after the success of the first NFL International Series game in 2007, the BAFL announced that it would begin looking into the potential of a professional or semi-professional American football league (BAFA, 2007). This would include working with commercial partners and terrestrial television to promote the sport on a larger scale. One of the primary objectives would be to establish an extension of the player pathway in Britain, giving the best British American football athletes a further tier of competition. Members of the London Bombers were torn on whether or not they believed that British American football could become fully professionalized in the near future. Randy, who was working towards his PhD in engineering, was hopeful that the administration would deliver a professional league one day, but he was also realistic of the expectations for it:

> I think it's a while off. There are people saying we'll get a sponsored league in the next couple of years, but I think it will take a bit longer. I think there could be up to 10 top level teams and then a lot of other small teams to act as feeder teams, kind of like when they made the super league in rugby.

Bruce, a teaching assistant, made a good point about the necessity of funds to be able to expand the sport to this level: "At the same time for it to expand on a playing level, you would need a lot more municipal support like

they have in Europe in terms of facilities, funding, and everything else. We just don't get it here; here we have to pay out of pocket to play." The extension of the player pathway would require not just support from potential athletes and American football coaches, but also from higher governing and sponsorship bodies. The potential expansion of British American football, therefore, resides not just within the current amateur culture, but also with the wider British sporting community. Aside from player suspicions about the potential for a professional British American football league, there are other factors which may stand in the way of developing the sport at this level. The biggest contingency factor for a professional branch of British American football is whether the sport can attract sponsorship.

British American football has become quite an expensive sport to play. This was mostly due to the amount of equipment that is necessary in order to compete. That expenditure falls on the individual athletes and clubs in places like Britain because of the amateur organization of the league. At the present time, British American football gets very little money from the government. It also had no major sponsorship as a whole; however, some individual teams have been lucky enough to acquire their own sponsorship deals. The consequence of this was that players had to pay subscriptions every year in order to participate. In order to be a member of the London Bombers, players were expected to pay £250 a year in fees. This covered the cost of league fees and insurance, as well as referees, ambulances, and field hire. Additional to this was the cost for transportation to games, camp, merchandise, and equipment. Troy, a player and administrator who handles much of the team finances, simply stated that "because it is all self-funded and everything, that is the big challenge about it". Don commented on the difference between the amount of 'stuff' you need to play American football compared to association football:

> You know one of the problems with [American] football is the amount of stuff you need, which I think is a barrier to a certain extent. To be able to play soccer you just need a field; well you don't even need a field. You don't really need anything, you don't even need a ball; you can just kick something.

Forrest also discussed the need for excessive equipment as compared to association football:

> The equipment and the padding is all fairly expensive. A lot of people learn to play sport at school and in this country sports funding is fairly low and not seen as a priority. Also generally the sports we play don't require that much equipment, they just need the space to do it; whereas in American football you do need all the equipment to be able to play it.

Therefore, the London Bombers believed that in order for the sport to become professionalized, it would need to attract sponsors with sufficient resources to set up and sustain the necessary infrastructure, as well as take the financial pressure off those who participate. The professionalization of the sport is, therefore, contingent on this. At the time of this study, that infrastructure was primitive at best, with equipment being mostly privately owned by teams or individuals. This necessary infrastructure would also have to include resources such as properly sized pitches and regulation American football goalposts. Once any potential investors got past the start-up costs of providing the adequate American football infrastructure, they would still have to consider how to position and promote the sport within the already crowded British sports space. As this research has demonstrated, there is a niche for it within the British sports space, but expansion requires investment, infrastructure, promotion, scheduling, and staffing.

All of these challenges could be addressed with the appropriate funding and vision; however, the sport will still need to confront its 'outsiderness' within British sporting culture. In many ways, British American football is still feeling the pressure to be like the American version of the game; the global is still just as powerful as the local. In response to this 'global' pressure, the league has recently decided to shift its focus to the youth level in order to adjust the player-pathway. They are attempting to invest in young athletes in order to build a more sustainable British American football population. According to the London Bombers, this is the first step towards creating an environment that could possibly sustain a professionalized American football league within Britain, while still sticking to its current amateur obligations.

Youth: The Future of British American Football

While I did not set out to observe the youth division of British American football, the London Bombers youth team was a constant presence within the club. It was at this level where many of the senior participants believed the future of the sport lay within the context of the amateur framework and the potential to expand to a professional organization. For this reason, it is important for me to mention how British American football was faring with younger athletes. I will start with Jim, the American coach that works with special needs children on a daily basis, who brought up the topic of the youth aspect of British American football. He stated that it was at this level where another one of the key differences between American football played in the US and in the UK exists:

> The difference is the age that you start… Here, it started with the seniors, and then university football came and now they are trying to build up the youth program. So it's kind of working backwards, whereas in the States it's the exact opposite; it's biggest at the bottom and then you gradually take out. People understand that they are not going to make it at the next level, so they go on and do something else. So that's a big thing.

In the United States, the National Football League operates under a cartel which is based on a central body, 'NFL Properties', which sells media, sponsorship and merchandise rights to the sport. The teams are all franchises which can be bought and sold and move from city to city in search of commercial advantages (Morgan, 2002). The consequences of this system have a trickledown effect into the other branches of the sport, with all of them acting as feeders into the NFL. Therefore, American football has a professionalized set-up all the way through its player pathway. Even youth participation is set up to promote the development of professionalized athletes. The American football player pathway is also very systematic, taking on a triangular shape. Approximately 3 million young athletes are involved at the pee-wee level (USA Football, 2008); that number then decreases as athletes reach high school and thus the next level of competition, where approximately 1.2 million play (Gregory, 2010). From there, the numbers decrease to 60,000

(beRecruited.com, 2010) as universities weed out even more athletes. Finally, only about 2,000 players are employed in the NFL as professional American football athletes. It is important to note that very few athletes who have not gone through this entire pathway ever make it into the NFL. Also, for those who drop out of the sport along the way, there are very few alternatives to play the sport at an amateur level. American football players end up dedicating a significant amount of time to their sport from an early age in order to become eligible to move up this player pathway. In fact, this level of commitment also feeds into the argument that American football takes on a professional model at all levels.

This type of player pathway does not exist in British American football. In fact, some described it as the opposite, a backwards triangle. The senior (or adult) branch of American football has the most participants in the UK, and the university branch of the sport has recently seen an increase in participation. However, the youth still maintains the lowest number of participants. In the case of British American football, the backwards triangle of participation was contingent on the types of athletes who were initially interested in the sport of American football. Many of the senior league participants, such as those I observed with the London Bombers, had grown up watching the NFL on Channel 4 in the 1980's and 1990's, and thus had a relationship with the sport from an early age. Ray was one of those guys: "I watched a lot of it when I was younger. I watched a lot of NFL, certainly in the 80's when American football started to get big over here. Channel 4 used to screen it and I would watch every single game." The youth in 2009 have had less exposure to American football in the media, which may be one of the reasons why they have shown less interest in playing the sport.

The presence of this backwards triangle meant that British American football has not been able to operate under the same model as its American counterpart. It has had to find its own internal structure on which to develop a uniquely British variation of the normally professionalized American pastime. The British American football culture has had to come up with an innovative system which adapts to local customs and cultures, while still championing the uniqueness associated with the external characteristics I discussed in the previous chapter.

The youth programs may currently be struggling to keep up with adult level participation; however, it was at the youth level where much of the future development of both the club and the league was being aimed. This excerpt from my field notes comes from our first double-header game with the youth squad:

> I do not normally have the opportunity to interact with the youth team. They practice on a field located at the opposite end of the park during the same time frame as the senior squad. The members of this team occasionally hang around for the last part of senior practice in order to watch the more experienced players, but on the whole, they do not factor into my observation. Today was an exception, however, as we were hosting a double header. The youth team was playing their game first, with the senior game to follow. This meant that while our squad was busy with pre-game, the youth squad could be seen playing their game. I couldn't help but note the small size of the youth squad and the fact that most of the players were required to play both offense and defense. The same seemed to be true of their opponents, and, as I am told, across the entire youth community. The youth branch of American football in the UK struggles the most to recruit and retain players, but these kids seemed blissfully unaware of the fact that their game was practically going unnoticed. But, despite the obvious hardships the youth teams were encountering, all around me the senior squad was cheering on the next generation of Bombers because they know that these boys are the future of American football in the UK. (Field notes, 16/8/09)

As this excerpt demonstrated, the youth team struggles to recruit a comparable number of athletes as the senior team. This reflects the struggles the entire British American football community faces as it attempts to expand the sport. The youth have become more of a focus for the league as they are realizing the benefits of getting athletes to commit to playing British American football at an earlier age. In fact, the youth do seem to be reaping the most benefits from recent regulations in multiple ways. In 2008, IFAF announced that it would receive 2.465 million dollars from the NFL Youth Football Fund in order to strengthen the sport's global participation at this level (BAFA, 2008b). This

grant will include money for programs such as a development tour (where US coaches engage in exchanges with developing American football nations), coaching schools, player academies, and equipment supplies. The hope was that focusing on the youth would help to provide a strong foundation for the future growth of the sport internationally. Randy, who also coaches at a university, has already seen a positive impact from youth expansion:

> Having youth teams has really made a difference. That's really what's progressed the sport; now you've got players who have been playing for a number of years, and have more of an American football mentality, especially off the field and outside of training.

Jim was also optimistic about the expansion of the sport through the youth:

> Hopefully in the future the sport brings in a lot of youth, a lot of younger players who really want to get into the game because they think 'this is a cool game, this is a different game'. I think American football in this country has the ability to be something that is really, really good for a lot of the youth, because it's a sport that brings in everything.

Jim's optimism came from a belief that British American football not only offered young people the positive benefits of any sporting activity, but that it offered the youth something distinctive. Harry, who also spent time with and wrote articles for the website about the London Bombers youth team, saw British American football as a potential force for good in a youth culture which today has many negative stereotypes associated with it: "I think it is good for the youth of today to have something they can get into. I think we should increase promotion of the game aimed at school kids, and use it as a deterrent against anti-social behavior." He leads into an argument about the rising concern for the future of today's youth. According to Fraser-Thomas, Côté and Deakin (2005), these concerns stemmed from increasing behavior problems, such as delinquency and drug use, and are also coupled with changing social forces. Hamilton, Hamilton and Pittman (2004) suggested that positive development in young people, through activities such as music, theatre, and sport, helps enable them to lead healthy, satisfying, and productive lives.

The BAFA has picked up on this potential within the youth community and has been actively pursuing schools to incorporate American football into their physical education programs, and flag football programs (the non-contact version of the game) have begun to be introduced into the curriculum at some schools (BAFA, 2009d). While these programs are still few and far between, they are at least beginning to attract some attention. Jerry, who also coaches for the youth division of the British American football national team, said this about the new school effort: "I think the way that they've tried to develop the youth, in terms of going into schools; I think that's definitely helped out". However, Forrest had a different and more pessimistic view about how this school initiative would work out: "I think school budgets are stretched tight enough as it is, that it's quite difficult for them to say they are going to put such and such amount of money away towards this one sport which not many people know of".

Hesitation from schools was not the only hardship which youth British American football encountered as it tried to expand within the youth culture. As Forrest mentioned, it was a very expensive sport. While this was true across the board in British American football, it was magnified at the youth level. Ryan, another coach originally from Northern Ireland, explained it like this:

> It's a very expensive sport, especially for kids. When you present a parent with a 150 pound bill for a lid and another 100 pounds for pads…and you know what kids are like, you don't know if they are going to stick with it or not. It's a very, very expensive sport… But I don't think it will expand at a youth level because of the money aspect.

Others talked about the violence or the complexity of the game as a turnoff to some people. Marcus talked about the violence as a deterrent for parents along side of the fact that many parents still don't understand American football:

> To have that kind of youth league, like you have in soccer, where you have lots of kids coming out, will be difficult because parents aren't willing to support that, being the violent sport that it is. What they don't understand is that [American] football builds discipline in children because they learn to respect officials and that kind of thing. If you look at soccer, you don't get any discipline from players, they

are more diva-ish. The challenge is being able to lay it down and convince parents that their kids should be a part of this.

Due to safety regulations, youth in Britain cannot play the contact version of American football until they are fourteen years old. This makes the flag version the only available option to many younger players. Bruce, who works within the educational system as a teaching assistant, believes this rule actually hinders kids' ability to learn the 'true' version of American football: "Also it's a difficult sport to play; it's not a kid's sport that you can just play anywhere, unless you take it out of its natural state and play touch football". Troy also mentioned the complexity of setting up a game: "It's not like kids can just go out and start playing, that doesn't happen". What both of these points suggest is that the survival of the youth division of British American football is both relational and contingent to what else is available to the youth of Britain. British American football will always be compared to other sports, most notably association football and rugby football, both in terms of its available capital and its accessibility.

An example of how British American football was investing into the future of the sport with the youth was the Filton Academy in Bristol, which offered an American football academy. This academy aimed to provide young athletes with the opportunity to study academically and play their sport. The ultimate hope was that these young men could attract the attention of US college scouts and earn a scholarship to a US university with an offer to play American football. A further example on the international stage is that USA football (the organization in charge of youth and amateur levels of American football) has continued to support the USA International Student Program. This allowed international student athletes the opportunity to study and play American football at US Prep Schools (IFAF, 2009). The hope was similar to that of the UK based American football academy, in that the players hoped to attract the attention of college scouts and be given the opportunity to play at an American university.

Even with all of the aforementioned obstacles involved in youth sports development, the British American football youth programs were slowing gaining momentum. In fact, it was at this level where British American football was focusing most of its developmental energy. Creating and sustaining active

participation at the youth level was crucial to building a presence for American football within the British sports space. The youth movement was specifically important to British American football as an amateur activity because bringing in athletes early aided in the potential for retention. It also allowed athletes to have prolonged exposure to the sport and hone their skills over a longer period of time. As I have discussed throughout this section, it was at this youth level where the senior London Bombers players believed the sport had the most potential to expand. As London Bombers club members also pointed out, however, the outlook for continuing youth expansion was relational and contingent on a number of factors. Its potential growth was related to British American football's identity as a violent masculine sport (Trujillo, 1995), which was often misunderstood within the general population (Richards, 2009). It was also contingent on what was happening with the other branches of the sport as a whole, as British American football has one national governing body.

Where Does British American Football Go From Here?

Some of my most important data was collected after Sunday practices when a group of players and coaches would head to the local pub. Within the casual setting, the group could discuss British American football and their thoughts on where the sport was going:

> During another one of our post-practice trips to the pub, a discussion started up about the future of the sport. Specifically, the discussion focused around the league administration. There was an agreement amongst those in the room that the league was not looking far enough into the future. They pointed out that the structure of the league had changed multiple times over the course of the last few years, and that they believed the current plan was only looking ahead one year at a time. Specific examples were given, such as the number of teams in the premier division, and possible solutions were also discussed. One included cutting down the number of divisions and creating subdivisions which were made up based on geographical location. While the architect of this suggestion admitted it had some flaws, mostly that teams could be unequally matched in talent if divisions

were based on location only, they believed this type of structure was better long term and that eventually the talent pool would even out. Besides this, they also wanted stricter rules about teams providing statistics and video footage. When I asked them why they hadn't proposed this to the board, they answered that they had, but received little feedback about the proposition. They echoed earlier remarks that this may have something to do with the board being made up of 'the same people' and it being 'like a boys club', consisting of people with like-minded agendas. The conversation wrapped up with everyone in agreement that while some progress has been made, it must go even further in order for the sport of American football to grow in Britain. (Field notes, 30/8/09)

This specific discussion was a good example of the kinds of frustration felt by members of the London Bombers over how the league was administrated and the direction they felt the sport should go. It emphasizes how amateur centered the London Bombers organization was, but also how they recognized the faults which existed within the current amateur organization.

While British American football has been on the up in the past few years, it still has a way to go before becoming a staple in the British sports space. In 2008, BAFA cited the following figures about the growth of the sport (BAFA, 2008c, paragraph 5):

12% increase in participants in the British American Football Association

16% increase in teams participating in the British University American Football League

26% increase in new clubs and teams in the British American Football League

400% increase in qualified coaches in the British American Football League

According to this same study, the contributing factors for this growth included the presence of the NFL in the British Market; TV coverage on Sky, Channel 5 and the BBC; the promotion of the 'Get into American Football' campaign; and individual features about American football on programs such as NFL Live on Channel 5, Blue Peter and BBC Sportsround (BAFA, 2009c). Randy discussed

his perception of changes: "I think over the last two years it has gotten better. I think from about 2006, the leagues have been promoting themselves a lot more than they have in previous years. I watched the sport on TV for about 5 years quite regularly and I didn't know there was a league in existence. As soon as I found out, I came out and joined".

While Randy makes a point of increased promotion, this promotion does tend to be within the already small circle of American football fans. Bruce made an interesting comment about how small the community of British American football actually is: "It's a subculture basically, but it's a subculture that everyone who does play either knows each other or knows someone who knows someone… It's an interesting subculture in itself in that it's a hard core group of people who follow it very intensely".

Bob, a current Bombers administrator, who has also been involved with the administration of the sport at the national level, has realistic expectations of the future growth of British American football. He believes that with the right strategy, expansion can and will happen:

> I think if they are sensible about it and they don't try and do things too quickly, then it will expand. If they try to let it go too fast, they are in danger of it being like a mushroom; you know, everything's on the top and there is no substance underneath it to support it. So, they have to play a very fine line between going too fast and giving people what they want. So, it's not easy, but I think it will expand slowly but surely.

Don hopes that the future leaders of the sport learn from the past, because he is afraid that British American football cannot afford another major drop-off:

> I think it is also important to maintain as much of a wave as possible. I know that [American] football was quite big in the 80's in the UK, and I think it surfed the crest of that wave for a while and then took a dive. I think it's coming back up now, but the key is for someone to have the foresight to get it up to the point where it was in the 80's, take it further than that, and then maintain it… If it drops off again, it's the kind of sport that can just disappear if it's not careful.

Finally, Jerry believes that the sport has the ability to grow in the UK, but in order to do so, it has to continue to make changes: "Is there an opportunity for it

to grow over here? Yes. Do things need to change for it to happen? Yes. But, as you can see, there are a lot of people who just play the sport, love the sport, and I think you are not going to lose that."

Within this debate about the future of British American football it is possible to see both the heterogenization perspective (Appadurai, 1990; Giddens, 1990; Robertson, 1990, 1992; Tomlinson, 1999) and the hybridization of cultures theory (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004) of globalization. Both the heterogenization perspective and the hybridization of cultures theory emphasize the importance of local cultures on the process of globalization. British American football, therefore, can be said to be a hybrid form of American American football because it combines traditional American characteristics with local British culture. Through this 'glocalization', British athletes have molded the sport to fit within their habitus, and while it may still be a minor sport, it has found a niche in which to grow.

For many of the players on the London Bombers, the amateur ethos is integrated into their valuing of the game. Players articulated that their love of the game was the most important factor in their involvement. The second most important factor was the camaraderie that was perceived to be a fundamental component of playing on the team. These intrinsic forces are consistent with amateur sports where external rewards such as social status and employment are unavailable. Throughout my time with the London Bombers, I learned that these things did not matter; that British American football was about more than these opportunities. Games are played on spare pieces of grass, crowds are small, winners are barely mentioned in the press, and no one gets paid to play. However, these developmental shortcomings did not deter the London Bombers players from committing themselves to playing the game.

The rules may be the same, the equipment may be the same, and the terminology may be the same, but British American football is different from American American football. While a sport can be technically the same in terms of its rules and physical appearance, what surrounds it varies from society to society. As Barnett (1953) and Voigt (1977) argued, American sports cannot succeed internationally as carbon copies of themselves. Sporting displays filled with spectacle and dictated by the American professional leagues do little to globalize sport. Instead, these academics argued that sport should be negotiated

on the international stage by equals, and should allow for local sporting cultures to individually influence foreign games. British teams like the London Bombers are content with keeping the sport amateur, for now at least, despite some of the current criticisms of the league structure and its administrators. They are happy to have placed a uniquely British stamp on an otherwise purely American pastime.

Conclusion

Using Bourdieu's theory that sport operates as a supply intended to meet a demand, this chapter explored the amateur status of British American football. What my data emphasized was that in order to fill the demand of British athletes the American football supply had to be altered to fit within the British sporting habitus. While British American football struggled with this in its early history, by 2009 it had begun to form its own identity, associated with specific British, as well as American, characteristics. It had begun the processes of becoming a hybrid sport capable of fulfilling a desire for a distinctive sport within the British sports space. While these local British forces may have succeeded in creating an altered form of American football, the sport is still under pressure from the global to mimic the successful and professional American structure. Therefore, while the local may have been able to influence how American football has been globalized, it is not without its struggles. British American football can be said to be pluralistic, or a hybrid sport, because of this manifestation of the competing forces of globalization, which demonstrates that the local is influenced by the global, and vice versa. In the next chapter, I will specifically address the influence of the NFL and its further role in the 'glocalization' of American football to Britain. I will discuss whether or not the spectacle-filled American version of the game is having a positive or negative impact on the British grassroots.

Chapter 7 - The Globalization of the NFL and British American Football: The Spectacle vs. the Reality

In Britain, two forms of American football exist; the first is British American football, which I have been focusing on in the last two chapters, while the second is American football as played and promoted by the NFL. Observation of these two American football cultures has identified that while they may be playing the same game, their respective social fields give them each a unique identity and purpose within the British sporting community. The most obvious difference between these two branches of American football is the amount of spectacle attached to each of them. Bourdieu (1978) discussed spectacle in relation to sport by stating that it is an important part of the classification of what a 'popular' sport is. While American football in Britain may not be considered a 'popular' sport, it hopes to become one, and has its roots in an American system which has succeeded in making American football the most popular sport in the United States. The NFL thrives on its ability to put on a show, while British American football is focused more on the fundamentals of the game. This chapter will address the elasticity involved in the globalization of American football to Britain in terms of how the sport is consumed as both a commodity and a pastime.

Spectacle and the Commercialization of British American Football

As I stated in Chapter 2, Maguire (1990, 1991, 1993a, 1999) primarily focused his research into the globalization of American football to Britain on the media/sports production complex. He focused on the Americanization of British culture in general and he cited Channel 4, Anheuser-Busch, and the NFL as the catalysts for American football's expansion into Britain. From his perspective, American football was looked at as a commodity of popular culture exchange. When referencing American football, Maguire was almost always referring to the NFL's export of its game. British American football was only mentioned in regards to Anheuser-Busch's involvement in underwriting the 'Budweiser League'. While the NFL may be the most recognizable form of

globalized American football, it was the amateur leagues and those British athletes who chose to play in them that were the focus of this research. However, the impact of the NFL on the development of these amateur leagues must be acknowledged.

Sports are social constructions and they change in connection with social relationships in society as a whole. On the field, the American football I saw in the British leagues was essentially the same as the NFL American football I watched back in the United States. The major difference between the two was the context which surrounded the games. Again, this importantly relates to the history of American football and sports in general. America and Britain both have played important roles in the formation of modern day sports and, thus, are subconsciously tied to their own 'homegrown' sports. Despite the fact that academics like Markovits & Hellerman (2001) and Sugden & Tomlinson (1996) have argued that Western countries' sports spaces are 'frozen', British American football has made room for itself within the British sports space. That space may be small and not noticed by many, but the sport does exist on multiple levels throughout the country. As I have already pointed out, British American football has adapted itself to fit within this British sports space. I have also already explored the hybridity of British American football, both in terms of the internal and external characteristics which made British American football a distinctively *British* game, while retaining its uniqueness as an American import. Here I will analyze how the NFL's changing global initiatives have further influenced British American football's hybridity.

Referring back to his arguments about class habitus and involvement in sport, Bourdieu (1978) stated that popular sports, mostly those appealing to the middle and lower classes, also function as spectacles. In his opinion, truly popular sports are games produced by the people to be returned to the people. However, with this being said, there is also a divide between the active practice of and the passive consumption of these popular sports. In American football in the United States, for example, the game has become, through television, a mass spectacle. This spectacle-driven American football has transformed far beyond the game that Walter Camp created in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Specifically, Bourdieu argues that the passive viewers of this spectacle are "imperfectly equipped with the specific competence needed to decipher it

(Real, 1998). The NFL hoped that this relationship with television would be incentive enough for the British sports space to open up to American football; however, after its ten year run on Channel 4, the sport has been banished to late night viewing hours and satellite television.

Commercial sports are organized and played to make money as entertainment events. They depend on a combination of factors such as gate receipts, concessions, sponsorship, and the sale of broadcast media rights. The decision to commercialize one sport over another is usually decided upon by those who possess or control the vast majority of economic resources in a given society (Rowe, 1999). Therefore, unless the people with the power and resources are interested in any given sport, then that sport is not likely to become commercialized on a large scale. This was one reason why American football, along with baseball and basketball, have become 'America's Games' in the United States, but also the reason why they have been slow to take off in the United Kingdom. These sports celebrate the privileges, values, and experiences of corporate America, and they are able to reproduce this certain way of viewing the world. It is association football, rugby football, or at times cricket, which British society has branded as the sports which best reproduce their way of looking at the world.

In order to make more of an impact on the British sports space, the NFL has recently decided to restructure their global initiative to include NFL teams playing regular season games abroad (NFLUK, 2006). As of October 2010, London will have hosted four games in four years at Wembley Stadium. Each of these games has attracted sellout crowds and enthusiasm from European fans of American football. The NFL International Series replaced NFL Europe, which acted as a filter league for many North American players, but also for some talented European players. The new global strategy for the NFL was aimed towards worldwide media coverage of the NFL itself. This new plan, however, seemed to neglect incorporating initiatives which would globalize the sport of American football outside the context of the NFL brand. While increased publicity for the NFL brand of American football did broadly heighten the level of exposure for the sport, this chapter will focus on whether or not this exposure conflicts with or complements the 'glocalization' efforts of the British American football leagues.

The Failure of NFL Europe

The NFL, and American football in general, have so far had a tumultuous challenge in trying to expand their product on a global scale. The World League of American Football kicked off its inaugural season in 1991. In 1998, the name of the league changed to NFL Europe in order to strengthen the link between the NFL and American football in Europe. By 2007, however, NFL Europe had ceased operation, and, with this, a door slammed shut for Europeans hoping to gain a foothold into the professional ranks of American football. NFL Europe was first and foremost a developmental league. Its primary role was as a holding tank for North American players who did not make it into the NFL directly after college, but still had enough talent to possibly make it with a few more years of experience under their belt. The secondary role for NFL Europe was to increase American football's exposure in Europe through high level domestic competition. Finally, NFL Europe gave some talented European players an opportunity to play at a high level and the possibility of being recruited into the NFL.

In regards to the productivity of NFL Europe, most London Bombers players were in agreement that the league was not helping to spread grassroots level American football. While they acknowledged that it did give the most talented athletes an opportunity to play at a high level, it did not lead to the creation of any European superstars in the NFL. It also did not create a large fan base or have the ability to inspire the youth to pick up British American football over other indigenous European sports. Don, who expressed that his sporting preference lay in participating rather than spectating, had this view on NFL Europe's closure:

> I don't know how accessible NFL Europe was in terms of getting people through grassroots. As far as I am aware, I don't think it was that influential. I think abolishing it and starting up the International Series is actually a very good idea because you are coming in direct contact with the NFL, which is basically the highest that you can get… Having the International Series is great for exposure and I think there

will be a trickle down effect into grassroots, equally, if not more so than having NFL Europe.

Forrest made the observation that: "…they tried with NFL Europe, but it never got off the ground. I don't think enough attention was paid to it to make it succeed at the same level as the NFL." Shawne, who once played for a professional association football club but preferred the spectacle of American football, had a similar take on the first attempt at global expansion by the NFL:

I think the World League wasn't going to work because people wanted to see star names. The players changed every year and you never had the same people there. It didn't really feel like it belonged to you, whereas in an NFL game people get to see the stars they know and see every week on TV. So, I think that is a much better way of getting more people interested and involved.

Finally, Bob, who's been involved with American football in the UK since the 1980's, said: "The trouble with NFL Europe was that the NFL really saw it as a place to put its players who were almost good enough for the NFL, rather than it being there to develop international players".

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the player pathway for a typical male American American football athlete is very direct. He begins playing as a youth, progresses through to high school football, where he is then recruited by a university. It is subsequently from playing for their chosen university where the athletes receive their opportunity to turn professional and enter the NFL. Very few players who have not gone through this strict process ever get the opportunity to play in the NFL (databaseFootball.com, 2009). Because of this, European players had had very little opportunity to make it in the sport until NFL Europe presented them with a league of their own, to which NFL scouts were actually paying attention. Unfortunately, NFL Europe did not succeed in many of its goals. The commodification of NFL brand American football did not interlock with the goals of the European fans, athletes or cities playing host to the expansion of the sport.

What NFL Europe was lacking was a connection to its audience. American football had very little history within Europe, and thus it struggled to create a narrative which satisfied its international clientele. American football in the United States has an enduring narrative which helps to define its

collective identity (Oriard, 1993, 2001). The narrative of American football was encoded to meet the needs of a specific group of people (Gems, 2000). NFL Europe was not only missing a narrative to which the new audience could relate, it was also devoid of any real spectacle. It was a retainer league, a place for talented American football athletes to train and compete while they waited to get noticed by NFL scouts. While the league did prove to be a breeding ground for budding American football stars such as Kurt Warner, David Akers, and Jake Delhomme, the NFL did not receive the attention it craved from a global audience. European players also did not get the opportunities they were hoping for, as they were being outperformed by their North American counterparts and rarely being called up to the professional level (Lyne-Austen, 2008). The NFL had not created a successful commodity in the form of NFL Europe. It had failed to acquire any value in the international marketplace, even though sport in general was becoming increasingly commodified. So, the NFL disbanded the European league in favor of a new global initiative, the International Series.

Falcous and Maguire (2005, 2006) published several articles which explored the National Basketball Association's (NBA) globalization efforts to Britain. While basketball has its own unique sporting qualities, its attempt at breaking into the British sports market has important comparisons to what American football is currently trying to accomplish in Britain. The first way the NBA was able to successfully infiltrate its global market was through the use of migrant athletes. Migrants are important in promotional strategies as leagues seek to obtain local resonance. This influx of migrant players has, in fact, played a crucial role in the appeal of American basketball around the globe (Miller et al., 2003). With American football, very few migrant players have been able to break into the professional ranks of the sport. According to Brown (2005), in 2004 only 2.31 percent of all NFL players were born outside of the United States. This number becomes even lower if you consider that most of these foreign born players relocated to the United States at a young age and were able to take advantage of the American educational system, and thus the pathway on which American football advancement is based (ESPN, 2007; Lyne-Austen, 2008).

With the loss of NFL Europe and the move towards providing regular season NFL games to an international audience, the middle tier of American football – that between amateur club level and the professional NFL – was no longer in existence for non-American athletes. Comparatively, the NBA has been attempting its own globalization of its brand, and it has been able to capitalize upon its inclusion of migrant athletes born and trained in other countries. Through this inclusion, American basketball as a product has been able to more easily connect to local cultures through promotion by the NBA (Falcous & Maguire, 2005). Also, rugby football has been undergoing international brand expansion for some years now, and it has a system in place which aims to develop international talent in emerging markets (Lyne-Austen, 2008). Without a similar developmental league, international players have little hope of turning their talent into a profession. With the grassroots level of American football expanding in many countries, it raises the question of whether the NFL is interested in growing the sport of American football or just their own brand of the sport?

The NFL International Series as a New Global Strategy

The NFL International Series, on the other hand, was a part of the narrative of the NFL season. It was a game which counted towards the outcome of the season and, thus, had all of the star players and media attention. It also brought a whole new level of spectacle with it, as the NFL wanted to give a foreign audience an authentic NFL experience. This excerpt from my field notes recounts the weekend of the International Series game. While it was not directly a London Bombers event, it had been at the center of much conversation over the course of the season:

> It's the end of October again and I am queuing up to buy a program before heading into the iconic Wembley stadium to watch the Tampa Bay Buccaneers take on the New England Patriots. This is the third International Series Games I have been to in London, but the first time I have arrived hours early in order to participate in the NFL Tailgate party taking place in an empty lot alongside the stadium. It is filled with people, most of whom are wearing one of thirty-two NFL team

jerseys. You wouldn't know by looking at the crowd which two teams were playing, only that you were surrounded by people who loved American football. It's certainly not like any tailgate I have been to back in the US; there are no cars, coolers filled with beer, or grills cooking an array of meats. Instead, the lot is occupied by large displays of American football memorabilia and history. The centerpiece of the event is the Hall of Fame enclosure where the Vince Lombardi Trophy (which the winner of the Super Bowl receives each year) is on display, along with Super Bowl rings from each year the national championship game has been in existence. A number of bands and the Tampa Bay cheerleaders entertained the crowd as we all counted down the minutes until kickoff. (Field notes, 25/10/09)

The scene I set here alludes to how the game and its surroundings were altered to try to fit in with the mainly British audience. The 'tailgate' was aimed at providing entertainment and a history of the NFL, while the game itself focused on highlighting the best live aspects of the NFL in an iconic British venue.

In the past, countries around the world have hosted the American Bowl Series, which pitted two NFL teams against each other in a pre-season contest. While this brought NFL teams to Europe, these games were often second-class, as pre-season games do not count towards a team's record, and often star players sit out during these matches for fear of injury. The American Bowl Series and NFL Europe were inferior products because they exposed an international audience to only an introductory level of American football competition. The international fan base wanted higher quality games and the International Series was the next step (ESPN, 2007). Fans would finally have the opportunity to experience a regular season NFL game live, without having to travel across the world to do so. The International Series was a new approach to not only globalizing American football, but to spectacle as well. NFL Europe and the American Bowl Series could not provide international audiences with the same level of spectacle as the NFL provided in the United States on a weekly basis. It lacked the high quality players, the media attention, and the financial support required to put on such a show. The NFL decided that bringing one regular season game, along with all of the star players, media attention, and equipment, would make a larger impact on the international

sporting community than a whole season of inferior competition would with NFL Europe. They were pinning their hopes on the fact that a one-day spectacle would sell the sport of American football.

The ultimate goal is to have two regular season games held outside the US every year, and possibly even to expand the NFL regular season in order to accommodate these extra European based matches. The first International Series contest was held in 2005 in Mexico City, with the following four contests being held in London, starting in 2007. London was chosen as a host for the International Series because the UK was thought to have a huge NFL fan base left over from when the sport was popular on terrestrial TV in the 1980's. The league was convinced that the rest of the world held a fascination for the game, and that this series would capitalize upon a growing international interest in the sport. However, staging four years of the International Series in London was the safe option for the NFL (Lyne-Austen, 2008). The UK is an English speaking nation and is culturally similar to that of the United States. Cameron, a London Bombers coach who moved to London after growing up in Northern Ireland and working in the United States, agrees that the UK was the safe option for the International Series: "I think London was very central for the US from an accessibility stand point, not only for the teams but for the fans… If you go to Germany, for example, it's an extra couple of hours, which is probably not a good thing for the teams…"

The next phase in NFL global expansion seems to be the possibility of starting a franchise in London. It was a dream that hoped to be realized within the next ten years or so, according to NFLUK (BBC Sport, 2009). While no details about how having a European based team would work logistically, the proposition had certainly not gone unnoticed by the London Bombers. Some, like Harry, who works in the sports media industry, were skeptical about the proposition: "In terms of a London team in the NFL…I'm not so sure if that's a good idea." Chad, who followed the sport growing up in Australia, still had an optimistic view point, although he acknowledged the difficulty of it: "Yea, I think it could happen. But I think it will be hard because the NFL approaches the sport a different way from Europe." Shawne also believed in the dream, if only the NFL would really commit to the expansion: "It all depends on how much money the NFL is willing to throw at it. If the NFL is willing to make a

real commitment to it, then I think there is enough support over here for it to grow." Others disagreed and thought that the European sporting culture was just too different to support a professional American football league of any kind. Don, who has been exposed to the US sports system through his grandparents who live on the East Coast, gave this opinion:

> I find it difficult to imagine that happening. The sport in the States is so established with feeding from university level [American] football all the way back to elementary school, and stuff like that. It all feeds through to the NFL, and there just isn't that network in this country or any European country.

While these London Bombers players had differing opinions on the potential success of an NFL franchise in London, they seemed to be in agreement about one point, that the International Series was a better catalyst for NFL global expansion. This was due to the fact that an international audience was able to experience the spectacle of the NFL live with a game that counted, and where star players were involved. The NFL International Series was seen as a good transmitter of American football because it displayed the sport as entertainment, and not just as a game.

> The increased penetration of sport by capital and resultant infusion of spectacular, internationalized and glamorized forms of entertainment can be seen as an attempt to reduce the uncertainty of the sporting commodity, at least as far as its entertainment value is concerned (Whannel, 1986, p.130).

The spectacle which surrounded the event ensured that even if the game was dull, or the audience did not understand the sport itself, that it could still be entertaining.

Until recently, the NFL's only real global presence was the annual Super Bowl. Wenner (1998) called it the 'most important export for American culture' to a global sporting audience. However, shining the spotlight on American football's championship game was not enough to satisfy a globally ambitious National Football League; they wanted to bring the live game to an international audience. The global expansion of North American sports was driven by a desire to expand markets, maximize profits, and introduce products and services to the world. In the specific case of the NFL expansion into

Britain, the goal was to first sell broadcasting rights to television companies, as well as to sell NFL brand merchandise (Maguire, 1990). The expansion into hosting the NFL International Series aimed to secondly bring in gate receipts, alongside of continuing to use the media to promote the NFL as a brand. A distant third was the ambitious plan to expand the NFL to include international franchises.

However, the International Series cannot truly call itself a success until it leaves the UK and expands to other European countries, and eventually other international markets. This is especially true of Asia, where other US sports, such as baseball and basketball, have already found a market. Originally, countries such as Germany, Spain, and China had been mentioned as potential hosts for NFL games. Beijing had a pre-season game scheduled in 2007; however, it was canceled due to resources being focused on the London games (NFLUK, 2007b).

From the perspective of the NFL, it is not only the UK's public reaction which needs to be assessed; the reaction of fans back in the US and the teams themselves also have to be considered if the International Series is to be continued. One of the factors which may be measured when evaluating the success of this new international venture will be whether it was worth disrupting an NFL team's normal schedule in order to have them act as showpieces on an international stage. All along, this venture has been better received at the administrative level than at the coaching or playing level. Even American fans have had their own doubts about whether globalization is worth sacrificing their own access to 'America's game' (Jackson, 2008). As the International Series and the UK approach the end of their contractual agreement in 2011, the most pertinent question is whether or not the novelty factor has given way to a reliable and sustainable fan base, and if the venture has been profitable enough to counteract the inconvenience of interrupting the routines of NFL teams and fans.

If the International Series is considered a success, then the NFL has already considered expanding the regular season schedule to 17 or 18 weeks. This would decrease the number of pre-season games and could allow for the possibility of neutral site games to be played in developing markets, most notably abroad. This plan was rumored to have support from owners of the

league, as more regular season games bring in more fan interest. If some of those games are played on neutral sites, it would mean not having to give up any home games, as one team a year has had to do so far with the International Series. Giving up a home game not only disappoints fans, but it also disrupts the income of many local vendors who rely on the thousands of fans who attend the games (Jackson, 2008).

What was of the most importance to this research, however, was the impact of the NFL's expansion on the grassroots community of British American football. By comparison, Falcous and Maguire (2005) concentrated on the interaction between local basketball leagues in Britain and the NBA's presence. They posed the question of whether the two forms of the sport could co-exist successfully. For example, potential expansion of European based teams participating in the NBA could be threatening to the local leagues, in some opinions. While the NBA specifically denied any plans for this type of expansion, supporters of local basketball remained worried about the NBA's presence. While American football, too, has an international governing body which organizes local American football competition, its relationship to the NFL, as I will continue to discuss, is different from that of basketball.

So far, the future of the NFL International Series has yet to be determined. The expansion of American football in Europe, and specifically in Britain, is not only contingent on what will happen with the NFL International Series after its contract with London ends in 2011, but on what kind of lasting influence these games have had on creating fans out of the general population and increasing the participation at the grassroots level of competition.

The International Series and Grassroots British American Football

In the case of the globalization of the NFL brand of American football, its narrative was one which supported American sporting identity rather than British sporting identity. Sport is not just about the event; it is a dramatic presentation of a narrative construction. On the surface, the International Series may have catered towards education of the international population about the sport of American football, but the narrative underneath may lack substance for sustainability. Sporting narratives are told from a specific view point. The

meanings that people give to events are never naturally contained within the events themselves (Gruneau, 1989). Meanings are social productions which are constructed to be sold to a certain audience by giving the event a level of credibility. Media, especially in the form of television, aids in this ability for sport to be entertainment, but the fundamental character of the sport must also matter to the audience.

American football mattered to the London Bombers and, thus, they were aware of the fact that the sport existed as two completely separate entities; one as a commodity and the other as a leisure pursuit. When talking about the NFL's influence with interviewees, I ultimately wanted to know whether they believed the International Series, a commodity being sold by the NFL, was going to help American football at the grassroots level in Britain or not. Most answered that the new global initiative by the NFL certainly would not hurt their domestic leagues, but reaction on how much it would help differed. Rookie players usually had a more optimistic view on the level of influence, most likely because they were still new to the British American football culture. Ray, who watched American football on TV for years before joining the London Bombers, for example, said: "I think it is going to help an awful lot in terms of bringing it over here." Forrest, who only became interested in American football a few years ago when he started university, went into more detail as to why he felt the International Series was going to be a positive influence:

> I think it's only going to help. At the end of the day, American football is not a sport that is shown very much over in this country; it is starting to be, but still it's very late night television. I think with the extra coverage people will be more aware of it, people are going to get more interested in it. You know, it's one of those things like when we won the World Cup in 2003; rugby was still a minor sport. There was a professional league in this country, but the general public didn't really play it. It was more of a private school sport; it still is, but after we won the World Cup, the coverage became so much wider that people began to grasp it. And I think that is exactly what will happen with American football; the more coverage it gets, the more people

will know about it, the more people will get involved participating in it.

Jared, who used to attend the American Bowl games with his father, also said: "With proper NFL games live, the sport will have more incentive and more strength behind it. I would imagine it getting back to a high point within the next few years."

On the other side, the veteran players, and especially those involved in the administrative side of the club, were skeptical about how much the International Series was really going to help promote their amateur British leagues. For example, Bruce, who watched the sport on Channel 4 as a kid and started up a team in university, stated: "It hasn't done too much to help so far; it's always just been about promoting their own product. It has nothing to do with spreading the game…" Bob, an administrator and coach, went into a bit more detail about both the positive and negative sides of having the NFL play regular season games in London:

> It does and it doesn't help; and you've got two ways of looking at it. People that go and watch the NFL games at Wembley are seeing American football at its peak, so people have got very high expectations if they have been and watched games like that. Then they come and watch us and there is a gulf between the two. So people who have seen the NFL live are often disappointed if they come and watch us. But on the other side of the coin, it's been great for recruiting people to actually play the game. So, yes and no. The fact that the NFL puts no money into grassroots American football in this country is a disappointment. They run their organization here like a business, you know they are not really there for altruistic reasons; they are here to make money for their owners and shareholders. So, anyone who thinks the NFL is going to fall over itself to give us cash is going to be sadly disillusioned.

Jared agrees that it cannot hurt, but that it is not going to make much of a difference: "It's probably not helping the grassroots all that much, although it can't hurt." Finally, Ryan, who began playing American football after becoming disillusioned with playing rugby, had a much more pessimistic

attitude about the NFL International Series becoming an influential recruiting tool:

> No, I think you'll get fans who watch the NFL on Sky, but I don't think it will help attract fans to the game. You are getting sports fans, rather than people who want to play the game; there is absolutely no association… [The International Series game] was a prime opportunity to recruit generally and they [BAFA] didn't take advantage of it. It's about making the most of opportunities and that was a blatant missed opportunity.

One area which the British leagues have focused on, and where the International Series seems to have had a positive influence, was at the youth level. The NFL has co-hosted a number of youth clinics and the BAFA has made youth development a priority. Players like Reggie see the presence of the NFL as an incentive for young players to work towards something: "I was actually talking to one of the youth guys today and he is planning on going to America, to an American school because he wants to play American football…and he wants to go out there to university. A good dream…" For dreams like this to become a reality, however, young players do have to decide to focus on playing American football early on. Justin, who also joined his university team after becoming disillusioned with the culture surrounding rugby, emphasized the need for more places like the London Bombers club and the aforementioned Bristol sports academy: "We will get young players interested in it, but there needs to be the correct infrastructure in place, because if you don't support them, then they will lose interest and move on to something else. But in general, it is a good tool to build on…"

This emphasis on the youth, however, was rerouting attention away from the International Player Development Program, which gave older athletes the opportunity to try-out for a spot on NFL practice squads. This program provided a direct link between the local British American football league and the global NFL American football. It rewarded athletes for their athletic skills by offering them the opportunity to play the sport at the highest level of competition. I received a mixed reaction about this specific program. Forrest, a player who had been invited to participate in the program, explained his experience like this:

That was basically a combine trying to develop and measure your abilities, strength, speed and all of those kinds of attributes. And then they keep an eye on my progress, or I can contact them directly for coaching advice and stuff like that. Basically they keep an eye on my development playing individually. I will be invited back to do the same combine next year to see how I've improved or worsened... And eventually, if I have enough talent, they would recommend me to try out in the USA.

He went on to explain that one of the main aims of programs like this was to begin to properly test athletes and compile a standardized database which scouts could use to compare British athletes to American athletes:

The problem in this country is that Americans don't have a way of judging ability in terms of American football unless a player were playing over in the United States because then they could measure them up against other American players. There is no database in this country of players' abilities, and that is something they have to work on. It is something they are beginning to do with player development programs.

On the other hand, Ryan saw programs like the NFL International Player Development Program as distractions, and wanted the focus to be on developing youth programs akin to those discussed earlier:

I am not a fan of the NFL in this country when they have international programs because it is all about ticking boxes. If you are big enough, if you can bench press 100kg, if you can run the 40 in this time, no matter how good an American footballer you are, as long as you tick all the boxes then you will go to the NFL trials. I think the NFL program is disruptive because in this country it should be about helping the kids go as far as they can, and if they can go to college in the States and get a good education as well as play American football, then that should be the focus... I was reading an interview with an American coach about a British kid out there and he said 'yea, he is ok, but he needs to work on his football skills'. That to me says he is big and strong but he doesn't know what gap he needs to go into... I've seen kids in this country who I think are good football players and with

the right encouragement could play a fairly decent level of college ball and that's what we need to be pushing for.

It is possible that the NFL may have agreed with Ryan's logic as the NFL International Player Development Program has, for the moment, suspended operation. The NFL has shifted its focus to the youth of British American football as opposed to the adult players. If the NFL is going to increase their pool of international talent, then the youth are the best group to invest in because they can be molded to fit into the aforementioned player-pathway. Returning to Falcous and Maguire (2005) and the comparison to the NBA's global expansion, there is a key difference in their respective globalization strategies. The NBA specifically targeted the development of a grassroots community amongst the youth of Britain, as a key component of their own growth. They believed that getting a basketball into the hands of a child would not only grow the sport itself, but also increase their interest in buying NBA merchandise and watching the NBA on television. The NBA had a strategy which relied on not only growing its own brand, but also on growing the sport itself through grassroots play.

While some sort of relationship exists between the grassroots community and the NFL's own global expansion, it was certainly not on the same level as the relationship between the NBA and its respective grassroots base in Britain. In fact, what stood out from all of my own data about the relationship between the new global initiative by the NFL and British grassroots was that there seems to be very little correlation between the increase in interest about the NFL and that of the British grassroots game. The NFL narrative was not utilized effectively in conjunction with the expansion of the British grassroots leagues. The general consensus on the London Bombers squad was that the grassroots level of American football should have been able to use these NFL events as a catalyst for expansion and development. The NFL provided the British leagues with an opportunity to promote itself and 'piggy back' on the media exposure generated by this venture. Many of my interviewees, however, believed that this chance was badly managed and that the British leagues have so far missed out on a great media opportunity.

A Missed Media Opportunity

As I outlined in my earlier review of the literature, sport is at the forefront of the local-global media analysis. When sport became a commercial form of entertainment, the media became an intricate part of sporting life (Poulton, 2004). Researchers such as Blain, Boyle and O'Donnell (1993) and Chandler (1988) have pointed out that there exist differences in the way Americans and the British consume sport, and that television especially is bound to work within certain social contexts. The images and narratives represented tend to reflect the traditional values of the home nation. Referencing Hall (1973) and Kinkema and Harris (1992), sports media was re-represented to an audience through images and narratives which could not be fully separated from their social context. In this way, sports media is a symbolic construction. Different people will interpret sport in different ways depending upon their own unique social, political, and cultural backgrounds. The producers of sports media understand this concept and they use specific ideologies to historically attract audiences. Pearson (1986) analyzed baseball and how a sporting audience is more active in the decoding process. With sport, feeling and emotion are an important part of the process. The difficulty arises with sports such as American football because globally the sport may not translate in the way the producer originally intended. Sports are socially specific leisure activities in that they were shaped by a certain group of people who encompassed a specific set of social values. During globalization, this engrained set of social values inevitably undergoes a 'sea change' of active translation by a new audience (Bigsby, 1975).

American football, thus, is encoded in a way that reflects its 'Americanness'. However, as the sport is exported globally, and specifically to Britain, it must be reinterpreted to reflect the audience's 'Britishness'. As I have pointed out in the previous two chapters, the grassroots level of American football has made concessions in order to adapt the sport to fit within the British sports space. The NFL, on the other hand, has not made as many concessions and has relied on American influenced spectacle and

commercialization to promote the sport abroad. Despite the grassroots efforts, in 2009, British American football was still an 'outsider' sport, a foreign oddity which survived within its own culture in the British sporting landscape. The NFL was also still an 'outsider' sport, although to a lesser extent, surviving mainly on late night and satellite television, and in conjunction with the International Series game.

Many of the negative comments about the relationship between the NFL International Series and the British grassroots during my interviews had to do with a lack of media attention. Shawne's response epitomizes the disappointment in the current relationship between the NFL and grassroots American football: "I don't think they market it right and it is causing people to drop away from it." The media's relationship with American football is important in the present and future status of the sport because there is a history of interdependency between the two. Wenner (1998) referred to the meshing of consumerism, media, and sport as simply mediasport. Those who control the media essentially control which sports will not only be covered, but how they will be covered. "Virtually every surge in the popularity of sport has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in the coverage provided to sport by the media" (McChesney, 1989, p.49). This means that the media plays an important role in constructing the framework through which we define our relationship with sport.

Robertson's theory of glocalization (2001) suggested that commodities and the media were not coercive, but rather they provide materials to be used by individuals and local groups. When sports become commercialized, they need the media to cover and promote their product. The NFL International Series received coverage by local, national, and international media sources. While this media exposure has decreased over the four years the games have been played in London, the media have still played their part in covering the NFL's expansion of American football to Britain. The British grassroots, on the other hand, received very little coverage as a result of this additional coverage of the NFL. Most reporting of the British leagues only happened through local media outlets accessed by individual team efforts. Therefore, local media controlled what kind of American football received the most attention.

The media excitement that surrounded the announcement and subsequent spectacle put on by the NFL in 2007 was notable. Newspapers dedicated substantial space to the game and the broader issue of the globalization of American football, while online blogs and websites were inundated with opinions on whether or not the International Series would be a success. Each year, however, the media interest in the event has decreased. The amount of space dedicated to the game by 2009 in major newspapers was minimal, leaving the primary coverage to dedicated American football websites and blogs. Again, this was most likely due to the fact that the novelty of the game had already begun to wear off, and that, despite the best efforts by the NFL, the International Series had not made a significant imprint on the British sports media. Coming back to the NBA comparison, print media attention was also scarce and implied a lack of widespread infiltration into mainstream British sport. In regards to television, American basketball enjoyed a short block of coverage which reached close to 1 million viewers (Falcous & Maguire, 2005). However, this too was only considered to reach the periphery of British sports fans. By 2003, the NBA had been banished from terrestrial television to the satellite only station, Sky.

What came as even more of a disappointment to many was the lack of continued support by the NFL for the British grassroots game. In 2007, when the first International Series game was announced, the NFL, NFLUK and BAFA seemed to want to work in cooperation to increase awareness of not just the NFL, but also the opportunities to play American football in the UK. By 2009, the BAFA had taken a back seat to the plans of NFLUK to make the NFL the number five most watched sport in Britain (BBC Sport, 2007), along with hopes of getting an NFL franchise for the city and possibly hosting the Super Bowl. The unfortunate truth of this decline was demonstrated in the amount of exposure the NFL has granted BAFA and its partner organizations in the official International Series program, and subsequent advertisement space and exposure time in the stadium. In both 2007 and 2008, the grassroots level of American football received advertisement space in the form of a half page ad for the Get Into American Football website aimed at recruiting players, volunteers, and fans for the BAFA league. There were also articles about British born American football players who had made it into the NFL, most

only onto practice squads through the International Player Development scheme. Also, NFLUK and its vision for American football in Britain featured heavily in these programs. In 2009, however, the official program contained no advertisements for any BAFA organizations, and the number of NFLUK dedicated articles had also fallen. In place of any BAFA associated articles, both Sky Sports and Channel 5 had advertisements about their NFL shows.

These subtle marketing changes may not have been noticed by many, but those on the London Bombers team were disheartened by the lack of effort put forth by both the NFL and BAFA. It seems as though both organizations had an opportunity to promote the globalization of not just the NFL brand of American football, but also the amateur level of the game. Cameron used an example of how the NFL and BAFA could have used each other to better promote the sport. In 2008, both NFL teams involved in the International Series had British born players on their practice squad rosters:

> I think the NFL could have been a little smarter and could have benefitted even more had they changed their rules in terms of the English kids that were on the practice squads to allow them to play, just for that one game, especially when there were English kids on the two teams last year. That would have been blown out of the water, and it would have done an awful lot more from a commercial standpoint for them.

The media and marketing campaigns surrounding the NFL International Series were targeted towards the promotion of American football as spectacle instead of a British leisure activity, while the British grassroots community chose to emphasize a different perspective on what American football meant to those participating in it in Britain.

This excerpt was written after a conversation I had with an American player who was new to our team. He made comments on the lack of publicity by the British American football leagues, stating that he would have joined the team sooner had he known they existed:

> After practice some of the players decided they wanted to go to pub. I was offered a ride by one of the newest members of the team, a fellow American now living in London. The two of us, along with an English born veteran player, got to talking about how he had found the London

Bombers. Once a captain for an Ivy League American football team, he had thought his days of playing American football were over. He admitted that in the many years he had lived in the London area since leaving university, he had never heard of American football being played. He had joined a work-sponsored rugby team, and it was through contacts on this team that he first heard about the British American football league. After some research of his own, he came across the London Bombers and decided to join the team. This wasn't the first time I had heard a story similar to this. The British American football league is simply not advertised, and many athletes who may be interested in playing the sport simply do not have access to the right kind of information. (Field notes, 26/04/09)

He was not the only athlete to make comments about the lack of attention the sport gets due to the league's own lethargy when it comes to promotion. Again, some of this blame is put on the shoulders of amateurism and the presence of the NFL; how it is promoting itself in Britain has brought this issue to the forefront in the minds of those individuals involved in the grassroots development of American football in Britain.

When sport exists in a truly amateur form, i.e. just for the participants, there is actually little need for advertisement of games, scores or league standings. The people involved already know these things and they are the only ones who really matter. At the moment, British American football operates largely under these conditions. There have been minimal attempts made to promote the sport on a national scale, indicated by comments in my field research that many athletes were unaware of the existence of the British leagues for several years. Of course, it was not just down to the governing body of American football to initiate media campaigns in the shadow of the NFL; the media outlets must also want to promote both the NFL and British American football. They must want to connect to and retell the narrative of the sport. It is true that the print and television media depend on sports coverage for content and advertising (McChesney, 1989). However, these media outlets will only print or schedule sports which are popular amongst the vast majority of subscribers. American football does not have the mass appeal of other British

sports such as association football, rugby football, cricket or formula 1 because the British public does not connect with the American football narrative.[9]

American football played in the United States has a special relationship with one particular type of media, television. In fact, American football is often said to have a symbiotic relationship with television (Real, 1998). "The marriage of the National Football League to the television networks has been the most intimate and mutually enriching in American sports" (Oriard, 2007). This is not just because of the media rights associated with companies bidding huge amounts of money for exposure through these two outlets; it is also because American football arguably looks its best and its most exciting for spectators when viewed on a television. Television gives precedence to certain sports through attaching an importance to the event (McChesney, 1989). Therefore, breaking into the global television market is of the utmost importance for a sport with such a strong affiliation with television. The NFL has already addressed this need to break into the British television market, but the British grassroots have not been able to expand into this form of media yet. The need for televised support was pointed out on multiple occasions by interviewees as participants understood that the media had tremendous influence over what sports people watched and consumed. Bob expanded on this idea by talking to me about what the BAFA needed to do in order to get more attention from the general public. In his view, the NFL had opened a door which those involved in the amateur leagues needed to exploit:

> The big thing is TV coverage; if you can crack TV coverage, then you start getting money because sponsors want to put money into things when they can see their names appearing on TV. Until that happens on a regular basis, 20 minutes of Britbowl coverage every year isn't going to be enough to attract people to invest a lot of money into the game, so that is the problem.

Jerry echoed this point and emphasized the need for the British grassroots to promote more: "What I would hope is that the league now wakes up to the fact

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[9] After data was collected about the London Bombers for this thesis a number of television shows surfaced which either focused on American football or had segments about the sport, mostly as a result of the NFL presence. Channel 5 had a weekly morning show dedicated to the NFL in 2010, Blue Peter did a segment on American football in Britain where the Bombers taught the presenters how to play the sport, and in early 2011 Vernon Kay announced he would also host a TV show about American football in Britain.

that there are people starting to take note, and however they decide to do it, they get more involved in putting some sort of promotion out there."

All in all, these missed media opportunities seem to have disheartened the enthusiasm surrounding the NFL International Series for those who play the sport in Britain. Many of the people I interviewed would still attend the games and watch the NFL on television, but they were able to separate the ambitions of the NFL and their own ambitions for the future of the British American Football League. If such a discontinuity has already appeared between the British American football athletes and the NFL, one can only speculate that the Great British public has not and will not be influenced by the NFL's spectacle as a springboard for adopting the domestic competition.

Global vs. Local: Popular Views of American Football

This excerpt was written during the beginning of my time with the team when we were still practicing on the artificial turf fields in Northeast London. The facility is a popular hangout for local children to play association football. Our American version of football often attracts attention from passers-by, but also from these young fans of the association variety of football:

> It's the dead of winter and the London Bombers are practicing on artificial sports fields in Northwest London. Normally used as association football pitches, we hire out one of two fields for four hours every Sunday during the pre-season. It is not uncommon for groups of children to barge onto our occupied pitch and try to start up an association football game. They are chased off by our coaches or the groundskeepers under protests by the children. This day in particular, a group of boys was asked to leave, and as they were walking off I overheard their remarks. They were complaining about the fact that these were association football pitches and that the American footballers had no business using them. This statement was cheered by the rest of the group amid comments about how stupid American football was and how unfair it was that they could not play their game. Overhearing this conversation hammered home the fact

that the general public does not respect the game of American football. (Field notes 15/2/09)

What was so important about this incident was that these young children had a specific vision of what American football was not, a *British* game. They somehow felt as though their association football games were more worthy of the fields than the American football practice that was scheduled to take place. This reinforces the struggle both the grassroots league and the NFL have to win over the general British population to support and follow both versions of American football currently being played and covered in Britain.

The organizers understood that the attendees of the International Series would be a mix of die hard fans and those who would go for the novelty factor. Their aim was to put on a spectacle which would not only appease those who were already fans, but convince those skeptics in attendance that American football had substance on an international level. Of course, there is always an element of cultural protectionism where not everyone was welcoming the NFL's attempts to re-enter the UK sporting landscape. Some may also worry about the effect another 'American invasion' may have. The American sports media has already influenced the way international sport is consumed, and this new wave of American influence has some concerned with what is next (Carlson, 2007). In this way, the NFL has had an incredible challenge on its hands by attempting to grow a nonindigenous sport in a country which has such strong historical ties to its own sports. The British grassroots has also had to deal with this challenge of growing a nonindigenous sport, but they have dealt with the obstacles in a different way. They have not relied on spectacle or novelty; British grassroots football has adapted itself to fit with the British sporting habitus.

Interviewees were conscious of the continuing uphill battle the NFL and the British leagues have to convince the general public to adopt American football. Oriard underlined the importance of the general population understanding the fundamental structure of the game: "Those who respond to its fundamental nature will remain fans no matter what the packaging, while those who respond to the packaging may be briefly attracted but will not become real fans" (Oriard, 2007, p.199). Don provided a lengthy opinion about how he thought the general population was divided on the sport of American football:

I think there are three groups of people who view American football. There's the group that have absolutely no interest and didn't even know it existed in this country, and that is a large majority. Then you've got the people that have played rugby or other English sports all their life and give you a bit of stick because they don't really understand the rules. It's just pure ignorance of how it works and most of the people that criticize would absolutely love it, I am absolutely convinced of that. And then there is the third group which is the people that, if not play, certainly watch the NFL. So they are aware of how it works, they are aware of the rules, and maybe they even follow their local senior team or university team.

Chad, who joined the team through being friends with veteran players, had quite a negative attitude about the struggles the organizations will have to go through in order to change people's opinions:

I think they are kind of pushing metaphoric **** up a hill, in the sense that there is already a negative approach to American football. People are very closed minded and very stuck in what they do, so it's difficult to change their mind about something and make them start to see the benefits of it.

Don continued to agree with Chad that it was going to be challenging to convince the British population that American football was worth their while:

As far as what people think and public opinion, I think they have quite a battle to fight, just because of general ignorance. It is a very difficult sport to get information about, so you just give up. I think making it more palpable, not in the playing style, but maybe in terms of websites or commentary, is a good way to introduce people. And get some characters; it needs to have some players that the general public can get to know.

Justin and Shawne went into more detail about why people struggled with the sport. Justin explained: "In general, I think people struggle with the stop start of the game. It's not like watching straight 20 minutes like in rugby or [association] football here. So I think that is one of the reasons why it is not accepted." While Shawne, the former professional association football player, said: "Over here in the UK we are so used to sports having a flow, so like

soccer, rugby, rugby league there is constant movement all the time. And people are used to that kind of sport now, so they demand that entertainment."

Both DeMarcus and Bruce had a more profound explanation about why the British found it difficult to accept American football; for them, it was about deep seated national identity. It was about the fact that passion for a sport cannot be artificially created. Marcus, whose friends in university influenced him to pick up the sport, told me:

> It's difficult to have a new sport, especially one called American football. At this point in time, people's minds are more towards trying to find something uniquely British rather than importing something else. So I think that will be its biggest problem, trying to change people's perceptions.

And Bruce, who studied the sociology of sport as a Master's degree, concurred by saying:

> Despite the fact that it is an Anglo-Saxon sport per say, it's still foreign to most little Englander Brits that see it as not from here and an American cultural invasion. They would object to it purely on those grounds… So there are some deeply engrained phobias that it has to overcome in order to compete with rugby and other sports.

One of the major concerns for the NFL and the International Series was how quickly the novelty factor would wear off, and whether they had done enough to create a hardcore fan base which would continue to support their product. Casual sports fans need to have a reason to commit themselves to the game, the leagues, and the teams (Lyne-Austen, 2008). I have already suggested that the NFL has not done enough in respect to this ability to create long lasting fandom, because the narrative of NFL American football has not resonated with the British sporting habitus. In regards to the British grassroots, however, Bob already believes that the current British American fan base was more knowledgeable about the sport when compared to the 1980's fan base:

> When we first started playing, we used to get hundreds of people coming to games, but then it was a novelty. People had only ever seen it on TV and so they came down to have a look for themselves. Now the people who actually come to the games are far more knowledgeable about it, they understand what the game is about and

they are actually following a particular team rather than just coming down out of curiosity. So from that point of view, the fan base is a real fan base, rather than people that are curious.

In this case, Bob respected the currently small fan base in the UK over what was happening in the 1980's. This was because he believed the fans British American football has now are more passionate and knowledgable about the game, whereas before he saw a lot of people latching on to the sport because it was trendy. While having a small knowledgeable fan base surrounding the British leagues was desirable in terms of creating real fans of the sport, it was still too small a number of fans to make an impact on the overall structure of the British sports space.

What Bob was alluding to was the fact that British American football does not want to repeat what happened in the 1980's. American football in that time period turned out to simply be a trend, a novelty sport to entertain the masses while association football sorted itself out. By British standards, it was 'over the top' and people were drawn in by the spectacle. However, without a proper organizational structure or forethought into how the sport could sustain itself after the initial fascination was over, the league collapsed. In this way, the British grassroots actually may have an edge over what the NFL is currently providing American football fans because it is taking its time to build up a connection with its participants and fans. They want British American football to be respected as a *British* sport, as well as retaining its uniqueness as an imported American sport.

NFL and British American Football, a Discordant Relationship

My data illuminated the fact that participation in British American football today is influenced by athletes' personal preferences in terms of the 'ludic'/play qualities of the game as opposed to the potential for athletic glory within the British sports space. The media sport production complex is still a factor in the long-term sustainability of American football in Britain, but it is no longer the most influential factor. In other words, British American football athletes no longer see American football as an American novelty which follows a trend; they see it as a viable and distinctive option for athletic competition

within Britain. However, the NFL presence in Britain does not complement this outlook. "The intention of the NFL is not so much to encourage more people to play American football through this greater media attention but to encourage more people to follow the sport" (Van Bottenburg 2003, p.1559). Van Bottenburg recognized the disconnect between the spectacle driven, commodity that is NFL American football and the American football played by amateurs throughout Europe. He argued that continuing to promote the game as a commodity will ultimately fail, much as it did in the 1980's. Instead, he argues for American football to follow the path of volleyball:

> It seems obvious that the sensible thing to do is to reverse the strategy and adopt the one successfully followed by another American sport: volleyball. This involves seeking connections with groups who are receptive to the sport so that a higher level of interest can be realized and a broader public mobilized (Van Bottenburg 2003, p.1560).

This is a strong argument because it emphasizes that sport has deeper meaning to individuals who play it, than those who merely consume it (Houlihan, 2008). Social embededness and a sport's ability to adapt and connect to qualities of a national identity is, therefore, important in the success of the globalization of that sport.

The NFL's global expansion could have provided a platform for British American football to promote itself. However, this has not happened; the interdependency chain has not yet become fully formed between these two organizations. The NFL controls the transplantation of American football as a commodity, while the BAFA controls the promotion of American football as a legitimate British leisure activity. What Maguire (1990) argued was that no one group had a monopoly over the 'touchdown' of American football in Britain. He argued that while the NFL had a conscious strategy by which they wanted to globalize their game in the 1980's, a British audience actively interpreted the product in a distinctive way. This active interpretation is still continuing today, although on two different levels, with both the new NFL International Series and with the British grassroots.

Commercial sports aim to draw mass audiences by attracting not only people who have a technical understanding of the sport, but also those who enjoy the surrounding hype, drama, and spectacle of the entertainment side of

sport. With NFL American football, people with no technical knowledge can still enjoy the general drama of athletes taking risks and facing clear physical danger. They are also more inclined to pay attention to end-zone dances, cheerleaders, and fireworks than the intricate details associated with actually playing the game. The NFL packages all of these elements of spectacle and, thus, successfully attracts mass audiences, even in events like the NFL International Series (McKnight, 2007). Wembley Stadium sells out every year because those who come to the game are attracted by the entire entertainment package, not necessarily because spectators have a relationship to the teams or the game. Globalization of a sport reliant on these types of spectacles can lose sight of the importance of local interpretations. The longevity of the International Series is contingent on whether the interest in spectacle can be transformed into interest in the sport generally. So far, however, the results of my field research have blanketed the sustainability of this globalization attempt with doubt, because the NFL and British grassroots were not working together on globalizing the sport in its entirety; each was focused solely on its own agenda.

At the grassroots level, there is little room for this type of spectacle. In British American football, that is pretty much all there is, a game. That game is played at its most basic, without any of the showmanship. A consequence of this is that if spectators do not understand the nuances of the game, then they have little else to attract them to spending an afternoon watching British American football. The emphasis of grassroots sport is to teach the game and to allow anyone the opportunity to participate in it. By all means, the focus is on winning, but it is also on playing a technically proficient game and being inclusive. This is why it has become more crucial at this level of play for the sport to adapt to local customs and culture. It has had to conform because it does not have spectacle to fall back on.

Due to having these different agendas, it can be said that the presence of the NFL certainly raised awareness of American football in Britain, but it did not specifically promote the amateur British leagues. In a way, this was the true measure of the NFL's influence. Robertson (2001) argued that the world is growing more pluralistic, and Nederveen Pieterse (1995, 2004) argued that sports can be hybrid forms which combine the local with the global. In this

respect, British American football can be understood as having plural forms, or as being a hybrid sport, since in Britain it has adopted multiple meanings. American football in Britain is both a commodity and a pastime. However, just because the sport exists in these two distinctive forms, there is little interdependency between them. The NFL's once a year spectacle in London has had minimal influence on the sustainability of American football into the British sporting landscape. This is because the British have yet to fully translate NFL American football narrative into something with which the general British public, and not just those who actively participate in the sport, can identify.

However, the British leagues have addressed this issue of national identity on their own by creating and altering their leagues to correspond with the desires of their own athletes and culture. The future of the International Series is unknown, but if the NFL wants to maintain momentum for true international expansion, then it should follow the lead of the NBA and make a concerted effort to support the grassroots level of the sport, alongside its own agenda. It must realize the plurality of the world, and that successfully globalized sports must cater towards both local and global traditions. It must want to build the game up at all levels, in order to continue to capture a supportive international fan base. At the moment, the International Series is only a stepping stone towards a truly globalized game of American football. Despite this, the British leagues are still slowly growing, and they have their own goals for what American football could and should be in Britain.

The following excerpt comes from my experience at the British national championship game. While the game was hyped-up amongst members of the British American football community, I was surprised to enter the facility and find how small the crowd was for a game that was supposed to represent the best in British American football talent:

> I quickly gathered up my medical pack and chased the team down the corridor and into the tunnel that led to the field. I hadn't had the opportunity to see the field or the crowd that awaited yet, as preparation for the National Championship, the biggest game of our season, had kept me very busy in the locker room all afternoon. I was full of anticipation and excitement about finally playing in a proper stadium in front of a large crowd. As I ran out of the tunnel and turned

the corner towards our sideline, I was suddenly filled with disappointment. The stadium was practically empty. There could not have been more then a few hundred people in the stands; I was shocked. It was comforting to see so many London Bombers fans, but many of them were the dedicated friends and family of players. There seemed to be very few American football fans, and with the way Wembley sells out every year, I was disappointed that the grassroots leagues did not have more British American football fans than this…
(Field notes 27/09/09)

This final excerpt summarizes what the British grassroots leagues' main hurdle is in further developing the sport. While they may have the numbers of players to currently sustain a playing season, those players do not have the emotional support of the public to back their own love of and dedication to the sport. While most of these individuals have stated they play the sport not for the attention it brings them, but for the pure love of it, one must consider just how long that type of emotional attachment to the sport can sustain it in an environment as hostile as the British sports space.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that the two branches of American football in Britain, the British grassroots and the NFL, are not working together to globalize the sport of American football. In the opinion of the London Bombers players, the NFL should have been able to use the existence of the British grassroots to better connect with their audience, and the British grassroots should have been able to utilize the media exposure surrounding the International Series to promote themselves. Each branch is concerned with only its own objectives for the sport. The NFL's main concern is over selling American football as a product, whereas the British grassroots is focused on domestic participation and competition. While both forms have existed within the British sports space since the 1980's, neither form on its own has been able to permanently alter American football's existence as a minority sport within the British sports space.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

General Conclusions

This thesis sought to explore the culture of British American football through a number of interconnected sociological ideas and themes. In this last chapter, I will reflect upon the theoretical models utilized to frame, collect, and analyze my data. These conclusions arose from the combination of the researcher's and participants' experiences to produce a collective narrative of the 2009 London Bombers British American football season within a sociological context. While this study has focused on one particular group of individuals within one particular branch of British American football, my data illuminates some of the issues which surround the globalization of a culturally specific sport in general. Finally, I will conclude with some thoughts about reflexivity and the limitations of my study.

My research was primarily concerned with the articulation of the local/global relationship within the context of British American football. In chapter 2, I introduced multiple theories of globalization which had previously been used to address the globality of sport and specifically of American football. Some of these theories focused on the Westernization or Americanization of cultures, while others emphasized how global sports are products of local/global interplay. My goal was to explore the question of how local and global processes influence the construction of the culture of British American football at a grassroots level. I argued that the focus should be upon the individual athletes who have chosen to play the sport, because it is these people who are adapting the sport and giving British American football its *British* identity. Therefore, I contest that we should shift away from a focus on the general population and the invasion and challenge of 'American' sport to 'British' sport or on the idea that American football is a cultural oddity which has been remanded to the periphery of British sporting culture. The thesis has found that American football has been globalized in a way that complements the existing British sporting system by adapting itself to meet the desires of a pool of 21st-century athletes who are contesting the historical boundaries of British sports which have, in the past, defined a nation.

My review of literature in chapter 2 demonstrated that much of the early work on British American football focused on the processes involved in globalization. Maguire's work primarily emphasized the media-sport production complex and how American football had become a commodity within Britain. This difference is important because my research shows that American football exists on multiple levels within Britain; it exists as a commodity in the form of the NFL and as a leisure activity in the form of the amateur British American football leagues. Therefore, the focus of Maguire's work was different from the focus of my work, which concentrated on the individuals who *played* American football in Britain as opposed to those people who only *consumed* it. It is my belief that a focus on the athletes who play British American football offers a better definition of how the *sport* has been globalized, and not just of how American sporting spectacle has been globalized.

I was not the first academic to study American football in Britain; I was however, the first to utilize ethnographic techniques to research the culture of British American football. The methodology, introduced in chapter 4, which I chose to explore the British American football culture of 2009 emphasized an interactionist approach to the sociological study of sport. I chose to undertake an ethnography of the British American football community in order to attain a depth of knowledge about the culture which surrounds the sport and influences player participation and identity. My ethnographic research consisted of participant observation and interviews which took place over the course of an entire British American football season. I chose a London based premier level British American football team because of their geographical location and their ability to provide me with the highest caliber of athletic talent and coaching. The team was also selected because they were willing to allow me to become an 'insider' within their club, and participate both as a researcher and as a member of their sideline staff. Gaining this form of access was crucial for attaining the type of data necessary to complete this study about British American football because I was able to understand the sport from the perspective of those who played it.

I wanted to concentrate on individual athletes within this thesis so I utilized theorists such as Castellis (1997) and Rowe (2003), who addressed the

debate between the local and the global on a micro-level by arguing that individuals' sense of national identity had not been crushed by the processes of globalization, but that local identities have served to offer resistance to capitalist globalization. Thus, the impact of globalization on identity becomes a matter of interplay between globality and localizing forces. The data collected in this thesis has added to the debate on the relationship between the local and the global because it has focused on how individuals and the local British sporting culture have affected the global expansion of American football. Therefore, this thesis was primarily about focusing on the individual's perspective of the social significance of one particular sport, American football, within the context of the local-global debate (the local British sporting culture, vs. the globally ambitious American sporting culture).

These previously mentioned globalization theories alone could not explain the social field of British American football. As I have already stated, my research was focused on the individual players within the London Bombers organization and, therefore, this research took on a framework that emphasized the micro. Theories of globalization focus more on macro-frameworks and, thus, I needed an alternative theoretical approach in order to fully understand how the local is influencing the development of American football as a British sport. I found this with the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1984) whose concepts of distinction, habitus, capital, and field were used to frame how British athletes have interpreted American football to meet their own needs. I chose to primarily reference Bourdieu because his theories provided conceptual tools with which to understand British American football. The use of Bourdieu has enabled me to develop two themes which characterized the processes involved in defining the sport of British American football. First, that it is a distinct sport with British athletes wanting to step away from standardized 'British' sports. At the same time, American football in Britain is adapting itself to be less like its American counterpart. Therefore, British American football's distinction comes in two forms which address both the sport's 'Britishness' and its 'Americaness'. Secondly, despite this possession of distinction, the sport also exists as an American, media-driven import in the form of the NFL (and specifically the International Series). Therefore, the sport's attempts at

transformation at the grassroots level still have the spectacle and success of the NFL influencing its development.

With regard to the first of these themes, the use of Bourdieu's theory of distinction highlighted how the characteristics of British American football's identity are both a reflection of the needs of the British athletes to appease their 'Britishness', while at the same time wanting a sport that is distinctive from what they are used to. Bourdieu stated his view on the existence of a hybridity among globalized sports because of the complex relationship between the global and the local like this:

> a sporting practice which, in its technical 'intrinsic' definition, always presents a great elasticity, thereby allowing for very different, even opposed, uses, can also change meanings… In fact, a sport frequently receives two very different meanings at the same time (Bourdieu 1988, p.158).

This was the single most important thread that ran throughout this thesis; that American football could, and has, taken on multiple meanings, which were dependent upon the nation in which it was being played. Specifically in terms of this London based, premier level team, the local needs of the British American football athletes were met when the sport was able to adapt to fit within the British sporting habitus. In order to theorize how this has happened, I chose to utilize Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field to emphasize how individuals within a group can affect this type of change. I focused on the British grassroots, as opposed to the global ambitions of the NFL, because it is at this level where the sport is developing and shifting identity, as opposed to simply being consumed as a sporting spectacle. The globalization of American football cannot be measured just by how popular the American version of the game is; it should also be explained by exploring the ways through which the sport is able to infiltrate a country's sports space and what concessions it has had to make to do so.

In chapter 5, I began to explore the construction of a British American football identity and deduced that this identity was constructed through a melding of global influences, the traditionally American aspects of American football, and local influences, the British sporting culture. The characteristics of British American football which I described in this chapter were examples of

physical, cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984) in the form of the melding of the mental and physical, diversity, and camaraderie. The unique combination of these characteristics drew British athletes to the sport because they were looking for something unique and different in which to participate. They highlighted its roots as an *American* sporting pastime and were the characteristics which were the most superficial in terms of defining British American football identity. Despite its 'sea change', British American football still retained the same rules, equipment, and terminology as American football in the United States, and these characteristics were what initially drew London Bombers players to participate in the sport.

Bourdieu's theory of distinction (1984) suggests that the choice of British American football is about differentiating oneself from someone who played an alternative sport, such as association football or rugby football. British American football offered something distinctive, as it provided athletes with an alternative to the mainstream sports they were exposed to on a daily basis. The basis for this distinction was the sport's 'Americanness'. What this chapter importantly pointed to was that British American football retained many of the characteristics of American American football because of this desire for distinction. Those involved in British American football adopted the American pastime as their own because they valued these characteristics. The emphasis on the mental component drew out aspects of the athlete's cultural capital pertaining to their level of discipline, the American football hierarchy, and the utilization of technology. The physical capital of these athletes was expressed through the necessity of possessing a hegemonic masculinity. Diversity was also a valued part of the team's social capital, as it encouraged diverse physical attributes and diverse personalities to come together. Finally, the camaraderie of the London Bombers highlighted the symbolic and social capitals which kept athletes committed to the team and to the sport in general, as they cherished the family-like dedication of the club. The London Bombers' players believed that other British sports did not offer these same characteristics in the same unique combination.

Within the chapter I also considered that the London Bombers' sporting practices were part of a larger lifestyle choice, and that the social meanings attached to their sport were not always clearly defined; they could have multiple

meanings depending upon the actor. Sport is, therefore, open to interpretations, and American football in Britain exemplifies this ability to be interpreted. More broadly, it supports the idea that British American football is an example of how globalization of sport occurs in multidimensional ways. Bourdieu argued that "…the appearance of a new sport or a new way of practicing an already established sport causes a restructuring of the sport of sporting practices and a more or less complete redefinition of the meaning attached to the various practices" (Bourdieu, 1978, p.833). This is what has happened, and is continuing to happen, with British American football. This restructuring makes British American football a hybrid sport. It is a cross between long-standing American influenced traditions, rules, and characteristics, with British sporting identity.

Within this complex discovery of sporting identity was the importance of the 'Other' (Mead, 1934). In chapter 3, I detailed how Americans developed their own sense of national identity as a way to distinguish themselves from the British. Now, however, it is the British involved in their own development of American football, who are constructing a new type of American football identity; one which retains the traditions of the game alongside traditions of British sporting culture. The concept of American football as a purely amateur sport is something distinctive to British American football; it is the best example of how the British have created a hybrid version of the sport to suit the needs of their participants.

In chapter 6, I explored this other side of American football which not only differentiated itself from other British sports, but also from its traditional roots as an American sport. This chapter took the conjecture of British American football as a hybrid form a step further to discuss how British amateurism specifically added to the sport's 'Britishness'. So far, British American football has been able to retain many American characteristics which were crucial to preserving the external distinctiveness of the game, but it has also found a way to internalize some of the customs associated with British amateurism. I again utilized Bourdieu to theorize how British American football was a supply intended to meet a social demand. My data suggested that a British American football identity was constructed through a demand for something distinctive, as well as for something that fit within the confines of the

British sporting habitus. This chapter concentrated on the latter part of this by demonstrating how the amateur framework of the league was adapting American football to better fit within the British sports space. By concentrating on keeping the sport an amateur activity, the BAFA has attempted to embed itself into the British sports space by making it more palatable to British sporting tastes.

At the time of my data collection, the league was concentrating on continuing to develop within the confines of amateur sport. With immersion into the London Bombers American football community, I discovered that their version of amateurism more closely embraced the ethos of playing for the love of the game and the value of camaraderie. This was due to the fact that British American football players have very few external motivations, such as money or athletic fame, available to them. In America, American football is played primarily for the spectacle, for the attention it brings to individuals, and for the potential for external rewards, most importantly monetary rewards. While there is also a grassroots branch of American football in America, that too operates under the influence of spectacle and professionalism. What this data emphasized was the importance of the influence of the local on the globalization of sport. Those involved in the development of British American football were attempting to mold the sport to fit within the existing British sports habitus. The decisions taken by those in the positions of authority were not always popular ones by the London Bombers' standards; however, the general consensus was that they were happy to continue to take the spectacle filled American version of the sport and filter it to meet the needs of British grassroots athletes. The London Bombers were content with placing a uniquely British stamp, in the form of an amateur league, on to an otherwise purely professional American sporting pastime.

I emphasized Bourdieu's argument that the appearance of a new way of practicing a sport, such as American football in Britain, causes a restructuring of the 'space of sporting practices' and a redefinition of the meaning attached to the sport. This led to a discussion about the importance of class and a person's relationship with their body, and how that relationship may be affecting the development of the sport. Bourdieu argued that the reason social agents are inclined toward one sport or another is because of their disposition towards

sport based upon their particular relation to their body. This inclination is historically bound to the British history of class struggle and how that was expressed through sport. What my data showed, in relation to this debate, however, was that British American football largely attracted a middle class cohort of students and professionals. Therefore, the appeal of the sport is based upon a combination of factors including class habitus, historical association, and national identity. This was another example of British American football's hybridity.

What my data emphasized was that, in order to fill the demand of British athletes, the American football supply had to be altered to fit within the British sporting habitus. While these local British forces may have succeeded in creating an altered form of American football, the sport is still under pressure from the global to mimic the successful and professional American structure. Therefore, while the local may have been able to influence how American football has been globalized, it is not without its struggles. British American football can be said to be pluralistic, or a hybrid sport, because of this manifestation of the competing forces of globalization, which demonstrates that the local is influenced by the global, and vice versa.

While I utilized much of Bourdieu's work to theorize my data collected in the field, I also contributed to the work on 'glocalization'. This was done through showing how the local/global interaction works in practice, and that the local interacts with the global in order to create hybrid or distinctive sport forms. In the case of British American football, its sport form importantly retains some of the historically American characteristics, while adapting to meet the needs of British athletes. My review of historical research on sport in chapter 3 focused on how American football came to reflect American national identity. This chapter importantly contextualized the history of American football to identify its cultural specificity and why this aspect of its identity was important in the globalization process; it situated British American football as a product of historical discourses and introduced the characteristics of the sport which made it culturally specific to America.

This budding plurality within American football ties into the second theme which I explored within this thesis; that the NFL's presence in the British sports space is too overwhelming to not be taken into consideration when

analyzing the grassroots British American football leagues. This is not only in regards to the history of British American football and its relationship to the NFL-based player pathway; it is also in reference to how the new global strategy of the NFL, the International Series, has influenced British grassroots development.

Chapter 7 focused on the NFL's direct and indirect influence on British American football grassroots. The NFL has long been the most identifiable branch of American football from a global perspective, and therefore it was crucial to take into account how its new International Series, based in London for the last four years, has been affecting the global development of the sport. In relation to this potential influence on the British grassroots leagues, my data showed a general consensus of opinion by the London Bombers that the two branches of American football in Britain actually have very little influence over one another. I found that while the presence of the NFL may raise the profile of the sport in general, it does not specifically promote the presence of the British leagues as a participatory activity.

The two branches of American football in Britain, the British grassroots and the NFL, were not working together to globalize the sport of American football. The London Bombers believed that the NFL should have been able to use the existence of the British grassroots to better connect with their audience, and the British grassroots should have been able to utilize the media exposure surrounding the International Series to better promote themselves. Each branch was concerned with only their own objectives for the sport. The NFL's main concern was over selling American football as a commodity, whereas the British grassroots was focused on domestic participation and competition. One reason behind this discontinuity was the gap in the level of spectacle between the two branches. The NFL is well known for its ability to put on a show within a sporting event, while British grassroots offers a barebones athletic contest. The gap between the two meant that fans of one variety may not appreciate the level of spectacle of the other. Without any formal continuity between the two branches of American football, this gap remains a barrier, in the eyes of the London Bombers, between those who are drawn to the sport because of the spectacle and those drawn to the sport because of the fundamental characteristics of the game.

London Bombers players not only played American football for its American characteristics, but also because they had come to identify with the Bombers as a British team. They had an emotional attachment to the team and, thus, to the sport itself. While many London Bombers players watched the NFL and respected the professional American based league for what it was, they illustrated more of an affinity for their local identity as British American football players. The strength of this affiliation superseded any connection they had made with the NFL brand of American football. The NFL was always more of a showpiece, a spectacle that was to be consumed and admired from afar, either on television or once a year at Wembley stadium. The relationship these players had with British American football was personal. They spent their own time, money, and physical endurance to make the London Bombers the best team they could. They related to the trials and tribulations of the league because it directly affected them and their friends. All in all, it was easier for them to identify with British American football than with American American football because of emotional attachment, local identity, and pride.

A debate continues about whether globalization trends inhibit or enhance local cultures. On the one hand, global culture can be perceived as destroying local culture; however, it also seems to aid in the construction of a sense of locality. Featherstone (1991) argued that globalization leads to polyculturalism and an awareness of others. This logic suggests that sovereign individuals can become empowered to freely choose whatever sport fits their own personal values and needs. In this case, British American football was able to retain many of the American characteristics that made it a distinctive sporting activity, while adapting itself to fit within an amateur framework which better suited the current British sports space. Whether or not this adaptation of the sports identity will be enough to sustain American football in Britain in the future is still questionable. However, if it continues to rework its identity based upon the needs of the local, then the sport stands a better chance than it did in the 1980's.

This is why this thesis is important in the wider debate about the globalization of sport; the debate should not be confined to the macro, it should include an appreciation of the micro. More studies should focus on groups like the London Bombers, who can offer an in-depth perspective into the

construction of a specific sporting identity. Therefore, my research has added to this debate by offering an insider's perspective into one particular globalized sport. Through a detailed examination of a single British American football team, I have been able to uncover how the culturally specific American sport has been able to survive and grow in an alien British environment. On a larger scale, it demonstrates that globalization does in fact work in multi-dimensional ways. American football, as a global sport, has had to meet the needs of the local British culture alongside its own global ambitions. Within this study, I was able to explore British American football identity, using the theories of Bourdieu, and then contribute to the debate on the relationship between the local and the global.

Throughout this thesis, I defined British American football specificity in terms of the retention of its American identity, its adoption of the British sporting habitus in the form of amateurism, and its disparate relationship with the NFL and spectacle. British American football is importantly a developing sport with a history that has a specifically American physical and social construction. However, this 'Americanness' has not been transported intact along with the rules of playing the game; there has been a 'sea change' (Bigsby, 1975). What I hope to have achieved through this research is recognition that the American football played in Britain is *British* American football, and that that prefix is as important in defining the sport as the rest of the name. British American football importantly demonstrates that while a sport can retain its roots in terms of its physical appearance and playing structure, in order for it to infiltrate a foreign sports space, concessions must be made to the local sporting culture. Therefore, American football is not one thing; it has plural forms, and British American football has placed a uniquely British stamp on what has been known otherwise as a distinctly American pastime.

Implications and Limitations of the Research

My research focused on the ethnographic study of one group of British American football players using a variety of qualitative research techniques. The focus on this group of individuals and aspects of their culture explained how the sport of American football had undergone globalization in relation to it

as a British participatory activity. While I believe my study has made a significant contribution to the field, it also has unveiled some areas which need further study in the future. The first has to do with the future development of British American football. At the moment, the focus of the NGB is to stabilize and expand the sport under the amateur model. However, the professionalization of British American football could eventually become a viable option if the amateur version can further implant itself into the British sports space and rally more interest from British athletes and the general population. What this research implies, in terms of future development, is that British American football's potential development depends upon its ability to recognize its own uniqueness of circumstance. This comes full circle to the general globalization discussion by emphasizing the importance of combining local traditions with global ambitions. Through this 'glocalization', the British American football community has molded the sport to fit into its society, and while it may still be a minor sport, it has found a niche in which to grow.

While British American football does have a professional template on which it can draw, the British and European sporting cultures themselves may impede its development. Any professionalized British American football system would have to adapt itself to European expectations of sport. If it wanted to take the next step and become a professionalized British sport, it would still have to make concessions to the local and choose a professional structure which a British audience would understand and most easily relate to. If American football is to truly become a globalized sport, then my research suggests that the 'glocalization' process should continue to occur at all levels of sports development. Therefore, continuing where my study left off could include a more in depth analysis of the sports development component of British American football's relationship with the processes of globalization.

A second implication of my research is that of the role of the International Series in regards to the field of sports media studies. I found that the existence of this global initiative by the NFL was significant to the British grassroots; however, its presence as an international media commodity should be given more individual academic attention. I have attempted to give the reader an introduction to the potential implications of staging the NFL International Series in London, as reported to me by my research subjects and as it related to

the British grassroots league. However, an in depth analysis of American football's role as a spectator sport in Britain was outside the scope of my research.

In choosing to utilize a qualitative methodology, specifically ethnography, I have concentrated on one small component part of the British American football culture. Through my participant observation and interviews, I have been able to collect a depth of knowledge about the individuals on this particular team, which gave insightful views into the multi-dimensional workings of the culture. However, while I was able to retrieve a certain depth of knowledge, I was limited to the breadth of that knowledge. My research is, thus, from the perspective of one team which existed within one specific division of British American football. The players were all of a certain age and participated within one specific range of British American football talent. While I did not intentionally ignore the other age groups and divisions of British American football, it is important to note that their perspectives may not be identical to that of the London Bombers. Thus, this study is limited in its capacity for generalization. Future research, therefore, could utilize other research techniques, along with concentrating on obtaining comparable data from multiple British American football perspectives.

I have also only concentrated on the globalization of American football to Britain. Currently, the sport is played in 52 different countries across the world, and each of those countries could contribute important knowledge to the understanding of the relationship between the local and the global within the globalization of sport. Mainland Europe, specifically Germany, Austria, and the Scandinavian countries, would be of particular interest as they are currently experiencing the most popular success of any of the international American football leagues.

Finally, this study is limited in its replicability, as an ethnographic narrative is always influenced by the researcher. The relationship formed between myself and the individual participants was unique, and therefore the data I collected was unique to these specific circumstances. In order to combat this issue of replicability, the final section will address my reflexive journey in relation to this research project.

Reflexivity: Personal Reflections on the Research Process

Within the realm of qualitative social science research, there has been a growing recognition that researchers cannot produce entirely subjective or objective research (Bryman, 2004; Davies, 1999). Davies argued that "we cannot research something with which we have no contact, from which we are completely isolated. All researchers are to some degree connected to, a part of, the object of their research" (Davies, 1999, p.3). The choice of topic for investigation developed out of a personal interest in American football and because of my own experiences in working with both American and British based clubs. I gave a personal narrative about this connection to the sport of American football in my introduction. With this research, I wanted to answer my own questions about American football's globalization to Britain, as well as to contribute knowledge to the academic field of sports sociology. In this section I will confront my own personal history and any biased opinions I may have brought to the collection and analysis of this data throughout this final section.

As I have already stated in my methodology chapter, I have potentially affected my data in three main ways. First of all, I am a woman conducting research into a sport which is dominated by men. This gender difference could have influenced my ability to collect and understand my data in a number of ways. I found that, initially, I had to make an effort to prove my knowledge and experience of American football in order to be accepted as an 'insider'. Once a certain standard of knowledge had been established, and the men felt as though they could discuss American football in an intelligent manner with me, my gender no longer felt like a barrier between me and my subjects. Also, I found that my gender became an asset, as it allowed me to fit comfortably into my role as a member of the medical staff. During the 2009 season, the London Bombers had four senior volunteers on the medical staff. Three of these, including myself, were female. Therefore, I was able to blend into the medical team quite easily and establish myself as a caregiver. This label as a 'caregiver' created an automatic relationship of trust between myself and the players.

The aim of my participant observation was to become an 'insider' and to collect data about the culture of British American football from the perspective

of those who participate in it. While I was able to infiltrate the London Bombers club and become an insider in regards to being a valued member of the sideline staff, I had chosen not become an American football player myself. This was both a personal and practical choice. While women are allowed to participate directly in the British American football leagues, very few do. I believe that my position as a member of the sideline staff gave me ample access to the players and coaches, while also allowing me sufficient distance from most of the events to not personally influence them. In choosing to become a player myself, I would have brought even more focus to my gender, which could have potentially led to less acceptance of me as a true 'insider'.

While women are allowed to play British American football, their participation is still seen as a type of invasion into a male domain by many. Some London Bombers players did express the opinion that they would be uncomfortable with a female player, simply because of her gender. In fact, the London Bombers had a female player on the 2008 squad. When I asked about her, I was told that she never played in a game, and rarely made it through a practice without complaining of some type of injury or finding an excuse to sit out. The London Bombers would often cite this incidence as 'proof' that women should remain involved with British American football from the sideline only. Confronting this gender stereotype was outside the scope of my research objectives, and therefore my decision to conduct research as a member of the sideline crew worked to my advantage. I was able to find useful employment as a member of staff and found a comfortable way of dealing with this gender stereotype, while still being an 'insider' within the British American football culture.

Finally, I had to take into consideration the fact that I was an American studying American football within Britain. Being American meant that I had certain preconceived opinions about American football in general. I had to take this potential bias into consideration when exploring British American football because I did not want my own opinions to supersede those of the British participants. However, the researcher's interpretation does influence the telling of any narrative within an ethnographic research project. This is an example of how my personal history could have influenced my collection and analysis of the data:

> During my time working with a university team in the US, I was used to having American football practice six days a week for a minimum of two hours. When I moved to England and began working with a university team in Oxford, they only practiced on the weekend, and the general level of skill and commitment was quite poor in comparison to what I had experienced at the university level in the United States. Moving on to observe the senior league branch of British American football for this study, I found myself making assumptions that this team would take after those I had worked with in Oxford; that British players of American football would be lazier and take the sport less seriously than their American counterparts. What I found was that different levels of British American football existed and that British American football was multi-dimensional. (Field notes, 24/3/09)

By acknowledging these biases and using the process of reflexivity within my field notes, my aim was to be constantly aware of my personal history and preconceptions when conducting research with the London Bombers.

Therefore, as a researcher undertaking ethnographic research, I attempted to deal with these potential issues in an open and reflexive manner throughout my data collection and analysis, in order to disclose any potential partiality and influence. I openly acknowledge that I brought with me my own personal history, conceptual disposition, and epistemological perception. Researchers socially construct the data they collect, and, thus, as a researcher I can never fully be separated from the data collected and analyzed within this thesis. However, this research is ultimately a narrative about the London Bombers as told to me by the participants themselves. Their story is one which was important to tell because it gives the reader an insight into how the globalization of sport is defined by its ability to combine the needs of the local with the aspirations of the global. Therefore, the London Bombers' British American football was a preeminent example of the process of 'glocalization' at work in contemporary society.

Appendix 1 - The Number of British American Football Adult Contact Leagues and Registered Team Numbers by Year

Year	Number of Leagues	Number of Teams
1984	1	35
1985	4	71
1986	3	108
1987	6	166
1988	5	166
1989	4	85
1990	3	69
1991	2	114
1992	2	100
1993	2	89
1994	1	70
1995	1	59
1996	1	54
1997	2	45
1998	1	40
1999	1	30
2000	1	29
2001	1	28
2002	1	28
2003	1	35
2004	1	34
2005	1	35
2006	1	36
2007	1	42
2008	1	46
2009	1	50

Appendix 2 - Don't Stop Believing: A Narrative of the 2009 London Bombers American Football Team

The 2009 London Bombers' season really began within the closing seconds of 2008's BritBowl XXII. After a hard fought season, the Bombers had returned to the championship game and were feeling confident about their chances of being crowned national champions for the second year running. They had held the lead for the entire game, but their opponents began mounting a comeback. In those last remaining seconds, their opponents scored an unlikely 40 yard field goal, putting them ahead by 1 point. Suddenly, the Bombers found themselves in second place; they had lost by a score of 33 to 32.

There was an overwhelming feeling of disappointment that spread through the team after that day. It was a disappointment rooted in their own failures to play to their highest potential. In their hearts, they knew that the game was theirs for the taking and they became complacent. After that fateful evening, the 2009 season became about proving something, not just to the rest of the league, but to themselves; it became about taking back what they saw as rightfully theirs.

I joined the team in February of that year and this tale of defeat was one of the first stories I heard. Even on that first day of practice, five months after BritBowl XXII, the pain was still evident on the faces of those who had been there. The Bombers seemed to have learned a powerful lesson, and that had become the motivation for this season. I did not know upon choosing the London Bombers as the focus of my research that I had, in fact, chosen to become a part of something special; that this team had chosen this year to achieve perfection in their quest to being British national champions.

The goal was simple enough to say - go undefeated and win BritBowl XXIII - but would require a level of commitment and talent that was difficult to find in British American football. For one, an undefeated season in American football is difficult to capture, simply due to the nature of the game, and secondly, this was an amateur club whose members gave up their own time to train. From my perspective, the task seemed impossible, but I had not yet come to understand just how important achieving this goal was for this team.

The winter months battered us as the team cleaned off the rust from the offseason and rookie players learned new American football skills. The end of pre-season was marked by the arrival of spring training camp. By this time, I had begun to settle into a routine and had become comfortable with my surroundings; however, I believed camp would bring me another step closer to becoming an accepted part of the team. I spent three days secluded with the team at a rented school in Essex, and during that time I came to understand just how seriously this team took American football. I came away from the weekend with a new found respect for not only these individuals, but for the sport of British American football as a whole. Up until this point, my experience with the sport in Britain had been disappointing in terms of the quality of play and commitment. However, the London Bombers changed my opinion about the potential of the sport, because here was a group of athletes willing to give up an entire weekend to prepare themselves both physically and mentally for the upcoming season.

Everything seemed to be progressing smoothly and optimism was high, until one day in April that would put everything the team had worked for in jeopardy. It seemed like a normal Thursday evening until the team was informed that a former player and captain had passed away. It was a blow that no one had seen coming and hit at the heart of everything the team had held dear. Their friend and teammate was gone, and suddenly the perfect season seemed unimportant. That was probably the most difficult practice I had ever had to sit through. I was in the awkward position of being relatively new to the team and thus not knowing the individual, but still feeling the effects of the loss. The team rallied around one another and through this terrible event somehow grew closer. I realized through the weeks that followed that the reason I had become so affected by this stranger's passing was because I had become a part of the team. These people had allowed me to share in their grief because our team was a family, and I had now become a part of that.

The loss of a teammate could have signaled the end of their dreams for the 2009 season. It could have cast a shadow over their efforts and brought them down, but it did not. Instead, the event brought the team closer together and gave them something else to play for; now the season became not only about revenge for their 'stolen' championship, but about playing for their fallen

friend. During the opening game, he was honored with both a moment of silence and a resounding 40 to 16 defeat of our opponents. The journey to perfection had begun.

The rest of the season went by in a blur, with victory after victory registering for us. It became clear that the London Bombers were the dominant team in the league and that they were the front runners to take home the national championship trophy. The team went 8 and 0 in the regular season, and secured home field advantage against the fourth seated team in the first (and only) round of playoffs. This was now a sudden death scenario, with the winner moving on to the championship and the loser going home. Essentially, all of the hard work the team had put in up until this point was erased, and their fate rested in those 60 minutes of British American football. Once again, though, the London Bombers were victorious, beating their opponents 33 to 13. In this victory, they had achieved one part of their 2009 dream; they had made it back to the final, and what made the achievement even sweeter was that their opponent for BritBowl XXIII would be the same team to whom they had lost to a year earlier. The London Bombers were going to get the rematch they had been hoping for all year.

The bus left North London on the Saturday before BritBowl XXIII, filled with excitement for the battle ahead. These journeys had become second nature to me now, and I found myself quietly confident that the team could actually achieve all they had set out to accomplish. While the weekend would be dominated by keen observation and note taking on my part, it had also become about more than just my research. After spending 8 months with this team, I had become personally invested in the outcome of this game. I had become a valued member of the team, contributing to their winning season through my skills in sports medicine and as the dedicated videographer. I had a role in this game as a London Bomber, and not just as an outside eye. I had truly become an insider, a part of the British American football community.

Sunday morning was filled with tension as we all crammed into a small meeting room in the hotel. The entire team was dressed in matching white shirts and blue shorts, emphasizing the fact that we all functioned as one unit today. Before we headed to the stadium, we watched a video put together by one of our captains. It began with scenes of last year's loss, reminding

everyone of how it felt to lose that game. It then turned to focus on this season and all of the games we had won so far. It ended with a slideshow which pictured each person on the team individually. Each player, coach, and member of staff was given a moment's recognition, as it was made clear to us that everyone standing in that room was an important contributor to getting us to this point. I can remember a distinct feeling of pride when my picture appeared on that screen; I had entered my field work as a stranger and was ending it as an important member of the team, worthy of reference in this slideshow. We left the hotel on a high after that screening and boarded the bus for the short journey to the stadium.

The pre-game ritual was the same; I was quickly trying to tape up the players and prepare them to take the field. At the same time, I was soaking up the atmosphere of being at the British American football championship game, taking notes whenever I had a free moment. I had been to this game before, as a fan sitting in the stands, but I had a new perspective this year. I was right in the midst of the action. I was face to face with the people who were going to be playing for this coveted title, and I understood what it meant to them. Running out through the tunnel that evening was an exciting moment because I was doing it with my team, and at that moment it did not matter that the stadium was practically empty, or that tomorrow very few people would hear about or care about the result of this game. What mattered was that it was happening, and those who were on that field or in that stadium didn't care that the outside world was ignorant of the importance of this night. That fact really summarizes the attitude taken by the London Bombers about their sport's popularity within the British sporting landscape. They know that their efforts go unnoticed by the general population, but that does not matter because ultimately they are playing for the love of the game and for the love of their teammates.

As the final seconds ticked away on the clock that evening in September, the team made one of the most moving displays of camaraderie I have ever seen. Those on the sideline all took off their helmets and held them up as high as they could by the face cage. On the back of each of those helmets was the number 75, a small reminder that their fallen teammate was still a part of us. They began to chant his name as the seconds slipped away, and the emotion of the moment got the best of some of them, as tears appeared in their eyes. They

had won the game 26 to 7 and had dedicated that accomplishment to their friend. The moment summarized what the 2009 season had been about for this group of athletes; it had been about friendship and fighting to accomplish perfection in the quest for national recognition in a sport they loved.

My selection of the London Bombers as the focus of my research was based on a number of factors including geography, status, and availability. What I wanted to achieve through this research was an intimate understanding of the British American football culture. I wanted to become an insider and explore what it was like to be involved in the sport in Britain in 2009. I not only achieved these objectives of becoming an insider and experiencing the culture, I acquired a new family. It was a journey I never expected to find buried within my academic research, but it was one which fulfilled me, both as a researcher and as a person. My goal in sharing this story of my experience with the London Bombers is to give the reader an insight into an unfamiliar sporting culture; to open a window into the inspiration for these athletes to play a sport which may seem foreign to many; to demonstrate simply that British American football exists and that it is a unique and important case to study because it has a story to tell.

Appendix 3 - Sample Field Notes[1011]

London Bombers Game
Bristol (Away)

<u>Pre-game</u>:

The team bus was due to leave at 8:30 am from ******* ****. I was given an official London Bombers staff shirt by one of the committee members to wear for games, as well as the camera equipment to look after. *Helping me to become more of an insider* The bus arrived on time and was a double-decker with a trailer. The trailer came in handy to store all of the football equipment. Unfortunately, the bus was not able to leave until after 9:00 am as some people were late and it took a while to load in all of the equipment. I took a seat on the top level with most of the players and the other members of the medical staff. Only about half of the team had chosen to take the bus to the game, so it felt rather empty. *Would it be better to travel all together as a team? Many players have to travel quite a distance to get to ******* ****, and for some it makes more sense to go directly to the away game sites. However, bus journeys contribute towards team unity and it would be nice to have travelled all together.*

On the bus, the medical staff handed out medical forms to those players who had not already filled them out, and then most people decided to sleep on the ride to Bristol. Money was also collected for the bus ride (15 pounds each). *I did not have to pay this.*

Accompanying us on the bus was the regular Bombers media staff, a journalist and a photographer, as well as a reporter from the Daily Mirror. Apparently he had played for the Bombers a few years ago and he was going to write a story about the game. *Have to keep a look out for this article.*

We stopped off at a service station about half way through the trip to allow the players to get some food. Most chose to buy snacks, sandwiches or salads, however a few chose the less healthy option of Burger King. Our captain tried to persuade them away from eating Burger King before a game, but most ignored that advice.

We arrived at Bristol around 12:30 pm and were taken to the changing rooms where the medical staff set up in the hallway outside. Players would come out one by one and get their treatment, which mostly consisted of pre-game

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[10] Some personal details about the team have been changed from the original field note document in order to preserve anonymity.

[11] Color Key:
Black- Observational notes
Red- Methodological notes
Purple- Emotional notes

Theoretical notes were hand written and thus were separate from this computer typed document.

massage or taping. *The pre-game treatments were fewer than I had anticipated. I thought more players would ask to be taped up on game days.* The players had brought a stereo to play music while they changed. The music selection was chosen in order to pump everyone up. *This type of pre-game music ritual is also done in the US with American football teams.* Some players chose to listen to their own music on personal devices, but everyone was mentally preparing for the game. Uniforms and numbers were also handed out during this time. Uniforms are kept communally and not handed out to individual players during the season. This is to keep track of all of them and to make sure they are all well taken care of and can last for a number of seasons. There was some debate over who got what numbers. *Numbers are important in athletic identity* The veteran players got first selection while rookies had to make do with what was left. Some positions are required to wear certain numbers and those guidelines were followed. Commemorative number stickers were also placed on all helmets to remember our lost teammate.

The facilities overall were quite impressive. The Bristol ******* use the ****** ******* sports grounds for their games, so the changing rooms were large and there was plenty of space for the medical team to set up. These indoor facilities were much nicer than our small building within the ******* **** stadium.

We were out on the field for warm-ups by 1:30. I was given the impression that the coaching staff had hoped to have more time to practice before the game, however. Warm-ups consisted of announcing the offensive, defensive, and special teams' starters, the regular warm-up drill, and then individuals. You could hear a lot of motivational talk during this pregame warm-up trying to mentally prepare everyone for the game. *Warm-ups were conducted very systematically; are they always done the same way?*

During this pre-game warm-up I took care of setting up the video camera on the portable scaffolding unit we had brought with us. *I was actually quite happy to film during the game as being up on the scaffolding gave me a good view of the game and I was positioned on our sideline, so I could still be involved with the team while doing this job.*

Teams were asked to line-up on the sideline for eligibility checks. This entailed a neutral party checking off registered names on a list as our chairman called them forward. This check is crucial in keeping teams honest about who is playing on their teams. Both teams then all had a minute of silence to commemorate our lost teammate. *It was considerate of Bristol to arrange this minute of silence for us; they also printed a picture and commemoration of him on the back of the game day program. This just demonstrates the respect teams have for one another. * *I felt quite emotional during this time as being a part of the team made me sad about this former player's passing.*

The Bristol team had about 70 players suited up, as well as a large number of coaches and staff members. They were well put together in terms of uniforms and equipment. *Compare to other teams*
Game:

There was a small crowd of spectators at the game. Both sides had supporters, but most seemed to be family members or friends of the players. There were no seats for people to sit in; they either had to stand or bring their own seats. I did not hear a lot of cheering from the crowd, just the occasional word of encouragement on a key play. Our sideline contingency was smaller than Bristol's, which was to be expected as they were the home side. Though, there were a number of Bombers fans present who had made the journey to support our team.

The field was standard rugby sized (so not the standard American football size, but legal in the UK). They had rugby posts instead of standard American football field goals posts (also legal in the UK league). The ground was relatively well taken care of and flat, and they had marked out the pitch properly. They had a chain crew (although clearly inexperienced) and the necessary equipment. There was also a 4 man officiating crew who all seemed experienced and knowledgeable. *Compare facilities to other teams*

The game kicked-off on time after captains were called to do the coin toss. This coin toss decided which team gets the ball first and which direction each team will go. We had three captains sent out for this coin toss. We won the toss and decided to receive the ball, while Bristol got to choose which direction they wanted. The Bombers' ritual consisted of the entire team forming a straight line with the four captains in front. *This was to present a united front, and the veteran players explained the ritual to the rookies and emphasized the importance of looking uniformed during the pre-game. Get more of an explanation about this ritual*

Based on the match report written by our media guy, the Bombers had four offensive touchdowns, two defensive touchdowns, two interceptions, but also two fumbles. One aspect which stood out as needing work was the field goal and P.A.T. kicking. The Bombers missed some of these and therefore lost out on valuable points.

During the match, my position on the scaffolding allowed me to listen in to impromptu positional meetings. These meetings usually consisted of a coach yelling at the players about a mistake or a captain making motivational remarks to try and inspire the boys to play harder.

At half time I rejoined the medical staff to check on some players. I also got a chance to talk with our quarterback's father who was taking his own video footage. He was obviously proud that his son had become the starting quarterback and had made the journey in order to support him and the team. The coaches pointed out that most of the team's mistakes in the first half were mental ones, and that if they focused more in the second half, we should be able to win the game. The boys all drank a lot of water; some ate fruit or other snacks during the break. They also gathered in groups according to position in order to go over a few key points with the coaches. A few minutes before the start of the second half they did a short warm-up.

Overall, the Bombers started out slow and made mistakes. However, they were able to correct those and start playing good football by the second quarter. *This slow start was most likely due to the fact that it was the first game and players were nervous and a bit rusty. They also had only one pre-season scrimmage as the game against team Canada had been canceled.* The game was a great American football contest and was played at quite a high standard. *I was actually surprised at how talented these two teams were as compared to my previous experiences with American football in the UK. It is obvious why these teams are members of a small premier division. If more American football teams in the UK could aspire to this level of play, maybe the sport would be more successful.*

The final aspect of the game was for both teams to shake hands, and then the Bombers gathered on the field for a cheer and a talk. The coaches took turns saying a few words about the game. Overall, they said they were satisfied, but that there were areas that needed to be worked on. They emphasized the importance of Thursday's practice as we have a game the following weekend. Then the team all kneeled for a prayer lead by one of the players. All of the members of the team took part in this. *Prayer during American football matches is a tradition in the US. Do other teams do this?*

Post-game:

The players left the field to head back into the changing rooms to shower, and we all quickly boarded the bus. Bristol had arranged for a local restaurant to provide our team with an inexpensive meal of sausage and chips. The general consensus of those on the bus was that we should have skipped this and headed directly back to London, as it was already 6:30 pm. However, the chairman said that we had to attend, as we had made a commitment.

At the restaurant, we ate and spent time socializing around the bar. I had a conversation with one of our coaches about the team in general. We were talking about how the Bombers was family and how much we both enjoyed being a part of the team. We also discussed the fact that coaches have to pay to be a member of the team. This coach understood and was happy to pay to coach as he loves it so much. We both agreed it was unfortunate that he gives up his time to coach and still has to pay, but he understands that the team needs money to stay afloat, and if he weren't doing this, he would be at home sitting around. He also commented that he would never want to coach for a division 1 or 2 team as the standard decreases significantly. He stated that while he has to spend some time attending to the rookies and reviewing fundamentals, he gets to coach athletes who are good at American football and whom he can coach at a higher standard. It is also this fact which drives him to stay with the Bombers.

The bus pulled out of the restaurant around 8 pm and headed back to London. There were even fewer players on the bus on the way back than had taken the bus to the game. Some had received rides home with other members of the team. We did not get back to ******* **** until 11 pm, which made for a very long day.

<u>Results and Standings</u>:

London Bombers 40 – Bristol ****** 16

Sussex ******* 16 – Farnham ******* 21

TEAM	WIN	LOSS
London Bombers	1	0
Farnham *******	1	0
Bristol ******	0	1
Sussex *******	0	1
Coventry ****	0	0

<u>Plan for next week</u>:

Attend practice on Thursday evening. Observe specifically how practice is tailored to address the issued faced on Sunday and to prepare for the next game.

Attend the second game on Sunday against Farnham away.

Begin interviews on the bus on Sunday. Hopefully be given permission to send out a mass email to the team informing everyone of these interviews. The bus seemed quiet enough that I could conduct interviews on it during the next three away games. Doing this will give me a good start to collecting interview data from the team.

Appendix 4 - Semi-Structured Interview Questions

These were the basic interview questions which I wanted to ask during each interview with a London Bombers player or coach. They were treated as guidelines and each interview took on its own unique style as it was being conducted. This was based upon the personality of the interviewee and their own experiences with the game and the team. The specific questions changed based upon whether the person was a rookie or a veteran, whether they were American or a British, whether they held an administrative role within the club, or if they were a coach as opposed to a player. The questions were derived out of my earlier field notes to address the key characteristics which were emerging from my data collection. All of these questions aimed to gather more in depth information about certain aspects of the British American football culture.

1) How did you become involved in British American football?

2) Were there specific characteristics about the sport of American football which drew you to the game over other sports?

3) What are your opinions about the set-up of the British American football league?

4) Do you believe American football will continue grow as a sport within Britain? What specific problems do you think it will encounter?

5) What do you think of the new NFL International Series? Will this new global initiative help or hinder the British grassroots leagues?

6) Is there anything additional which you would like to add about your own personal experience with British American football?

Appendix 5 – Confidentiality Agreement[12]

Participant Information Sheet

Participants should keep this form as a reference in order to address any concerns which may arise during the course of this project.

Title of Research Project: National Identity and Cultural Specificity in Sport: American Football's Globalization to Britain.

Brief Description of Research Project: The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between sport and national identity in the context of the broader debate on the globalization of sport. American football in Britain has been chosen as a case study to analyze how national identity manifests itself in sport. The London ***** has been selected to participate in this research. I, Lacey Wismer, an MPhil/PhD student at Roehampton University, will be following your team throughout the season in order to gain a better understanding about why athletes choose to play American football in Britain.

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Holybourne Avenue
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Please note: If you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School or the Director of Studies.

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[12] This confidentiality agreement was produced while the researcher was a PhD candidate at Roehampton University. She later transferred to Brunel University to finish the study.

ETHICS BOARD
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: National Identity and Cultural Specificity in Sport: American Football's Globalization to Britain.

Brief Description of Research Project: The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between sport and national identity in the context of the broader debate on the globalization of sport. American football in Britain has been chosen as a case study to analyze how national identity manifests itself in sport. The London ***** has been selected to participate in this research. I, Lacey Wismer, an MPhil/PhD student at Roehampton University, will be following your team throughout the season in order to gain a better understanding about why athletes choose to play American football in Britain.

Investigator Contact Details:

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Consent Statement:

I agree to allow the London ***** to take part in this research, which I understand will involve the researcher's presence at practices, games and social events involving the team, as well as interviews with the researcher. I am aware that the London ***** are free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information the team provides will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that your identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Name …………………………………….

Signature ………………………………

Date …………………………………

Please note: If you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School or the Director of Studies.

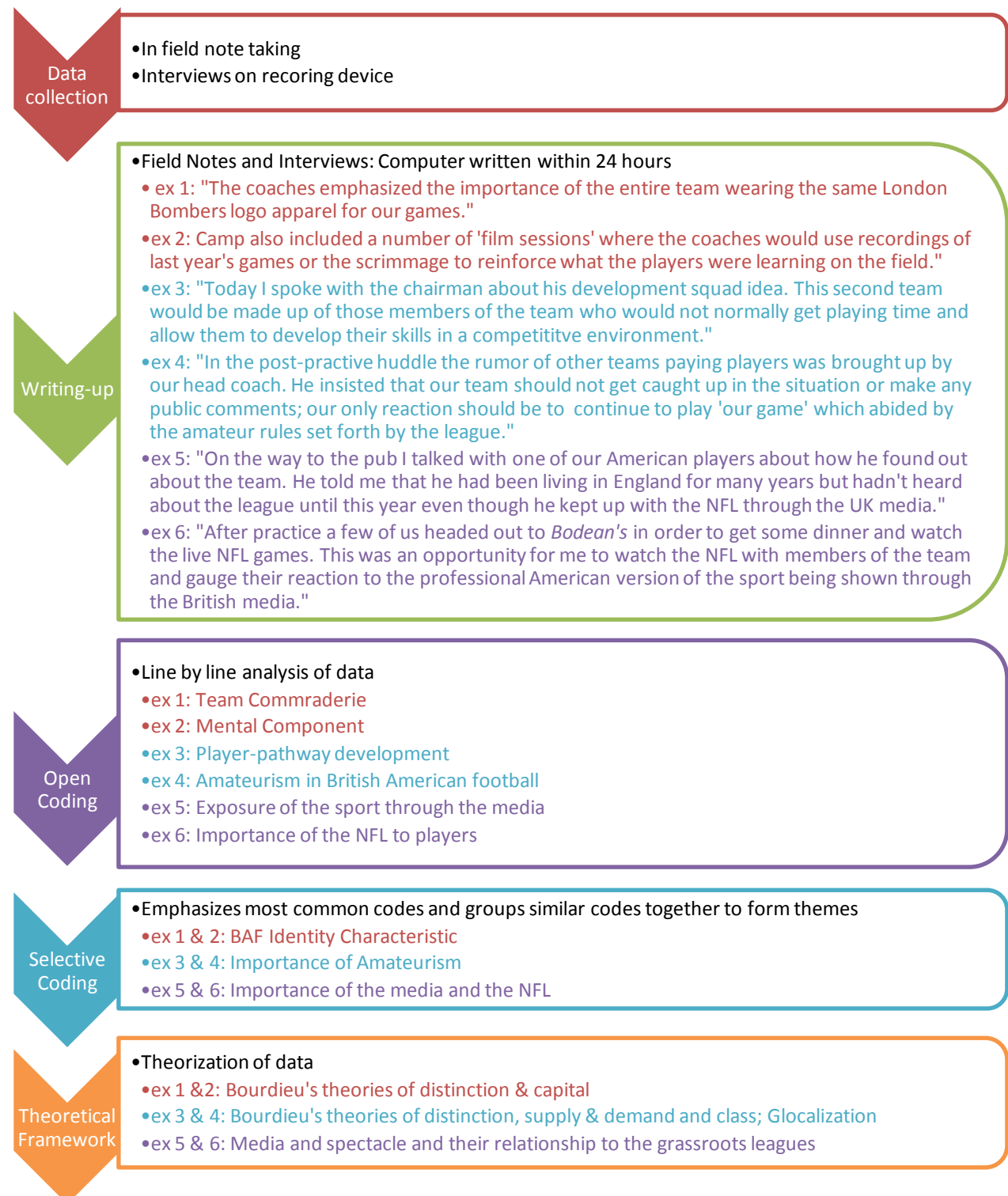**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

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Appendix 6 – Coding Example

Data collection
- In field note taking
- Interviews on recoring device

Writing-up
- Field Notes and Interviews: Computer written within 24 hours
  - ex 1: "The coaches emphasized the importance of the entire team wearing the same London Bombers logo apparel for our games."
  - ex 2: Camp also included a number of 'film sessions' where the coaches would use recordings of last year's games or the scrimmage to reinforce what the players were learning on the field."
  - ex 3: "Today I spoke with the chairman about his development squad idea. This second team would be made up of those members of the team who would not normally get playing time and allow them to develop their skills in a competititve environment."
  - ex 4: "In the post-practive huddle the rumor of other teams paying players was brought up by our head coach. He insisted that our team should not get caught up in the situation or make any public comments; our only reaction should be to continue to play 'our game' which abided by the amateur rules set forth by the league."
  - ex 5: "On the way to the pub I talked with one of our American players about how he found out about the team. He told me that he had been living in England for many years but hadn't heard about the league until this year even though he kept up with the NFL through the UK media."
  - ex 6: "After practice a few of us headed out to *Bodean's* in order to get some dinner and watch the live NFL games. This was an opportunity for me to watch the NFL with members of the team and gauge their reaction to the professional American version of the sport being shown through the British media."

Open Coding
- Line by line analysis of data
  - ex 1: Team Commraderie
  - ex 2: Mental Component
  - ex 3: Player-pathway development
  - ex 4: Amateurism in British American football
  - ex 5: Exposure of the sport through the media
  - ex 6: Importance of the NFL to players

Selective Coding
- Emphasizes most common codes and groups similar codes together to form themes
  - ex 1 & 2: BAF Identity Characteristic
  - ex 3 & 4: Importance of Amateurism
  - ex 5 & 6: Importance of the media and the NFL

Theoretical Framework
- Theorization of data
  - ex 1 &2: Bourdieu's theories of distinction & capital
  - ex 3 & 4: Bourdieu's theories of distinction, supply & demand and class; Glocalization
  - ex 5 & 6: Media and spectacle and their relationship to the grassroots leagues

Appendix 7 – Player Profiles

Name	Age	Nationality	Occupation	Team Status	Level Became Involved
Don	27	British (English)	Graduate Student	Veteran	University
Forrest	24	British (English)	Barman	Veteran	University
Ray	42	British (English)	Campaign manager	Rookie	Adult League
Harry	24	British (English)	Journalist	Staff	Adult League
Chad	21	Australian	Student	Rookie	Adult League
Reggie	26	British (English)	Freelance Artist	Rookie	Adult League
Randy	28	British (English)	Graduate Student	Veteran	University
Justin	28	British (Scottish)	Marketing Engineer	Veteran	University
Shawne	28	British (English)	Unemployed	Veteran	Youth League
Nick	30	American	Video Games Engineer	Veteran	Youth League
Bob	54	British (English)	Computer Engineer	Coach	Adult League
Demarcus	24	British/Nigerian	Unemployed	Veteran	University
Bruce	29	British (English)	Teaching Assistant	Veteran	University
Jared	26	British (English)	IT Consultant	Rookie	University
Albert	22	British/Portuguese	Student	Veteran	University
Jerry	35	British (English)	Data Manager	Coach	Youth League
Cameron	38	British (N. Irish)	Manager	Coach	Youth League
Jim	30	American	Special Needs Teacher	Coach	Youth League

Ryan	32	British (N. Irish)	Account Executive	Coach	Adult League
James	27	British (English)	Sales Advisor	Rookie	University
Troy	27	British (English)	Sales	Veteran	University
Kirk	28	British (English)	Surveyor	Veteran	University

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