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ESPN's Ability to Get Fans 'Inside Sports': A Framing Analysis of College Gameday

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Melissa Lovette entitled "ESPN's Ability to Get Fans 'Inside Sports': A Framing Analysis of College Gameday." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Sport Studies.

Robin Hardin, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Dennie Kelley, Lars Dzikus

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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recommend its acceptance:**

Dennie Kelley

Lars Dzikus

Acceptance for the Council:

Linda R. Painter

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ESPN'S Ability to Get Fans "Inside Sports"—A Framing Analysis of College Gameday

A Thesis Presented for
the Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee

Melissa Lovette
May 2007

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DEDICATION

To my father Robert Lovette, and his “love of the game.”

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the professionals who greatly increased my understanding of framing analysis and the sociological perspective of sport, while guiding me through the research process: Dr. Robin Hardin, Dr. Lars Dzikus, and Dr. Dennie Kelley are professors in the Sport Management Department at the University of Tennessee.

ABSTRACT

College Gameday is important and well-watched. It invents the perception of college football. It frames college football using four dominant themes—nostalgia, masculine identity, militarism and sports-as-corporation. All of these lead to its popularity and the reinforcement of ideas about college football. This study analyzes six episodes of ESPN's College Gameday, which originally aired in the fall of 2006. The research questions are 1) based on Nauright's work, how does College Gameday frame football in terms of nostalgia, national identity and masculine identity; 2) are there frames present that have not been identified by Nauright.

College Gameday frames college football in terms of nostalgia by placing special emphasis on school rivalries, traditions, and general atmosphere. The traits of national identity are militarism and corporate capitalism, as defined in this research. Therefore, College Gameday frames college football in terms of militarism by using "sports-as-war" references. These include words such as *trenches*, *bomb*, *attack* and *invade*.

Sports-as-corporation, a new frame identified in this analysis, is used to shape perception of football by comparing the game to the business world. Players are compared to stocks, references are made to business deals, and the job specialization of players and coaches are emphasized. This new frame is significant because it provides an avenue for future research. Further framing analysis should be conducted to confirm and advance this "sports-as-corporation" frame.

The masculine identity frame is most often utilized. Players are labeled “heroes.” Their achievements are emphasized, and they are attributed with having ideal traits in character and physical aptitude. Players and coaches are criticized when their performance is deemed poor or when behavior in regard to character becomes an issue.

The research questions are based on Nauright’s (1996) review article, which examines sports history books along with academic literature in an effort to determine football’s historical cultural significance. His findings identify several themes which include nostalgia, community identity, national consciousness and masculinity.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The United States has more media outlets than any other nation, and its citizens are subject to more mediated messages than any other country in the world (Perloff, 1998). Various sources of media determine the images and information to which the public is exposed. Newsworthy events, according to Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006), are selected and then taken out of context when the events are whittled down to digestible sound bytes—all subject to the discretion of an editor.

ESPN's College Gameday is a televised media outlet (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006). Each Saturday in the fall, a three-man panel, led by host Chris Fowler, regales audience members and viewers with stories about on-field college football heroics, school rivalries, and long-held college traditions. The grit and determination of disciplined teams is also among popular topics discussed. College Gameday frames college football—it supplies the meaning of football for a dedicated viewership.

The purpose of this research is to determine how College Gameday frames college football through the use of the themes of nostalgia, masculine identity, and national identity. This research is inspired by and based on John Nauright's (1996) review of non-fiction sports literature and films, which in turn were referential to actual sports figures such as Knute Rockne, John Heisman, and Walter Camp. Nauright's analysis identifies nostalgia, masculine identity, local identity and national consciousness as dominant

themes which are emphasized by the media for sport audiences. However, the literature review developed during this research more commonly applied the term national identity and therefore, this researcher has also applied this term, in its examination of College Gameday telecasts (Real, 1998; Schiller, 1989; McKay, 1991).

College Gameday is valuable as a modern-day focus of study, due to its singular concentration on college football. The program is of interest to this researcher because it provides in-depth information and analysis. In doing so, it allows for a representation of how the sport of college football is being presented to the public, through words as descriptors.

College Gameday appeals to college football fans. Increased ratings confirm the fact. In 2005, the show averaged 1.5 million viewers per show, an increase of 18 percent from the previous year (Nielsen Media Research, 2005, as cited in Consoli, 2005). Higher ratings provide quantitative proof that the show is increasing in popularity. They do not, however, provide insight into why the show appeals to sports fans. After all, the ability to appeal to sports fans and increase fan engagement affects sports revenues (Whitson, 1998). Even recruiting has been affected by the show. Athletes have been recruited by the promise that they will be showcased on College Gameday (Abrams, 2006).

Ultimately, college football belongs to the universities who now find themselves sustaining sports entertainment businesses, which generate huge revenues (and expenses) (Meggyesy, 2000). For example, the NCAA's Bowl

Championship Series dispersed \$103 million to five Division I schools. And with football comprising three-quarters of most big time athletic department budgets, it would be beneficial to learn how college football is being represented and therefore, promoted in the media (Frank, 2004).

Furthermore, this research places special emphasis upon the symbiotic relationship that exists between college football and the media. The crux of this partnership is exposure (Helland, 2004). Media exposure elevates football within the American consciousness, affecting football's profits positively (Marhawa, 2005). At the same time, the media's efforts to promote football result in increased revenue through advertising dollars (Harris & Kinkema, 1998).

Mass media's influence can be felt over every aspect of American life. Politics, public education, and recreation are just a few examples (Hachten, 2001). The media's influence is witnessed in the sports realm as well. Football games are scheduled at will by the networks. And even the media time-outs, used during football games, change the way the sport is viewed and played (Oriard, 1993). But there is a difference between news media and entertainment media. Entertainment media is not required to adhere to the same standards of objectivity that are expected of the news media.

According to Hachten (2001), entertainment media includes human interest stories, personal interviews, and gossip about well-known people or celebrities. In fact, viewers find it difficult to include sports journalism in the same category as traditional journalism, due to the fact that sports journalists

appear as if they are too close to the companies that own their networks (Rowe, 2004). College Gameday falls into the entertainment category. The format of their show is comprised of interviews, human interest pieces, and football analysis.

This research will examine how media, in particular College Gameday, draw upon college football narrative, specifically the storylines which emerge during game play, in an effort to promote the sport to the consumer. The basic format of sports stories transmitted to an audience is in narrative form (Arnold, 2006). The narrative is the storyline created and emphasized by sports journalists as the season unfolds. According to Whannel (1998), the media create interest in sports by creating heroes, villains, and stars during the course of a season. The sports journalist's goal is to encourage audience members to continue to watch in order to receive updates on the continuing story as such.

College football is a game comprised of cut-and-dried components: a field of play, participants and an elliptical-shaped ball. Football is not just football, however, when it becomes a mediated event, it is a spectacle. The media provide meaning to the game of football for its audiences—the media frame college football. Utilizing framing theory, this research will identify how College Gameday shapes public perception of college football by using themes of nostalgia, masculine identity, and national identity (Nauright, 1996). In this way, it can be determined how College Gameday promotes the game of college football to the public.

According to Goffman (1974), framing occurs in two phases: identification of the event and then explanation as to how the event fits into its social context. College football, in this instance, is the event of which the media seeks to assign importance. The mass media conditions the American public as to what to look for in the game of football, and what the game “means.” Framing theory asserts that the media does not necessarily tell the public what to think, “but they do tell the public what to think about” (Goffman, 1974). The “thinking points” presented to the public are called frames. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) identify a frame as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events.” As a result, the way in which sports media chooses to shape and present a story places particular emphasis on certain aspects of college football when it is presented to sports consumers.

In a comprehensive approach, this research also identifies early sports reporting methods used by newspaper journalists who first informed the public about football. In much the same way as early sports reporting, this paper asserts that College Gameday relies heavily upon heroes, militarism and the American public’s need for nostalgia. The role of College Gameday and other sports media outlets is to disseminate information about sports to the public (Rowe, 2004). Because sports are so central in the lives of Americans, the mass media has been able to perpetuate spectatorship by

placing sport on the public's agenda (Coakley, 2004; Marhawa, 2005). It is society's emphasis on winning and losing that sports media manipulate. In this way they can custom design sport coverage in a way that is enticing to their audience.

Framing analysis will show that ESPN's College Gameday uses football narrative to transform NCAA Division I football into a mediated product. There have been two key studies involving ESPN upon which this researcher will build. Choi (2002) used content analysis to examine SportsCenter's success and its subsequent influence over local sports broadcasts. Due to SportsCenter's dominance and popularity, local news affiliates have lost viewers (Choi, 2002). As a result, local sports segments have been altered to focus more attention on local sports, or have eliminated their sports segments altogether. This study is important because it effectively demonstrates the influence that ESPN programming has had over sports reporting. Furthermore, as local affiliates lose market share, there is less competition and fewer voices offering interpretation of sporting events. In effect, the ESPN network is closer to being looked upon as the top sports authority.

Marhawa (2005) employed content analysis to illustrate how ESPN's SportsCenter uses what he termed as "soap operatic" narrative to increase fan engagement. He concludes that ESPN focuses primarily on controversy in order to maintain its stronghold in sports reporting. Marhawa emphasizes

SportsCenter's focus on the narrative format and that its ability to maintain a strong share of the audience is based on this format.

Marhawa and Choi have both studied SportsCenter's format and affiliate news station format changes. Both studies employed the transactional system of communication. In other words, fans process the message that has been delivered to them and then they respond to the sender of the information. It may be that they respond back to the sender, in this case SportsCenter, via e-mail or online poll. And while College Gameday is a sports program created by ESPN, and may follow a similar format, the comparison ends at this juncture. College Gameday's sole focus is college football whereas SportsCenter covers a multitude of sporting events in brief segments. In contrast, College Gameday captures "the pageantry, traditions, and enduring enthusiasm of the college game" (Bonham & Hinchey, 2006, p. 5C). Finally, there has been no scholarly research as to how College Gameday packages college football as a product, drawing upon the game's narrative and ultimately promoting the sport to sports consumers.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

Sports are promoted by the media and the ways in which sports are promoted affect the perception of the product, in this case college football (Ghanem, 1997). Sport managers need to be aware of their product and how it is being promoted. The construction of alternative messages through advertising campaigns may be necessary if the sport manager is not satisfied with media presentation. This study is not only applicable to the management of sports. Primarily, this investigation will confirm that an on-going relationship between sports and media does exist.

THE SPORTS-MEDIA PRODUCTION COMPLEX

The symbiotic relationship through which football and the media exist manifested itself from the beginning: football has needed the media to define it for the public and sell it as a product (Oriard, 2001). The sports/media production complex is the term which describes the symbiosis which is understood to exist between sports and the media (Jhally, 1989). Symbiosis is a Greek term which refers to the “cohabitation between two entities of different kinds that both benefit from the cohabitation” (Helland, 2004, p. 3).

Helland (2004) concluded that the common link between sports and the media is exposure. The media makes the public aware of sports and sports’ sponsors. For example, when a football game is broadcast and the broadcaster captures sight of the signage in the arena, television gives

publicity to not just the team but to advertisers. Sports and media benefit from their mutual association. The media's role is in relation to the promotion of sports: mediated sports behave as a go-between. Sports could not have permeated every facet of society without help from the media. The media gave sports the exposure that it needed. The media reinforced sports' importance by virtue of the publicity it supplied (Marhawa, 2005).

In fact, the sports industry is an invention of the media. It is a "media-made" fact (Bellamy, 1998). The television industry has aided sports. It has secured sports' prominence within the cultural mainstream, just as the once powerful radio and print industries had done (Gaustad, 2000). The television industry constructed television personalities, amplified the attributes of athletes and then labeled them "stars." Furthermore, television supplied ready-made audiences, in the form of sports fans, which are enticing to the advertisers who help fund athletic departments and major-league sports teams. Television advertisers promote products associated with sports and then promote lifestyles in conjunction with sports. The media's influence, in particular, television, has aided sports. It normalized sports' existence, making it a natural element of day-to-day living in the United States. So much so, that no one could imagine this country without spectator sports. (Jhally, 1984; Maguire, 1993; McChesney, 1989)

Economic incentives drive the association between sports and the media. And, while there does exist a culture of sports in the United States, this culture is commercially-driven by the sports-media production complex.

The media are not just a message transmitter for its audience, however. They create programming for a profit. Sports are commodities created for the purpose of capturing a larger segment of the audience in order to increase profits (Marhawa, 2005). The sports-media production complex also includes entities directly related to both sports and media. Sports promotion, advertising, sponsorship, merchandisers, and eventually the consumers themselves, must also be included in our discussion of the sports-media production complex (Whannel, 2002).

It is advertising, however, that holds the sports-media relationship together. Advertising is a driving force behind capitalism, where the grind, the search for new forms of capital, (i.e. markets, and consumers) is ceaseless (Whannel, 2002). Sports stars are a crucial component for the promotion of sports products. In fact, television and advertisers rely heavily upon them. According to Whannel (2002), sports needs stars to promote programming that is favorable to an audience, and advertisers need sports stars that are wholesome and well-liked. Sports and sponsors could not operate if it they did not have a way to appeal to audiences.

According to Coakley (2004), the media provide the means for people to forge a relationship with sports. For example, internet-sponsored fantasy sports leagues create a surrogate community for sports enthusiasts and give them an opportunity to express their interest in sports. Subsequently, because people have access to sports through the media, popular teams and

players gain recognition thereby fueling everything from apparel and sports equipment sales, to travel packages (Coakley, 2004).

Commercial incentives affect the level to which society is exposed to sports, of which both football and media benefit. Sports “receive massive expenditures of funds by schools and colleges in the United States... they [also] occupy hours and hours of weekly commercial radio and television air time with accompanying astronomical advertising revenues” (Washington & Karen, 2001, p. 188).

Rupert Murdoch & the NFL

Rupert Murdoch’s company News Corporation relies on live sports programming to increase network visibility. In fact, including live sport coverage is a formal corporate strategy (Barker, 1997; McChesney, 2000). In 1994, Rupert Murdoch was in desperate need of steady viewership for the fledgling FOX network. As a result, News Corporation turned to the National Football League for help. Securing the broadcast rights to National Football Conference (NFC) games would give FOX the ability to build programming around the popular sport (Andrews, 2003). Furthermore, by outbidding network rivals, like NBC, News Corporation inadvertently increased the value of the NFL when they signed a 4-year deal worth \$1.58 billion (Andrews, 2003).

Before Murdoch, there was discussion that the NFL would have to decrease its asking price for broadcast rights due to the fact that many

networks were not able to recover the cost through advertising dollars (Bell, 2005). And while Murdoch was not a fan of sports, per se, he valued the way sports increase television viewership and newspaper circulations (Chenoweth, 2001). After 1993, Murdoch admitted that he did not care that his inflated bidding increased the worth of the NFL. As Murdoch explained,

We put that \$380 million a year on the table to help build Fox. We didn't do it so some quarterback can make another half million a year...That's just a by-product. What we did, we did selfishly, to build the network. It was a selfish business decision. (quoted in Pierce, 1995, p. 182)

The fact remains that the NFL benefited and continues to benefit from its association with News Corporation. And, News Corporation benefits from the NFL. Since 1993, ratings for FOX have translated into increased advertising revenue. According to Deloitte's *Annual Review of Football Finance* (2004), the value of individual NFL franchises has increased by 15.2 percent since 1994, with the average franchise's estimated value at \$732 million. Players' salaries have increased by 7.4 percent, and operating income has increased by 21.5 percent. The NFL's steady 10-year increase in value is directly attributable to News Corporation setting off a bidding war for broadcasting rights along with other television opportunities for the NFL. Another television opportunity included the NFL Sunday Ticket, which shows out-of-market games available through DirectTV. Murdoch paid the league \$3.5 billion in 2004 for the rights to the subscription-based show (Bernstein, 2004).

Ted Turner, TBS & Baseball

Ted Turner began airing Braves games in 1973. At that time, he owned a small local affiliate, WTCG, in Atlanta that suffered poor ratings (it was fifth in a market of five television stations) (Helyar, 1994). When rumors began to circulate that the Braves were going to move to Toronto, Turner acted. The following year in 1974 he paid \$12 million to buy the baseball franchise (Helyar, 1994). WTBS The Superstation (later TBS) began operations in December of 1976. Since its inception, Ted Turner televised Atlanta Braves games outside of Atlanta, Ga., to various parts of the United States, including Alaska (Helyar, 1994). This not only increased profits for TBS but also for the Braves organization. In fact, when the Braves won the National League West division title, revenue from increased subscriptions climbed, as did ratings (Helyar, 1994).

TBS was profitable because it could draw a largely male audience, which is highly sought after by advertisers. This meant that TBS could charge premium rates to advertisers, which in turn increased the value of TBS (Bellamy & Walker, 2005). Over the years, the increased revenue from advertising dollars made it possible for Turner to sign high-priced free agents. In signing the elite talent, he could then ensure that the Braves were a very competitive team, thus increasing viewership (Colangelo, 1999). In fact, the Braves advanced to the playoffs every year from 1995 to 2003 and, in 2001, was the second highest-paid ball club in the MLB, at \$76 million, behind only

the New York Yankees at \$85 million (Mihara, 2001; Foster, Greyser, & Walsh, 2006).

Owning the Braves made sense, it was cheap programming, and could help establish a then “fledgling” cable system. In addition, Turner would have the exclusive rights to 162 games and nearly 500 hours of original programming. Paying only \$9 million to broadcast Braves games, profits were ensured at the time when broadcast rights fees were estimated at more than \$30 million (Zimbalist, 1994).

Turner applied one of the oldest methods of capitalism—vertical integration (VI). Vertical Integration allows the owner to control all levels of the supply chain—from production to distribution. For media companies, however, VI also includes exhibition (Bellamy & Walker, 2005). As a result of this long-established relationship between the Braves and Turner, (the franchise is now owned by Time Warner) the Braves became profitable and TBS profited in tandem.

Football in Society

When describing the appeal of sports, in particular football in American society, there are many comparisons. Frey and Eitzen (1991) liken sports to other social institutions, like that of religion. Coakley (2004), however, takes a more macro approach suggesting that since sports are a part of our lives, we cannot help but bring our belief systems, our social spheres, and our ideologies into the field of play. Sports, therefore, become an extension and

expression of human life—cutting a swath across gendered, racial and regional boundaries (Oriard, 1993).

The meaning that Americans find in college football comes from the broad spectrum of perspectives that people bring to the game (Oriard, 1993). The game of football then is a ritual that has been brought to the public through technology. Football represents an original text in which life's similar obstacles have been compressed into a definable space and time, allowing only the score to determine the success or failure of one's actions (Real, 1998; Geertz, 1973).

The Media

The media is a significant social institution in American society, responsible for bringing sport to the public. The media, along with technology, extend human senses, allowing them to be where they are not (McLuhan, 1964). For example, technology makes it possible for sports fans to “be” at a live event without leaving their living rooms. So as sports are an extension of our lives, so too, does the media extend our senses (McLuhan, 1964). It allows us to see, hear, and cheer for athletes though they are not physically present.

As has been previously suggested, without media's influence, sports would not be as popular as they are in current times. Society's interest in sports can be seen by its demand for sports information. Thus, “every major daily newspaper devotes a section to sports...space given to sports frequently

surpasses space given to the economy, politics, or any other single topic of interest” (Coakley, 2004, p.10).

The media relay information to the public about newsworthy events. Football, to sports fans, is a newsworthy event. The storylines that emerge during the game—the narrative—are the equivalent of news coverage. The media relay the narrative of football through various forms such as newspaper, television, radio, books, and internet (Hachten, 2001). Being then that they are purveyors of information, the media holds a unique position in society. Through the media, society is kept informed about other social constructs involving education, medicine, law, and sports (Creedon, 1998). The mass media “portray the life of society to society” (Turow, 1992). The two types of information disseminated by the media are either forms of entertainment or news (Creedon, 1998). According to Lasswell (1971), media perform three basic purposes: 1) They observe the environment and report on breakthroughs or threats to society; 2) Offer a course of action to the public; 3) Describe the affect on future generations that the new finding or revelation could have.

Football as Narrative

College football lends itself to the creation of multiple storylines, which media outlets use to promote the sport to the public. It is football’s “structure, organization, and presentation [which] contributes to a heightened quality of narrative” (Oriard, 1993, p. 23). The four quarters broken up by a halftime

give football a beginning, a middle, and, an end, which are the basic building blocks of any story. The dramatic flair which football possesses is attributable to two of football's own constructs: the "organization of time and the rule for possession of the ball" (Oriard, 1993, p. 23). These elements, among others, contribute to football being more "chesslike...but also more novelistic (Oriard, 1993, p.24). In other words, the players are urged to adhere to finite rules of movement, such as in chess. The time constraints build a more structured timeline. Characters (quarterbacks, linebackers, etc.) are to operate within the confines of this timeline, which creates the similarity of a story or novel.

The parts of the game which add drama to the sport include the individual plays, which are shared with the team while in the huddle. The spectators watch as these plays are executed at the line of scrimmage and then witness the unfolding drama. The plays called by the quarterback, the ensuing drive down the field, the game itself and the season (for which this episodic television occurs) all provide opportunities for rivalries, alliances, highs and lows for audiences to follow. These are the components of football which lend themselves to creating plotlines (Oriard, 1993).

Athletes are turned into characters by sports journalists. Sports journalists use storylines to express various aspects of an athlete's career, such as the stage of excellence that the athlete has arrived. Whannel (2002) presents a condensed version of possible storylines used by journalists to describe athletes and define the stage of the athlete's career. These include:

- 1) The emergence of a striking talent;
- 2) The accomplishment of extraordinary

feats; 3) Public celebration; 4) Secondary circulation of star image; 5) Displays of arrogance; 6) A failure to deliver; 7) Public doubts; 8) Erratic behavior; 9) Public scandal; 10) Failure; 11) The hero redeemed by extraordinary performance; 12) Forgiveness; 13) The power wanes.

College football is newsworthy. A story is determined to be newsworthy if it is of interest to the public. There are four criteria used to determine newsworthiness—1) Deviance, which can include bizarreness, or oddity; 2) A sensational event or occurrence; 3) Conflict or controversy; 3) Fame, Celebrity, Prominence (Shoemaker, Danielian & Brandlinger, 1992).

There have been instances in which college football has fulfilled all of these requirements in order to sustain newsworthiness. Certainly deviance from pre-established rules would include numerous reports of on-field violence, as was seen during the Miami University and Florida International game during fall 2006. The brawl lasted for nearly five minutes and resulted in 13 players being ejected from the game (Degnan, 2006).

Conflict and controversy are witnessed in the annual grousing over the Bowl Championship Series title match. The BCS standings confuse most who follow college football, particularly since the BCS (started in 1998) was supposed to cut down on the confusion and determine the number one and two teams in the country through the use of a complex mathematical formula (Callaghan, Mucha & Porter, 2004). This formula was supposed to be more exact than the previous media and coaches' polls used to determine the best in the nation. The controversy remains, however. For example, in 2004, there

was uproar because the University of Southern California was not included in the title game. In 2006, two one-loss teams, the University of Florida and Ohio State University, competed for the national championship. Meanwhile, undefeated Boise State was omitted along with one-loss team Michigan University, both of whom were potential contenders (Wharton, 2006).

Finally, an example of prominence and celebrity within college football could be the Heisman trophy race and the way in which it has become a premiere event for individual athletes—in addition to a national title. In 2006, the Heisman trophy was awarded to Ohio State University's quarterback Troy Smith. Ironically, John Heisman, of whom the trophy is named, expressed reservations at the idea of singling out one player, from what he considered to be a team event. He eventually relented, and later considered the Heisman trophy to be a team honor. The team, after all, would benefit from the exposure that the award would bring to their football program (John W. Heisman, 2007).

Masculine Identity

College Gameday, and other sports media, promote a masculine ideal. As a result, the masculine ideal becomes a product attribute of college football. Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000) call this the "Televised Sports Manhood Formula." They conclude that sports media reinforces a limited notion of masculinity whereby only winners are considered "real men." To be a winner, men must display strength, toughness and aggression.

Furthermore, players must be willing to participate in sports even if they are injured. The willingness to play while injured proves that these idealized men have the will and stamina to fight other men for dominance (Messner, Dunbar & Hunt, 2000).

The concept of masculinity, however, is not a static notion. It is ever changing. This is why many scholars prefer the term masculinities (Whannel, 1999; Coakley, 2004). In fact, as Whannel (1999) explains, the type of masculinity that is promoted through the media is not the only definition of masculinity that exists but is instead, a dominant, en vogue version. The dominant masculinity over time has had the same characteristics: it is oppressive to women and to subordinate masculinities—such as cultural minorities or those who are physically incapable of competing in sports.

Furthermore, a balanced review of the literature would be incomplete without also discussing femininity. After all, masculinity and femininity are two parts of a whole. One cannot be understood without the other (Roper & Tosh, 1991; Connell, 1995). Accordingly, masculinity is considered to be at odds with femininity, particularly when women come into contact with the “bad boys” of sports (Whannel, 1999). These are the players framed by the media as being loners, perhaps rule breakers, and as always pushing the boundaries of authority. These players assert their rugged individuality and express their natural aggression on the playing field. This individuality is at odds with what are considered feminine ideals: family and domesticity. The male player’s wife, mother, or family is always attempting to temper and tame

the aggressive male (Whannel, 1999). In addition, Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt (2000) assert that the media perpetuates the woman's role in sports as being one of a peripheral attachment, such as that of cheerleader, but not the main center of focus.

Aggression is not only an admired trait in "bad boys" but in "good guys" as well. (Whannel,1999). In college football, heroics are oftentimes defined in terms of the level of aggression that is exhibited during the game. When athletes play aggressively, they are praised for their skill and their dedication. Displaying aggression provides evidence of the player's right to be on the field of play. When this occurs players are referred to as warriors (Messner, 1999).

Furthermore, aggressive males must have a capable leader and more often than not this leader is a white male. In fact, Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt (2000) assert that the media presents white men as the ideal and that they are the "voice of authority." Subordinate males and women must respect and comply with this voice of authority (Kellett, 2002). For example, the media often give coaches credit for developing a "system" or "program" in which the athletes participate. Praise or criticism is administered to that coach by the media when a coach's system succeeds or fails to produce victory (Kellett, 2002). Football, as a result, lends itself to preserving hegemonic masculinity because the sport is centered on patriarchy (Sabo & Panepinto, 1990). As Sabo & Panepinto suggest, this patriarchal social structure is normalized by

the media and society, which allows this dominant masculinity to perpetuate itself (1990).

The media analyzes football's narrative and then presents their findings to the public. From this analysis certain players are designated as "heroes." These are the main characters within the story constructed for the audience by the media or, as first termed by the Greeks—a man of more than human qualities, someone favored by the gods. (Whannel, 2002; Vande Berg, 1998). Today, the one recognizable way in which the media employs heroic framing includes the male body-as-weapon dynamic (Messner, 1992; Trujillo, 1995). This form of framing is reinforced every time a player is praised for sacrificing his body for the betterment of the team.

Stempel (2006) identifies what he terms as "masculinist moral capital" in which televised sports construct multiple metaphors that are tied closely to conservative ideals, including morality. These metaphors include "self-discipline, self-reliance, self-control, and competitiveness as highly rewarded traits" (p. 90) thereby reinforcing the moral order. The ideal masculine character is also defined in terms of,

[B]eing the 'go-to' guy under intense competitive pressure and being a true warrior who sacrifices his body and is resolute in the pursuit of victory (the will to win) in the face of great obstacles. Those possessing character or moral strength are the ones who stand up to adversaries when the going gets tough. Sports are a test of and crucible for constructing masculine honor or character (moral strength). (Stempel, 2006, p. 90)

The appearance of moral strength identifies heroes from villains (as these distinctions are assigned by the media) (Whannel, 2002). Television reinforces the masculine ideal in its promotion of athletes as heroes. Since the 1970s, mediated sports representations have taken on greater cultural capital. The public have become accustomed to television's presented ideas of sports stars and heroes. Television applied, and continues to apply, layer after layer of invention. The way in which media present athletes, however, can be problematic. Particularly, when all the public knows of athletes is the way in which television has presented them. This type of knowledge would be intensely lacking (Whannel, 2002).

The way in which the media narrate the lives of athletes causes athletes to seem less human and more otherworldly. Frailties and humanity are glossed over, and the athlete becomes a construction of the media (Whannel, 2002). Television production techniques that employ music and editing and a singular focus on performance—or a superficial summation of an athlete's background—does not fully explain the identity of an athlete. The media selects and excludes information so that what is known of an athlete is more propaganda than personal interview. It is more infomercial than editorial (2002).

Heroes, however, are a necessary social construction. According to Klapp (1962, 1964), heroes and heroic narratives play special roles in society. They are the embodiment of what the public considers "good" and "right" in regard to behavior and comportment. Furthermore, heroes unite the public.

As Klapp describes, heroes and heroic narrative, “transport an audience vicariously out of everyday roles into a new kind of reality that has laws and patterns different from the ordinary social structure” (1964, p.24). Heroes also are a source of compensatory comfort for people—they are standardized examples of virtue and demonstrate to the public how people could and should be—but are not (1962).

Many have given credit to sports heroes for teaching them life skills. Grantland Rice, for example, one of the first sportswriters to draw acclaim in the United States for his ability to reconstruct sports and present them in an artful literary style articulated the importance that sports heroes had had in shaping his character. He thanked them for teaching him how to live his life particularly in what he called the “Age of Anxiety” (Rice, 1956).

Terrell Owens and Peyton Manning

The media constructs roles for athletes to play. Simply put, athletes are either “good guys” or “bad boys” (Whannel, 1999). Currently, examples of athletes as media constructions are Dallas Cowboys wide receiver Terrell Owens and Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning. Terrell Owens is described as being an antagonist by the media. His antics on the playing field and in the locker room have been emphasized to the point that the man is being perceived as a villainous character in the game. His actions, starting in San Francisco when he halted play to autograph a football before tossing it back in to the stands, have all contributed to his vilification.

There was uproar in Dallas as soon as Terrell Owens was signed to the Dallas Cowboys. Local sportscaster Dale Hansen looked upon Owen's signing as just another sign of the amoral climate of the NFL. It condones players with character flaws as long as they can play the sport (Hansen, 2006, ¶ 12). Hansen said in regard to Terrell Owens, "You put 50 guys in a room, I guarantee you there will be some bad guys. That's true in Congress, any state house or city council, and most of our churches" (2006, ¶ 12). Character then is one way in which the media differentiate the heroes from the villains.

If sports media personnel were to explore any athlete's personal profile more in depth, they could bring to the forefront more notable qualities. But good tidings do not titillate viewers. Terrell Owens for one has been identified as a bad boy. Controversy linked to him then reinforces the credibility of the media as they create a character out of the athlete, instead of a real person (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006).

Conversely, Peyton Manning has been identified as a protagonist. He is admired for his on-field behavior. Case in point, after Manning's 2007 AFC Championship victory, Mike Celizic (2007, ¶ 6), an MSNBC.com contributor wrote of Manning,

Even if you found yourself taking pot shots at him in other years for coming up small in big situations, you still understood that he's one of the good guys. And just because the game doesn't care if a player is a saint or the devil himself, doesn't mean that you have to feel the same way.

The media has characterized Manning as an All-America, along the same lines as past greats such as Johnny Unitas and Roger Staubach. Media have the ability to cause facts about a player's background to be viewed as either appealing or unappealing. The public, therefore, has been conditioned to accept the media's framing of Manning and are reinforced to think that they know him based on how he has been portrayed (Grentzkow & Shapiro, 2006).

National Identity

Football is a game built upon more than heroics. It is a game that requires the use of strategy in order to acquire territory and ultimately win—this is the same strategy used in the American business world (Real, 1998). Football can, therefore, be cited as an example of a capitalist endeavor. The mediated text of football reinforces this concept. A football game is representative of American capitalism—the utilization of force and strategy to dominate markets and therefore win at the game of business (1998). In addition, as Real observed (1975, p. 42), football is a game used to reinforce American nationalistic virtues.

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.

Lawrence and Rowe (1986) suggest that the media perpetuate the capitalist ideals of “survival of the fittest” and the ideal of meritocracy—reward

for individual performance in a corporate structure. According to Bryant, Comiskey & Zillmann (1977) television commentators generate reports of opponents as rivals and adversaries, presumably competing for the same achievement—the win. Broadcasters have been encouraged to enhance televised match-ups by telling the at-home audience that opposing players are not just opponents but real enemies (Hitchcock, 1991). This instruction to broadcasters is meant to increase the fan's emotional involvement in the game—particularly if they are made to believe that real hostility will be a factor (1991). Fans are, in effect, watching the inner workings of capitalism played out in its most primitive form.

The corporate model is one constituent of our national identity. From its inception, football was fashioned to represent the unity of progressive America (Oriard, 1993; Bairner, 2001). Walter Camp, considered to be the inventor of modern football, saw the sport as a perfect training ground for future business leaders. To achieve success in both football and business, one had to do three things: exploit the opponent's weaknesses, strategize, and employ deception in order to blindside the opposition (Westby & Sack, 1976). Walter Camp emphasized this point when he said,

Finding a weak spot through which a play can be made, feeling out the line with experimental attempts, concealing the real strength till everything is ripe for the big push, then letting drive where least expected, what is this—an outline of football or business tactics? Both of course. (Walter Chauncey Camp Papers, as cited in Westby & Sack, 1976).

In fact, Camp patterned the game after the Frederick Taylor structure of industrial production and scientific management (Oriard, 1993). In doing so, Camp wished for players to excel at the positions that they acquired. Taylor's management structure required strict division of labor based upon a scientific selection of workers. Through training, a workers' innate talent could be developed and then utilized for the betterment of the corporation. Taylor also called for a division between management and workers.

Specialization was not limited to players (Westby & Sack, 1976). Coaches emerged as the single voice of authority. Camp called this the "Czar principle," in which one man is made to manage and lead the group. He rationalized that with one man in charge, he could do what he deemed necessary without receiving any interference from others (Westby & Sack, 1976).

At the same time, football has exemplified an America that values military preparedness, particularly after World War I.¹ As Bairner (2001, p. 104) writes, "Partly due to its origins but also as a result of its inherent characteristics, the game had manifest military implications, combining both the order and chaos of the battlefield." Militarism manifests itself every time sports media utilize warfare terminology when they describe football. Words such as *blitz*, *battle*, *kill*, *reload*, *fight* all contribute to perpetuate the "sports as war" belief (Messner, Dunbar & Hunt, 2000; Kellett, 2002; Kozar, 2002).

¹ Nationalism can also include a study of American imperialism, which is America's self-perception in the context of world affairs. This is particularly relevant in light of the current war being waged in Iraq, but beyond the scope of this paper.

Furthermore, Kellett (2002) contends that the public has been conditioned to accept head football coaches as being equivalent to generals in charge of an army, and athletes as their soldiers.

A citizenry is conditioned to accept the benefits afforded them through militarism when “the values of militarism [are]... rooted in the political and social life of the state” (Caulfield, 2001, p. 299). These values are reinforced through mediated messages that influence spectators whether they are conscious of receiving this message or not (Rowe, McKay & Miller, 1998). Schiller (1989, p. 130) asserts that football reinforces national identity, among other ideologies, while the audience is “in its most vulnerable condition, relaxed, yet fully receptive to the physical action and the inserted sales pitch. It is the ideal ambience for the penetration of consciousness by a wide variety of ideological messages.”

Militarism refers to “a set of values or ideologies that include hierarchical relationships and domination” (Finley, 2002, p. 1). Militaristic values, though not unique to only a militaristic setting, can also include centralization of authority, discipline, and obedience (Merryfinch, 1981).² These same militaristic ideals are promoted through modern corporate America--and the game of football itself, whereby a quarterback (or foreman)

² The notions of domination and a hierarchical structure can be observed in their relation to militarism; however, these concepts can be seen in many organizations—familial, religious, etc. And while these notions can be seen as a negative aspect of militarism, a degree of domination and structure is necessary in different organizations. After all, any organization that imposes rules upon its members and has a formal division of labor places these concepts into motion.

dictates orders in the form of plays at the line of scrimmage, and others on the field scatter as they tend to their “assignments.” In this regard, football is a strong example of the corporate/military structure.³

Furthermore, research conducted by McKay (1991) showed that sports have been framed as war, in which nationalism and militarism emerged as dominant ideologies. He studied the telecast of Super Bowl XXV during Operation Desert Storm and concluded that many images contributed to the “football-as-war” theme. For instance, military jets flew over the stadium followed by the national anthem. Then footage of soldiers stationed in Iraq was broadcast during the halftime show. Finally, shots of a packed, flag-waving stadium also evoked nationalistic ideology. Others have identified force, aggression, and conflict as not only emerging themes found within football but useful sports marketing tools (Bryant, 1989; Zillmann & Paulus, 1993). In fact, Carroll (1998) concluded that spectators respond to these attributes because it serves a basic need of all individuals—the need to overcome adversity and achieve victory.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia generally refers to a longing for past experiences. This can even include a longing for events that have not been experienced first-hand

³ This paper will identify domestic themes and issues as college football is a homegrown sport and not global in nature, as say, professional football could be considered to be. While there have been college football games played in international venues, its promotion internationally is not typically thought of as a primary objective in its economic growth, as is the stated objective of the NFL.

(Holbrook, 1993). Fairley defines nostalgia as being: “A preference (general liking, positive attitude or favorable affect) towards objects (people, places, experiences or things) from when one was younger or from times about which one has learned vicariously, perhaps through socialization or the media” (2003, p. 288)

College football means many things to many different people. The game’s importance is often tied to memories of family, or achievements, or participation—social experiences (Fairley, 2003). Sports journalists often appeal to the “geographies of the heart” when they re-tell the stories of football. As Nauright (1996) describes, the “concept of ‘geographies of the heart’ allows us to think of nostalgia as place—as well as temporally-based” (p. 123). Communities are, therefore, resentful when owners of sports franchises suddenly decide to relocate franchises. The community looks upon their memories as if they are a place to be visited, or an object that can be touched (1996).

There are two ways in which nostalgia has been conceptualized. There is the view which says that nostalgia relates to “the heritage of sport,” which includes the visiting of stadiums, museums and sport halls of fame. The second view of nostalgia is in the re-living of sports experiences (Fairley & Gammon, 2005). In addition, people may “learn of nostalgic recollections through forms of socialization such as the passing on of stories which have nostalgic appeal” (Fairley & Gammon, 2005, p.123).

The media reinforces a sense of nostalgia when references are made to past excellence through the use of statistical evidence. Traditions, including the rivalries that have long been established, the fight songs, cheerleaders, stadium atmosphere, and many other attributes exemplify what can be thought of as nostalgia (Oriard, 2001).

Sports as a Commodity

The media commodify sports, particularly college football, and promote it to sports consumers. Commodification, according to Real (1998, p.21), refers to the process of reducing “the value of an act or object to only its monetary exchange value.” Or, in other words, commodification is represented by any activity one engages in for the sole purpose of profit-taking (Lee, 1993). The commercialization of college football can be seen in various examples. One only need look to the corporate sponsorships, commercials, product logos, memorabilia, or merchandising and marketing campaigns that lead up to weekly football match-ups, which predominate sports telecasts and sports news programs (Real, 1998; Harris & Kinkema, 1998).

In the beginning, football was not valued for its monetary worth. Instead, the sport was played, and its worth found, in the enjoyment of the participants (Bourdieu, 1978). In the early 1900s, print media repackaged football and resold it to the public as a mediated product (1978). The media provided free publicity for football match-ups. In turn, the sport’s popularity

increased and game accounts became “news.” Newspapers developed sports sections. Daily sports reports made football not only newsworthy but also gave the game social capital. People identified themselves as college football fans (Whitson, 1998). As a result, companies were assured an audience of potential consumers for their advertisements (1998).

In his book *Reading Football*, Oriard (1993) describes the “formula” used by fledgling journalists in 1876. Newspaper reports were based on the art of storytelling and embellishment. Early sports reporters who worked for media outlets, such as the *New York Clipper*, *the Spirit of the Times*, or the *National Police Gazette*, would first establish the setting in which the game was to be played. This included an approximation of the number in attendance, followed by plays generated on the field.

After a few years, the formula for sports changed as reporters worked harder to increase the dramatic appeal of football accounts, (and thereby increase newspaper circulation) particularly as college football moved further away from a mere campus event to full-blown public spectacle. At this time, in the 1920s, sketches and diagrams were added to game reports. These sketches were typically drawn to highlight the spectacle that football had become by placing renderings of the audience in the foreground with action on the field in the background. These detailed methods were used to generate interest in the game and ultimately lead to football’s increased popularity (Oriard, 1993).

Today, television has taken over where the once dominant print media left off, helping college football to become the third most popular sport in America, “with 57 percent of Americans calling themselves college football fans” (ESPN Sports Poll, 2004, as cited in ESPN Customer Marketing and Sales, 2004). As this paper will continue to assert, without sports, many media organizations would not be able to sustain the large viewing audiences that they have. Indeed, “The culture of sports in America and the desire for distraction have enabled media to capitalize on a shared interest of citizens” (Marhawa, 2005, p.26).

And just like the print media of the early twentieth century, television utilizes the same technique: generate drama through imagery. For print media, it was the perfectly captured photograph enhanced by the insertion of a snappy caption. Today, it is the highlight reel and sharp-witted summation. As Marhawa argues,

The nature of television ensures that the broadcast of a game is a form of spectacle in which drama and excitement can be manipulated by production techniques. While sports networks such as ESPN serve as a middleman in the communication process, they must take conscious strides to ensure that drama is incorporated within its reporting (2005, p. 27).

Dramatic reporting increases fan interest in the commodity of football. After all, a football season can be likened to serial entertainment (much like situation comedies or soap operas, which are popular in American culture) (Wernick, 1991; Whitson, 1998). Wernick describes serial entertainment as

episodic in nature—providing an endless supply “of continuous gossip to which identifying audiences become addicted” (1991, p. 105).

The media use the results from one college football game to create interest for succeeding games. At the end of the season, all of the games have contributed to the creation of a “master narrative” and the players have been transformed into characters (Wernick, 1991; Whitson, 1998). In addition, each game has its own conclusion, a winner and loser. And, just as in serial television, the audience can miss a game and still be kept abreast of the larger story, the season. Audiences remain interested in the continuing saga of the main characters from one game to the next. The next time viewers tune in to the show, the characters (players) will be involved in staged events within an expected set of variations, just as the week before (1991; 1998). In addition, audiences learn to identify different players based on that player’s contribution to the team’s success (or failure). As a result of character identification, drama is heightened as a team vies for post-season play or as players compete for individual awards such as the Heisman trophy (Whitson, 1998).

The impetus behind this drive for dramatic reporting is, of course, commercial in nature. Drama increases ratings. One rating point is roughly equaled to 1 million households. The higher the audience rating is, the more households sponsors will have to market their products to. Factually, every television show lives and dies based on television ratings. Ratings are the only way that television programs can measure their success in light of the

fact that there is a finite amount of funding available to all competing television stations (Barnett, 1990). This funding consists of sponsors' fees paid to advertise a product or service during a program's airing. Sponsors hope that the advertisements will result in increased sales.

For example, during the airing of the NFL's 2007 Super Bowl, 44 unique brands aired 44 minutes and 10 seconds worth of commercials (The Nielsen Report on Super Bowl Advertising, 2007, as cited in "The Nielsen Report", 2007). As a result of this airing, there were several businesses that saw increased traffic to their websites. CareerBuilder.com saw the biggest increase. One hundred and six million visitors viewed their website the day after the Super Bowl. This was a 148% increase in traffic from the previous day (2007). Hewlett Packard was second with 1.4 million hits on their website, an increase of 74% from the previous day (2007).

The amount of money spent over the past 20 years on advertising during the Super Bowl is substantial. The top five advertisers during this time include Anheuser Busch, Pepsi, General Motors, Time Warner, and Walt Disney. They have spent \$613.4 million since 1987, accounting for 35% of total spending. Total network advertising sales since 1987 is \$1.72 billion (TNS Media Intelligence, 2007, as cited in "TNS Media Intelligence," 2007). For the 2007 Super Bowl, CBS charged its sponsors \$2.6 million per 30-second television spot (2007).

The Super Bowl is an extreme example of advertising rates. Normally, the prices are much more affordable. The parent company of

ESPN, ABC, posts the advertising rates online for its potential customers. A company must pay \$475 per commercial during primetime hours, including sports programming. The cheapest rate is \$30.00 per commercial for overnight programming (“Commercial Scheduling Instructions”, 2006).

ESPN

The biggest example of influential media is ESPN. As Shea (2000) describes,

By virtue of its omnipresence, its audience size, its content, its credibility, its popularity, ESPN is the king of sports television. It has become the most dominant force in the history of sports broadcasting, an interconnected colossus of multimedia synergy, which now routinely influences and alters the way sports are viewed, covered, and even played (p.45).

According to ESPN’s Corporate Fact Sheet (2006), cable operators “ranked ESPN #1 in perceived value.” This is the sixth consecutive year they have earned this distinction. ESPN’s success can also be measured in it’s attractiveness to advertisers who clamor to have their product messages reach ESPN’s male audience, ages 18-34. This age group is significant to advertisers. According to King (2006, p.1), this age group represents “precious gems, rare and uncut. They are notoriously difficult to reach, watching less television than older viewers. Their preferences in programming pull them far from the TV mainstream.”

ESPN, Inc., the self-described “Worldwide Leader in Sports” began as the brainchild of founder William Rasmussen. Rasmussen was an employee of the Hartford Whalers hockey team when he had the idea that renting satellite time could “extend the television coverage of University of Connecticut basketball games” (Mihara, 2001, p. 87). He soon realized, however, that the relative small expense of renting satellite time could be used to provide coverage for sports other than Connecticut basketball (Klatell & Marcus, 1996; Rasmussen, 1983).

ESPN made its debut on September 7, 1979, as the first all-sports cable network. In its first six years of operation, however, ESPN lost more than \$100 million. At that time, ESPN was a new entrant into the market and was forced to pay cable systems inducement fees so that they would carry ESPN programming. In addition, sponsors and advertising agencies were not interested in ESPN. At that time, the network’s viewership was quite small (Rasmussen, 1983).

ESPN was a force to be reckoned with by the early 1990s due to the fact that they had invested a tremendous amount of capital into securing broadcasting rights to sporting events. For example, in 1987 they paid an estimated \$153 million to air NFL games. Because of this success, Getty Oil (an 85 percent stakeholder) was able to sell ESPN to ABC for \$202 million in 1994. A scant four years later, when Disney acquired both ABC and ESPN, the cable network was reportedly worth an estimated \$5 billion (Brockinton, 1998).

Today, ESPN is available in roughly 1/3 of all American households, which translates to over 91 million homes. And, the network produces more than “5,100 live and/or original hours of sports programming including more than 65 sports” (ESPN Customer Marketing and Sales, 2004, ¶ 1).

The cable giant’s market penetration and reach can also be measured in its various entities that generate and disseminate sports products to sports consumers – i.e., podcasts, Internet, ESPN books and ESPN the magazine. Furthermore, there are the various ESPN television channels such as ESPN2, ESPN HD, ESPN Classic, ESPN News, ESPN U, ESPN Regional Television, ESPN Today, ESPN Deportes, ESPN Pay-Per-View, and ESPN International (ESPN Customer Marketing and Sales, 2004, ¶ 1).

College Gameday

Each week, College Gameday begins and ends the same way: the playing of Big & Rich’s song “Comin’ To Your City” and then Lee Corso donning the head of a school mascot while making his prediction as to who will win the day’s featured game. This portion of the show always brings about a huge response from the live audience who are packed tightly around the stage on which host Chris Fowler, analysts Kirk Herbstreit and Lee Corso are seated. Each week provides “fast-paced football entertainment and superb gridiron analysis” (Bonham & Hinchey, 2006).

The fall of 2006 marked College Gameday’s twentieth season on ESPN. While the show can be raucous with a party-like atmosphere, it strives

to capture the pageantry and traditions of each university campus, while showcasing the enthusiasm that college fans have for the game (Kinmartin, 2004). This is evidenced by the large crowds that show up early to catch a glimpse of the show. In fact, crowds as large as 15,000 are not uncommon—arriving with their signs, their bodies painted and their fandom (Bonham & Hinchey, 2006). This party atmosphere has affected ratings positively. With a growth of 18% over 2004, ESPN then increased the length of the show by 30 minutes. The program is, at this writing, a two hour show which airs each Saturday morning during the fall college football season.

Getting the program up and running each week is an involved process. On Monday, the show's producers and hosts decide which game will be the most exciting and popular to focus on. At the end of the week, a fifty-man crew travels to the selected school and then sets up a stage for the two hour production, which will air from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Since its inception, College Gameday has visited 43 college campuses (Willow, 2006).

College Gameday's official name is ESPN's College Gameday Built By The Home Depot. The show first aired in 1989 with then host Bob Carpenter. His panel included Coach Lee Corso and Beano Cook as analysts. At its start, it was a lackluster, in-studio, pre-game show with some on-site analysis. In 1993, however, the show underwent a massive overhaul when it switched to live broadcasts at on-campus sites. Now, Chris Fowler serves as host/moderator and Kirk Herbstreit, a former Ohio State University quarterback, rounds out the three-man panel, along with original cast member

Coach Lee Corso. They are sometimes referred to as the “three wise men” of college football (Stewart, 2006).

The show consists of taped features, analysis, and commentary (Kinmartin, 2004). “Each moment of the 90 to 95 minutes of TV content is planned to the second by topic, camera shot, possible graphic, length and speaker. Even the bathroom break is scheduled” (Willow, 2006). But technical aspects aside, the show is based on the interests of the hosts. The men speak about topics that interest them and are never scripted (2006). This free-flowing style is one of the reasons for the show’s success. The men are not afraid to disagree with each other, creating a semi-serious atmosphere as they discuss the match-ups of the day. In fact, the crowd cheers when Corso disagrees with Herbstreit. They know that Corso’s signature phrase, “Not so fast my friend!” will be surfacing, to their delight.

College Gameday makes the day’s match-up more exciting for viewers to watch. Local fans clamor to be involved in the day’s festivities, because the pregame show highlights a regional game and puts it on a national stage. In fact, colleges use the pregame show as a recruiting tool. For instance, the University of Arkansas reported that they received three visits from potential recruits while the Gameday crew was in town. Arkansas had hopes that the prestige of a Gameday visit would influence the recruits positively and that they would sign with the school, as a result (Kirk, 2006). After all, if College Gameday chooses a particular school to visit, it means that that school is involved in the week’s premiere match-up. A visit from the pregame show is

a symbol of prestige (Abrams, 2006). It has even been suggested that the three-man panel can help influence the vote toward a particular Heisman candidate (Quindt, 2001).

It is the fanaticism of the fans, however, that distinguishes this show from any other sports show. Even the hosts themselves are surprised by the show's popularity. But the hosts also recognize how personal the game of college football is to its fans. For instance, in a recent interview for the HBO sports show Real Sports, Corso admitted that he takes two armed security guards with him to each college campus. Said Corso, "They never forget what you've said. Auburn's a perfect example. About 10 years ago, I picked Fresno State to upset Auburn in the opener. Auburn beat them 62 to nothing. And to this day, they'll walk up to me and say, 'Yo, sweetheart! How's Fresno State doing'" (Downs, 2006). Furthermore, ESPN has taken strides to protect the former coach by making fans take down posters and signs, which personally attack Corso (2006).

Notwithstanding, College Gameday will not be accused of keeping a low profile when visiting college campuses. In fact, the show's director, Scott Favalora admits that they go out of their way to be seen. In South Bend, home of Notre Dame, the show made sure to set up their stage near the "Touchdown Jesus" mosaic. At the University of Tennessee, they perched their stage up high at Thompson-Boling Arena. And at Ohio State University, they use the Horseshoe near St. John's Arena to help accentuate their stage (Willow, 2006).

The show is broken down into eight segments: 1) By the Numbers is a segment that appears twice in each show wherein the hosts break down various games by their statistics; 2) The GameChanger presented by Pontiac is a segment which appears at the end of every show. The hosts choose a player that they think will have a big impact on the outcome of one of the day's match-ups; 3) Saturday Selections is the premiere segment of College Gameday. This is the portion of the show in which the hosts outline the games most worthy of fan attention. Furthermore, since the College Gameday crew always attends the best match-up of the week, this is also the time when Lee Corso famously dons the mascot head of the team that he thinks will win—either the host team or its challenger; 4) Speed Drills—in this segment, host Chris Fowler peppers Lee Corso and Kirk Herbstreit with topical and timely questions that are relevant to college football. They are given 60 to 90 seconds in which to answer; 5) Spirit Meter—A decibel reading is taken to see how loud the live audience can get; 6) Trick of the Trade—Desmond Howard joins the cast at this point. He, and either Corso or Herbstreit, dissect a scheme that particular teams run and then show how the team's opponent can stop that play; 7) Upset Special—This segment occurs twice in the game. Here, Lee Corso or Kirk Herbstreit predicts which team will achieve a major upset during one of the day's match-ups; 8) What 2 Watch 4—all of the day's big games are examined.

The show is also an example of sports marketing at work. After all, the show is said to be “built by Home Depot”. Home Depot has been the show's

sponsor since 2003. Since then, the world's number one home improvement store has enjoyed its product tie-in to a devout demographic of at-home viewers (Bonham & Hinchey, 2006). Home Depot recently announced that it has renewed its sponsorship of College Gameday for an additional three-year term. This agreement entitles Home Depot to branding on the Gameday desk, additional commercials, and sponsorship of featured segments. In addition, Home Depot will receive extra consideration by ESPN including placement on ESPN podcasts, ESPN.com, ESPN Radio, ESPN Wireless, and ESPN The Magazine, among others ("News Releases", ¶ 4).

The reason that Home Depot has chosen to renew its sponsorship of College Gameday is strategic in nature. They have determined that most consumers make home improvement decisions on Saturday. According to Roger Adams, senior vice president of Marketing for The Home Depot, "College GameDay provides us with a national platform to connect with our customers and offers The Home Depot brand a unique point of differentiation," ("News Releases", ¶ 4).

In addition, ESPN has begun an apparel line inspired by College Gameday. The apparel's target market is young adults, and the product's launch coincided with College Gameday's September 9, 2006 game which aired in Austin, Texas. The apparel was made available in over 1500 outlets nationwide. The line includes T-shirts and hooded sweatshirts. The product line is unique to College Gameday because the clothes have messaging on them like "Hey Corso, Choose Wisely" and "Go Ahead Make My College

Gameday.” The line is meant to capture the unique air of the show. By stitching messages on the inside of the clothing, ESPN Consumer Products hopes to engage consumers as they would if they were at a live College Gameday show. According to ESPN’s apparel manufacturer, VF Imagewear, the stitching on the inside of the shirts represents ESPN’s “ability to get fans ‘inside’ sports” (“ESPN Consumer Products”, 2006).

CHAPTER III MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of this research is to determine how College Gameday frames college football using themes of nostalgia, masculine identity, and national identity, which includes militarism and corporate capitalism or, as has been termed by this researcher, the sports-as-corporation frame.

Framing Theory

Framing theory, which this research employs, is a communications theory, designed to explore the ways in which people interact. More specifically, the theory helps us understand how we rely upon others to teach us “what is going on” (Bateson, 1954). The media may be telling its audience what is happening in the world around them, but they are also shaping public perception based on the way that they present an issue to the public (Palenchar, 2001). Accordingly, framing theory can be and has been used to study concepts such as gender, race, ethnicity, and heroics (Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000; Entman, 1993; Kuusisto, 1998).

Framing theory, therefore, asserts that the media does not necessarily tell the public what to think but they do tell the public what to think about (Goffman, 1974). Entman (1993) describes framing as the purposeful selection of one aspect of a perceived reality thus, giving it relevance. In this way, the media may present a perceived problem and then suggest a course of action, moral assessment or evaluation. Accordingly, the mass media

condition the American public as to what to look for in the game of football, and what the game “means.”

The “thinking points” presented to the public are called frames. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) identify a frame as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events...The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (p.143). The media isolates and relays the storylines present within football to the audience which, according to Gitlin (1980), serves three purposes: 1) selection; 2) emphasis; and 3) exclusion. What this suggests, is that while the media is emphasizing one aspect of a perceived reality, it is logical to conclude that some portion of reality will be omitted, either intentionally or not (Entman, 1993). Audiences therefore, are not made fully aware of alternative messages and cannot make a true assessment of a situation because all they have is one source’s interpretation of events on which to judge (1993).

The techniques used to select, emphasize, or exclude are outlined by Fairhurst and Sarr (1996). These framing techniques include: metaphor, stories, traditions, slogans, jargon and catchphrases, artifacts, contrast, and spin. Entman (1993) identifies textual frames as keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images and sources of information. In addition, Maher (2001) suggests that framing can occur at any point in the communication process—the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture itself. Furthermore, Entman (1993) emphasizes the fact that communicators of frames do not

have to be aware that they are framing an issue in order for it to affect the audience's perception of an issue.

Frames occur in two phases—the natural occurrence and then the intent of the occurrence. In other words, the action will occur and then we seek to find the meaning of the situation. The game of college football, therefore, is the natural occurrence. The media provide the intent of the situation—the game requires a social answer, which College Gameday provides through their analysis (Goffman, 1974).

Tuchman (1978) described mass media's ability to play an active role in setting the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to assess and judge public events. Furthermore, Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) identify the media's power to influence audience perception. As a result, the way in which sports media chooses to shape and present a story places particular emphasis on certain aspects of college football when it is presented to sports consumers.

Nauright's (1996) review article investigates and offers examples of the media from the 1950s to present day. He offers strong evidence to suggest that the media has perpetuated ideas of nostalgia, local identity, national consciousness, and masculinity in the ways that it presents the stories of football and other sports. This research is, therefore, based upon Nauright's analysis and will argue that ESPN's College Gameday draws upon nostalgia, national identity, and masculinity when they re-tell the story of football to their national audience. The media focuses attention on these elements thereby

making them significant to the audience (Hardin & Zuenger, 1999; Hardin, 2001; Hardin, 2004).

Nauright's research cited non-fiction sports examples of masculine identity. For example, he concluded from his analysis of the documentary *Hoop Dreams*, that young high school athletes are pressured to "take that next step" into college basketball and ultimately the NBA. Similarly, he examined *Friday Night Lights*, which chronicled the Odessa, Texas, high school football team. Pressure was placed upon the young high school football players to live up to community expectations, which emphasized winning above all else. Furthermore, girls were relegated to the role of cheerleaders as they were pushed to the periphery of the action on the field.

Nauright provided an example of national consciousness when he cited President Reagan's use of the Knute Rockne film (of which he starred) to increase public morale and perpetuate the American values that the film was thought to represent.

Framing Analysis

Framing analysis will be used to determine the way in which the themes of nostalgia, national identity and masculine identity are used by College Gameday to turn college football into a mediated sports product. The goals of this research are best served by framing analysis because people share assumptions about college football and rely on media outlets such as College Gameday to interpret the game and tell them what the game

“means” (Oliver & Johnston, 2000). Furthermore, frames can be used to explain cultural rituals, which college football is representative of (Hymes, 1974). Sports are social constructions and frames are typically cultural symbols, which aid in the interpretation of cultural events. Frames help us structure reality and explain the roles of individuals, groups, institutions, and organizations (Coakley, 2004; Hertog & McLeod, 2001).

Tiger Woods, the Williams Sisters, and Bobby Jones

Framing analysis has been used to identify themes used to frame athletes. For instance, Billings (2003) analyzed descriptors used to portray golfer Tiger Woods. He found that when Woods was winning more descriptors historically attributed to white athletes were assigned to the golfer. For instance, the researcher found that commentators were likely to attribute Woods' success to his experience. Descriptors such as “he’s been there before” and “defending champion” are examples.

Furthermore, when Woods failed he was typically assigned descriptors which historically, are utilized in reference to black athletes. For example, announcers said that Woods was criticized for lacking composure and concentration. Descriptors such as Woods is “nervous” or “frustrated” were employed. Billings, therefore, determined that Woods was a new hybrid of athlete who was both praised for cognitive ability (“white” athlete attribute) and criticized for lacking emotional control (“black” athlete attribute).

Douglas (2002) examined media portrayals of tennis players Venus and Serena Williams. The researcher found that the sisters' domination of tennis provoked many racially charged descriptors within the media by announcers and former players. For instance, the sisters were defined as "arrogant" and references were made to their bodies and attire. Serena Williams was labeled "huge" and her beads that used to adorn her hair were labeled "childish." Both women's bodies were described as "pummeling" "overwhelming" and "overpowering." The purpose of Douglas' (2002) study was to examine the way in which the media perpetuated racial stereotypes. She confirmed the presence of racial identifiers and showed that the media used descriptors to isolate the Williams sisters from their white opponents.

The above examples include framing analysis in regards to the media's ability to shape perception of athletes in terms of the racial themes that they employ. Framing analysis has also been used to explain the media's promotion of sport. For instance, Hardin and Zuenger (2003) examined the growth of United States golf in the 1920s. They concluded that the media increased interest in the sport by highlighting the achievements of golfer Bobby Jones. Furthermore, the media encouraged people to take up the sport by trumpeting the perceived leisure benefits that the sport would have for average people.

In the same vein as similar framing analyses, this research applied the same research method to six episodes of College Gameday, excluding commercials. The pre-taped interviews, along with analysis and commentary

made by the College Gameday host and analysts were studied. Each episode was viewed twice for the appearance of relevant themes. Notes were taken after the first viewing. The second viewing was used for clarification. Once frames were identified, many viewings were then necessary in order to ensure accuracy as each direct quote taken from College Gameday is meant to be reviewed in its entirety (verbatim).

Research Questions

This researcher will attempt, therefore, to answer the following questions:

RQ 1: Based on Nauright's work, how does College Gameday frame football in terms of nostalgia, national identity and masculine identity?

RQ 2: Are other frames present that haven't been identified by Nauright?

CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This researcher analyzed six episodes of College Gameday, which originally aired in the fall of 2006, for frames of masculine identity, national identity and nostalgia. Results showed how College Gameday utilized the preceding themes to frame college football and therefore promote the sport, which answered the first research question in the affirmative. There was one new frame—corporate capitalism—identified within the text of College Gameday. This answers in the affirmative to the second research question of whether other frames were present that Nauright had not identified.

Masculine Identity Frame

As stated before, the media presents a masculine ideal, which generally includes praise for heroics, playing aggressively, playing hurt, and using one's body as a weapon.

Meeting the Masculine Ideal--Examples

There were many examples of the masculine ideal used by the hosts of College Gameday. For instance, there was mention of Adrian Peterson, the running back from Oklahoma University, and his ability to endure pain—his toughness was not only emphasized, but was presented as a key to his success on the football field. Peterson's interview was presented and he had the following to say about his "toughness" on the field:

It's a mental game...you've got to stay tough,...just run the ball hard and just pounding them, pounding them...you know, there's not too many guys that will make it, getting pounded like that each time.

Peterson offers personal testimony as to the benefit of being a physically tough player who can withstand multiple collisions with opponents and maintain his speed on the field. His teammate, John Cooper, a center on the offensive line, confirmed Peterson's tough play:

He's probably got more yards after contact than anybody in the country and he's just running people over and they're tired of trying to tackle him.

After Cooper's testimonial, a voice-over from an anonymous male narrator quantifies Adrian Peterson's talent:

As the Heisman runner-up in 2004, Peterson gained 70 percent of his 1,925 yards *after* contact. This season [2006], eighty-five percent of his yards have come after contact.

Finally, Bob Stoops, the head coach for the Oklahoma Sooners gives his assessment of Adrian Peterson:

A glancing blow at him usually doesn't faze him—he's able to run through those and keep gaining yards and really doesn't lose much speed when that happens.

Toughness is a reoccurring theme. Quarterback Brady Quinn was used as an example. Kirk Herbstreit said,

I've talked with a lot of NFL personnel when we travel around and it's very interesting. Because he has been sacked, because they cannot run the football, his stock is actually going up as far as a lot of the NFL administration is concerned because he's showing more toughness this year, Lee, than he has last year because he keeps getting hit. He's been sacked 21 times!

Again, being tough is considered to be the hallmark of an exceptional athlete. Case in point is an interview conducted by Kirk Herbstreit. He asked Troy Smith, the Ohio State quarterback, to define his strengths at the position. Smith said, "The first thing that I bring to the table is being a leader. And along with being a leader is being tough because when I'm out there on the field I don't think that there is a defensive tackle, a linebacker, safety, or cornerback that can stop what I'm doing."

Toughness is also used to differentiate a good segment of a football team from a bad one. Chris Fowler had the following to say about the University of Florida's 2005 defeat to LSU:

A year ago, Chris Leak had a beat down in the bayou that he will never forget from the LSU defense—Chase Pittman, Tyson Jackson, Glenn Dorsey, and Marlon Favorite.

After describing how mean, tough, and "nasty" these defensive linemen are, Chris Fowler said that even the LSU head coach is afraid for anyone having to face these men that play on his team:

Ya know, Les Miles [LSU head coach], whose 10-year old son plays quarterback, he told me this week that he would never,

ever, want his son, his nephew, anybody he cares about to have to face a defense as nasty as the one he's got at LSU.

In addition, Kirk Herbstreit and Lee Corso debated as to which team had the best defense in the country. They both concluded that the best defenses in the country are within the Southeastern Conference. Lee Corso then proceeded to rank the top four. He named Florida as fourth best in the country, then Georgia as third and LSU as second best. Auburn he named the number one defense in the country for the following reason:

You know why? They took LSU down, took 'em behind the woodshed, and didn't let them have a touchdown.

Players that meet the masculine ideal are labeled "heroes." Chris Fowler gave this distinction to Florida University's back-up quarterback Tim Tebow when he said,

As for Tebow, has there ever been a football folk hero created faster than Tebow? In four SEC [Southeastern Conference] games he has four completions, two of them for touchdowns last week against that fierce LSU defense. Of course it's the predictable, but bruising, fullback-style runs by the two hundred and thirty pound freshman that have really helped build that legend. He was born in the Phillipines, still goes back their every summer on a Christian mission. He was home-schooled. There was almost nothing typical about this guy including his unique role as a situational super-sub.

Kirk Herbstreit reiterated the above statement made by Chris Fowler. He said of Tim Tebow, "Seeing how Tim Tebow, who I call Roy Hobbs, The Natural, the way he affected the team [his team] and also the crowd [Florida's

fans], the way he energized the crowd is very, very unique.” Corso agreed. He said, “You’ve got to see this guy in person to believe him.”

Corso also sang the praises of Brady Quinn. Though Quinn had struggled during the season, Corso believed that he still had a chance at winning the Heisman. Corso said, “Any time you’re the quarterback at Notre Dame, you’ve got an advantage over anybody else in college football. It’s like the centerfielder for the New York Yankees—it’s a special position.”

Ohio State’s team and quarterback, Troy Smith, are also cited as examples of heroes. More than human qualities were assigned to each. For example, Rece Davis said, “The Ohio State offense, putting up some otherworldly numbers. Their efficiency in the red zone—they just don’t turn it over when they get down there.”

As for Troy Smith, Rece Davis said, “Fifteen touchdowns, no picks for Troy Smith in the red zone this year, completing nearly 72%...Troy Smith’s numbers have just been remarkable. He just doesn’t make mistakes—twenty-two touchdowns and two interceptions for the leading contender for the Heisman trophy.”

In a pre-taped piece, Tom Rinaldi quantifies Troy Smith’s success on the field. “Evade, evaluate, execute in just seconds.” A portion of the taped piece has an anonymous broadcaster’s voice saying, “Alludes one defender and...got it! Troy Smith did his best Houdini,” as Smith makes a completion into the end zone. A teammate, Ohio State center Doug Datish testifies to Smith’s ability. He said, “He just has that tremendous poise, that sixth sense.

He can feel when something's going to happen and be able to evade that tackler.”

Not Meeting the Masculine Ideal--Examples.

It is difficult to live up to the masculine ideal. For example, College Gameday aired a press conference in which Michigan State head coach John L. Smith, a white male, told reporters that he did not know what to do to motivate his team. Said Smith, “Apparently I don’t have the answer...I can’t get them to go hard in practice...and...so we’ve got to continue to look for the answer.” In a follow-up, pre-taped interview conducted by College Gameday contributor Tom Rinaldi, Coach John L. Smith was asked why he thought people “latched on to a statement like that by a coach.” Smith said:

I guess they’re [critics] looking for you to have all the answers...and we’re no different—they [the opponents] have all the answers, we don’t. I wish we did. If we did we’d be undefeated every year.

In defense of John L. Smith, Kirk Herbstreit and Lee Corso both stated that the competition was fierce within the Big Ten Conference. All a Michigan State head coach could hope for, therefore, was to recruit athletes with athletic ability and questionable character since the quality players were attending rival schools Michigan University and Ohio State University.

College Gameday praised game toughness while a lack of toughness and poor character was deemed unacceptable. Michigan State was admonished for their lack of toughness in reference to a post-game shoving

match between Michigan State and the University of Illinois. Illinois antagonized Michigan State when they attempted to plant their school flag into the playing field. Of the ensuing post-game brawl Chris Fowler said:

Both Michigan State and Illinois fined ten thousand dollars for that...scuffle after the game, and Illinois tried to plant a flag. If Sparty [Michigan State] had shown as much fight during the game as they did after it, who knows, maybe they'd be in a better state of mind right now.

Several episodes later, character again became an issue when College Gameday spoke about the firing of Coach John L. Smith. Kirk Herbstreit said,

I think this is a bigger issue than John L. Smith. This is a program issue for Michigan State...the one thing about Michigan State has been their inconsistency. What this program needs right now is discipline, accountability, respect. They have to bring a coach in who is going to clean the program up and say, 'I don't care if we win three games—this is how we're going to do things' and players fall in line and do what they're asked to do.

Heisman trophy candidates are considered to be the masculine/football ideal. After all, the Heisman trophy is awarded to the best college football player in the country. Many players are exceptional at their team positions, but for reasons beyond their control, fail to achieve national recognition. There are many inhibitors that prevent them from achieving the masculine standard. Chris Fowler, Lee Corso, Kirk Herbstreit and Gameday contributor Desmond Howard, discussed the likelihood of Garrett Wolfe, a running back from Northern Illinois University, ever winning the Heisman Memorial Trophy.

They all agreed—while the young man was talented, he was in the unfortunate position of representing a small university that did not benefit from national television exposure. In fact, he was so talented that he was averaging 9.3 yards per carry and was on track to replicating Barry Sanders' season record. With all of Wolfe's accomplishments he could not be considered the best player in the country because as Lee Corso said,

Garret Wolfe is as good a football player at his position—maybe in the country. But he will not win the Heisman Trophy. There's at least ten football players better than Wolfe at their positions who play on national television, week-in, week-out, against major competition—that's what wins the Heisman. People do not vote for the Heisman *reading* about them. They vote for them when they see them. So, therefore, Garrett Wolfe—forget about him.

Yet another example of a player who appeared to have all of the aesthetics of a great player but fell short of Heisman glory was Deshaun Jackson, a wide receiver from the University of California at Berkeley. Chris Fowler offered statistical evidence as to the player's talent when he said,

Their [California University] offensive player, sophomore Deshaun Jackson, a product of Long Beach Poly[technic], one of the top recruits in the country raised some eyebrows when he went to Cal. He comes out of the same school as literally hundreds of D-1 players down the line. Not to mention Tony Guinn and Billie Jean King, and Cameron Diaz and Snoop Dogg—all out of Long Beach Poly. Now Jackson has fewer touches than Ohio State's Ted Ginn, Jr. but more yards and more touchdowns, ten of them—eight receiving and two with punt returns. Four of those touchdowns of forty-plus yards—about seventeen yards per touch. There's nobody, these days, more dangerous to defenses.

A pre-taped piece quantified the player's attributes. The narrator said of Jackson, "Extremely fast...phenomenal...he has great vision." Deshaun Jackson offered this assessment of himself, "Sometimes I don't know how I do it, ya know, but it's kind of great...you just never really know which way I'm going to move. I look at film sometimes and wonder how I got out of a certain play or how I made two players miss." His head coach spoke of Jackson's ability and skill when he said, "Any time he touches the ball everybody holds their breath...because he can reverse field and make such big plays all the time." Quarterback Nate Longshore said of his teammate, "Seeing someone do things like he does is always mind-boggling...he's probably, honestly, the fastest guy on the field all the time."

After the glowing testimonial, Chris Fowler and company qualified Jackson's greatness by saying that if Jackson played for a more prestigious program other than California-Berkeley he would have been a front runner for the Heisman trophy. In fact Herbstreit said, "If he played at USC [The University of Southern California] he'd be my frontrunner for the Heisman trophy. Nobody really knows about him because he is at Cal, but he is legit."

College Gameday also cited Brady Quinn, the quarterback from Notre Dame, as an example of a near-heroic figure, or in other words, someone on the verge of hero status. Chris Fowler said,

Brady Quinn really needs no redemption. But, he would love to cap his legacy with his first ever win over USC...his first win

over USC would his 30th as a starter; no other quarterback in history has ever done that. Since his meltdown at Michigan, this year, in his last eight games, Quinn has had 26 touchdown passes and only two interceptions. They are...great numbers, but numbers only go so far in defining a legacy—it's performance in pressure moments that lead to victories.

National Identity Frame

This research has used corporate capitalism and militarism as parameters for national identity. There are examples of national identity found during a College Gameday broadcast as based upon the aforementioned terms. Kirk Herbstreit spoke of game expectations held by Florida and Auburn using militaristic terms.

They're coming out of here shooting...Auburn's going to have a lot of passion—their fans are going to be into the game...it is Chris Leak as a four year starting quarterback, the experience that he has on the road, including this year at Knoxville that gives the Gators, I think, a calm attitude in the way they'll attack Auburn.

Another example of war jargon is witnessed when Fowler assessed the then USC and Notre Dame match-up by saying, "I think it's going to be a shootout." Kirk Herbstreit also assigned college football with militaristic terms when he said, "Boston College is too physical in the trenches. I think they handle Wake (Forest) easily." Again, Military terms were used to describe South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier. Chris Fowler said, "At Florida, Steve Spurrier returns. The hero, the legend, of the Gator Nation is the head ball coach of the invading enemy trying to spoil the host's BCS dreams." Military

reference was made about Spurrier. Fowler said, "Today's trip to Gainesville, as the opposing general, is just too surreal for many Florida fans to grasp." In addition, Chris Fowler referred to the USC and Notre Dame game in militaristic terms. He said, "Rivalry Saturday at L.A.'s Coliseum. The storyline is age-old: the hometown Trojans and the invading Fighting Irish."

Yet again, Kirk Herbstreit said, "I know Indiana got bombed last week, but back home in Bloomington, they have back-to-back wins." Lee Corso applied military terms when he said, "The SEC, number one with one loss better not get screwed this time because there will be a revolution." In reference to Rutgers' running back Ray Rice, Fowler said, "Ray Rice strengthened his case as a Heisman hopeful; the sophomore, blasting down inside the twenty to set up the field goal attempt."

College Gameday applied "sports-as-corporation" terms in connection to a controversial coaching hire at the University of Arkansas. Arkansas head coach Houston Nutt hired Gus Malzahn as his offensive coordinator. Malzahn, a former high school football coach in the state of Arkansas, successfully recruited four of his former high school players for the University of Arkansas. These players included quarterback Mitch Mustain, the National Gatorade Player of the Year. The controversy laid in the fact that many believed that Nutt hired Malzahn in order to gain access to Malzahn's high school players, which the NCAA deems illegal. However, Lee Corso defended Nutt's right to hire Malzahn:

I don't think there's anything wrong...if you hire a person of influence who is legal--now legal, it's got to be legal and also it's got to be qualified to help influence that player...In fact, Kirk (Herbstreit), it's done every single day in the business world to get big deals. If it's legal, and if the guy's qualified—heck yeah, go get him and get the deal.

More corporate jargon was used to describe the perceived value of certain players. Fowler, Corso, and Herbstreit declared as to whether they would buy, sell, or trade a player's "stock" depending on how that player performed. For example, Fowler asked Corso, "Do you buy or sell (Adrian) Peterson's Heisman stock today?" Corso said that he would "sell" this stock because there was not a quality quarterback playing on the Oklahoma team. Herbstreit said he would sell the stock at that time, but that if Peterson's performances stepped up, he would buy it back.

There was also more market-speak thrown about such as "bear market," and "buy high and sell low." Desmond Howard provided another example when he referred to USC as a stock. He said, "When you look at the tenure of a college coach, it's like looking at the peaks and valleys of a stock chart. USC has been at the peak for the past three years, but now they're sliding towards that valley."

As stated previously, Walter Camp, the inventor of football, relied upon Taylor's management structure to formulate the philosophy of the game. A good manager first defines the position to be filled and then fills that position with the most skilled personnel. In one example on College Gameday, Kirk Herbstreit and Rece Davis discuss the job of the officials and whether they

are doing a good job. Rece Davis posed the following question to Corso and Herbstreit,

It is a thankless job, to say the least. They've got the fancy replay equipment now, coaches can challenge, but over the course of this season only 22 of 120 challenges has been overturned—that's about eighteen percent. Does that correlate, in your mind, to the officials on the field doing a top-notch job?

Herbstreit believed that instant replay was hurting the job of the officials. He said,

I think that there is so much negative attention on instant replay that it's taken away the job of the officials on the field. And, I believe, and I think officials have a tough job...I really believe that this is the most inconsistent year of officiating on the field that we've seen in years. I think the reason is instant replay. I find officials on the field very hesitant because of the eye in the sky making sure they're making the right call and I think it's putting the guys on the field almost in a position where they're hesitant like a quarterback aiming to make the perfect throw. They're so *careful* to make the right call that they're hesitant and they're not consistent.

Many coaches were asked job-related questions, particularly, how they run their programs and how they would manage their teams given certain circumstances. An example of this entails Louisville head coach Bobby Petrino. Rece Davis asked the coach, after an emotional win against rival West Virginia University, "What do you look for to make sure they're focused and that they put it behind them so that they're ready for Rutgers?" Petrino said,

Well, we gave them yesterday off. We'll bring them in today and do some conditioning, give them out the game books for the game. Come in tomorrow, it will be a normal Tuesday workday for us. So, we'll get out on the field and have a very physical, hard practice and we know it's a great challenge. Rutgers is very good on defense and they run the football extremely well.

USC head coach Pete Carroll is another example. In 2006, his team suffered their first regular season loss since 2003. In a pre-taped interview, Carroll was asked how he was dealing with the loss and what happened to cause the team loss. Carroll said,

The painful part of it is the way we messed up that game by giving up the football. It took a lot of bad things to happen for that game to turn out like that. To lose by giving the football away by fumbling it really crushes me because we spend every bit of waking hours focusing on how we can prevent that from happening.

ESPN's Shelley Smith then asked Carroll, "A lot of these kids had not lost a regular season game. What did you tell them about how to handle this?" Carroll replied,

First off, I have to demonstrate how to handle this. We didn't play very well and we made the mistakes that we always work to prevent that gives somebody a chance. And so, I wanted to hammer home the significance of that and then, go right back to the foundations of things we talk about. We can't do anything about that game. That game is over.

Nostalgia Frame

College Gameday is rife with nostalgic references including mention of rivalries and traditions. Sportscaster Keith Jackson, narrated a segment in

which the “Red River Shootout” and the implications for the winner of this long-standing rivalry between the University of Texas and Oklahoma University were identified. Mixed together among footage of past games and images of a local Texas, agriculturally-based community, Keith Jackson said the following:

Welcome to the Cotton Bowl, for another Oklahoma, Texas football game, a knuckle-busting, paint-swapping, hard hats...the works. It is a game between Oklahoma and Texas where you spend everything you brought. This is a game that produces heroes. One moment, in a game like this one can make an entire life. The legacy for a football coach in an archival game like this always has meaning...whether you talk a little Texas and you talk a little Oklahoma and in between you bump heads. An old rival game like this one brings more feeling, more optimism, more pessimism, more everything than a lot of people have ever seen. It's a short period of time, but my goodness, it's capitalized.

There were so many references made to school rivalries that they would be impractical to list. Several examples include, “We are just under 341 hours until the epic showdown between Michigan and Ohio State.” “Boston College and Wake Forest square off today. These two teams have played some barn burners the last couple of years.” (The game between Wisconsin and Iowa was referred to as “one of those rivalry games.”) There was also mention by Chris Fowler of the “Lafayette-Lehigh rivalry.” USC and Notre Dame’s match-up was quantified. Fowler said, “This rivalry features 15 teams that won national championships” dating back to 1936. Florida State

University and Florida University's match-up were said to "cap-off rivalry week."

There were several references made to school traditions. For example, Rece Davis, who was filling in for Chris Fowler as host, said, "Tradition is the essence of college football, but nowhere are the rituals of fall more revered than right here at Texas A&M." Corso then offered,

They've got a unique tradition here at Texas A&M that I just love. You know, it started before World War II and what happens is this: whenever Texas A&M scores any points like a field goal, a touchdown, a safety, the Aggie fans kiss their dates! You know why? Because when one Aggie scores all Aggies score!

Rece Davis then announced the Third Annual National College Football Day. He said,

Today comes just a couple of days before the anniversary of the first ever college football game ever played back in 1869 between Princeton and Rutgers. Rutgers won that one 6-4, they're hoping that they can have any even more landmark victory coming up on Thursday night against Louisville.

Texas A&M's tradition of the Twelfth Man was also discussed. Rece Davis said,

You know Texas A&M owes much of its esprit de corps to E. King Gill. Back in 1922, the Aggies were playing number one Center College and Coach Dana X. Bible was running preciously low on reserves. He remembered that he had Gill up in the stands who had left the football team to play basketball—let him know he needed to suit up. And though Gill never got into the game, he embodied the spirit and the readiness of

everybody to lend a hand to their beloved Aggie team. It's carried on today in the twelfth man tradition—the twelfth man that is still alive with Nick LaMantia, the official Twelfth Man.

Rece Davis then proceeded to ask Lee Corso which is his favorite college tradition. Corso said,

I've got one favorite. It *really* is my favorite. It's Army-Navy. Let me tell you why. Hey, there's nothing like Army-Navy. First of all, it starts at 10 o'clock in the morning, when Army marches in. Then, in come the Midshipmen. Then comes the mule. Then comes the goat. Then they play the game. But this is my favorite of all: when they (Army) stand and they sing the alma mater in front of the football team. This, ladies and gentleman, is the greatest moment in all of college football. If you're a college football fan, let me give you a tip. Before you die, go to an Army-Navy game. There's nothing in the world like it and I get goose bumps every time I talk about it.

A common tactic used on College Gameday is the use of historical context. Oftentimes, the current season is placed in relation to seasons past. For example, Chris Fowler asked his colleagues, "What does Arkansas have in common with Tennessee, Pittsburgh, Washington and Kent State?" None of his co-hosts had the answer, so Fowler gibes them a little by saying, "None of you have any idea?" Again, his co-hosts cannot answer his trivia question. Finally he tells them. "They've already equaled or surpassed their win totals from all of last year."

For the host game of Florida and Auburn, College Gameday produced a segment entitled Flashback, which is a staple of the program. Here, a

Florida and Auburn game from 1996 was highlighted, in which then underdogs Auburn defeated the Florida Gators. Fowler said,

Well, a dozen years ago the mighty Gators were ranked number one in the Swamp, but here came Auburn. Now Danny Wuerffel, he would throw a late touchdown pass...remember Jack Jackson, part of the talented receiving corps in the 90s? Florida led by 33-29, but then 30 seconds to go, Patrick Nix, now the Georgia Tech offensive coordinator [threw] to Frank Sanders—God love those kids—eighteen point underdogs—Terry Bowden went into the Swamp—underdogs were howling that day!

In another Flashback segment, LSU's 2005 performance against Auburn and Florida was showcased, in which they lost both games.

In a segment entitled Role Reversal, Chris Fowler provided more examples of teams that were improved or were performing shabbily.

Historically, these teams had either been poor performers or tough opponents. For example, Chris Fowler said that the 2006 season was,

The first time Florida State and Miami University has been unranked in 24 years. In the Big Twelve, it's Missouri with the big role reversal—on top of the Big Twelve North, 6-0 for the first time since 1973. And in the Big East, Rutgers is a power—5-0, Ray Rice has been tearing it up, Rutgers is in the top 25 for the first time since 1976.

Fowler then proceeded to share the Top 25 AP poll from 1936. In that year, Minnesota, Duke, Army, Northwestern, and Purdue rounded out the top five. None of these teams are national title contenders anymore.

Later, Fowler narrated a piece about Toomer's Corner, a local

landmark in Auburn, Alabama. Footage was shown of the 2004 football season--rolls of toilet paper were used to decorate a tree at Toomer's Corner after a football victory. Fowler said,

Where College meets Magnolia, they call it Toomer's Corner near the legendary old drug store where they serve up the great lemonade. The last time we were here, Tigers beat Georgia, they rolled Toomer's Corner with toilet paper. There was a huge party at the War Eagle's Supper Club later that night where the Velcro Pygmies played in a concert. The lead singer, Delicious—they're around here again; they're playing a frat party. Tonight, will Toomer's Corner be rolled once again if Auburn can knock off Florida?

Discussion

This study has presented the ways in which College Gameday frames college football. Specifically, this study identified the ways in which nostalgia, masculine identity, and national identity including corporate capitalism and militarism are used in order to promote college football to the public. This was shown through the use of framing analysis in which the commentary—the text of the show—was analyzed to provide multiple examples of relevant themes. The portion of the public that watches College Gameday is influenced by this media outlet. College Gameday teaches them about the game and isolates key elements about college football. As Hardin (2001) explains, the media's portrayal of college football, does in fact promote the sport. There would be no way for the public to know about the sport if the media did not report on it (2001). Therefore, when College Gameday frames college football, they are not just telling the public about the sport, they are

telling them why the sport is important and what sets this game apart from other sports. For example, when the screaming crowds, with their handmade signs, are depicted gathering closely to the Gameday podium, the media has produced a vicariously witnessed ritual for the audience. This creates a virtual community for the audience (Coakley, 2004).

In fact, Entman (1993) said that frames can exist in four areas of the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. For College Gameday, the frames exist in the text and in the communicator. The text in this case is the commentary and the pre-taped pieces that isolate, emphasize, and exclude information about the sport. The communicators are the College Gameday crew: the host, analysts and contributing sports journalists.

Football is a game in which few will ever participate. In fact, it is the most watched and least participated in sport in the country (Coakley, 2004). Therefore, audiences rely heavily upon the media to tell them what the game is like, how it feels, what it means, and what is at stake for those rare individuals who have the physical ability to participate. Football players are the heroes that the media exalt. They are, in effect, heroic because they participate in a sport that few can. In that regard, they are heroes (Klapp, 1962).

Nostalgia

College Gameday's host, analysts, and contributing reporters emphasized the traditions, rivalries, general atmosphere, and historical context. Nauright identified nostalgia as a theme in his examination of sports non-fiction. He identified nostalgia as an emotional, as opposed to intellectual, attachment to a team. College Gameday provided numerous examples of what Nauright termed "the geographies of the heart" (1996). Examples included Gameday's tribute to Texas A&M and their Twelfth Man tradition, the Red River Shootout, and rivalries between teams like Michigan and Ohio State and USC and Notre Dame. Furthermore, College Gameday used statistical evidence of players' and teams' past performances. Providing historical context for past performances has been identified by Oriard (2001) as nostalgic in nature.

College Gameday reminds football fans about past social experiences that they may have had. For example, the show highlighted Auburn University's tradition of toilet papering Toomer's Corner after a victory. This is a prime example of emphasizing a football experience which involves fan participation. Highlighting fan participation reinforces football's social importance. Other researchers agree. Fairley (2003) asserts that sports' importance is often tied to memories of family, or achievements, or participation. In addition, people learn about college football's significance through socialization, whether they are tied directly to the recollection or not

(Holbrook, 1993). Fairley and Gammon (2005) have concluded that passing on stories, which have nostalgic appeal, is one form of socialization.

College Gameday did not just talk about football. The participants were passionate about it. They opened a world for fans to visit. This world-created welcomed those who have never been, and those who were returning. This type of continuity encourages all types of fans. This continuity exemplifies immortalization, as it pertains to records, traditions, and scores. Immortalization is easy to acquire in that football has a history that requires no participation from the audience, merely devotion (Oriard, 1993). Traditions supply a sense of identity, a history for those who have always identified themselves as football fans or for those in the audience who have ever known a college football fan (Nauright, 1996).

National Identity

College Gameday also framed college football in terms of national identity. Nauright's work did not provide a working definition of national identity. He instead referred to national consciousness and President Reagan's use of the sports film *Knute Rockne* to popularize it to the nation and perpetuate the values that the film was deemed to portray. National identity was chosen because this term was most applied in the literature review. As a result, College Gameday was examined for themes of corporate capitalism and militarism, which have been identified as constituents of national identity (Real, 1998; Bairner, 2001).

Militarism

Militarism manifested itself in the use of war terminology to describe the game. Terms like *bomb, shootout, revolution, opposing general, shooting, attack, trenches, invading, and enemy* were all used to characterize college football by College Gameday. These terms are certainly not unique. Several researchers have performed studies and concluded that militaristic terms are often applied to football and other sports, which perpetuate the “sport as war” belief (Messner, Dunbar & Hunt, 2000; Kellett, 2002; Kozar, 2002).

Corporate Capitalism

This research did reveal a new frame which was not identified by Nauright’s work. Nauright’s literature review did discuss football’s similarity to a corporate structure and furthering the ideals of capitalism. His review of sports non-fiction did not reveal corporate capitalism to be a major theme, however. Corporate capitalism is, therefore, a new frame different from Nauright’s research.

On College Gameday, comparisons were drawn between stock deals and a player’s performance. Comparisons were also made between business deals and coaching hires. Furthermore, references were made to job performance. College coaches, players, and even referees were critiqued. Tasks that these personnel accomplished successfully were praised. Meanwhile, areas of improvement were also singled out. All of the

aforementioned are examples of corporate capitalism (Real, 1975; Real, 1998). Job specialization is also a component of the corporate model, which was identified by Westby and Sack (1976).

The head coach, as the centralized figure of authority, is an example of job specialization and is akin to the corporate model (Westby & Sack, 1976). College Gameday interviewed several coaches and it was clear that the role of leader and final authority was placed upon the head coach. Coaches were asked, for example, how they planned to lead their teams and what strategy they would employ to overcome failure or to maintain their team's composure after an emotional victory. Walter Camp, the founder of football, called this centralization of authority the "Czar principle," which is still in effect today and was demonstrated on College Gameday (Welch & Camp, 1899, as cited in Westby & Sack, 1976).

Corporate capitalism is a frame used by the media to define football and provide football's "meaning." Other researchers have established that football originated as a sport modeled after a corporation and was said to embody capitalistic ideals (Oriard, 2001; Umphlett, 1992; Lester, 1995). Adequate literature does not exist to support this paper's assertion that the media currently applies the "sports-as-corporation" frame to its mediated representations of college football. This finding confirms new avenues for future research.

Masculine Identity

Masculine Identity was by far the most dominant theme presented by College Gameday. Similar to Nauright's findings, framing analysis revealed multiple examples of players who lived up to expectations and those who fell short of the glory. The masculine ideal was described in one word: toughness. Players who were difficult to tackle were said to exhibit toughness. Similar to the Televised Sports Manhood Formula (Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000), players are considered tough if they can take a beating on the field. In fact, Notre Dame Quarterback Brady Quinn was said to have increased his value to NFL scouts because he had withstood so many sacks at his position—the NFL could now be assured that he could compete at the professional level.

During College Gameday, toughness is used to describe segments of football teams. The LSU defensive line was described as nasty and mean, which is characterized as a positive attribute for a defensive line to have. Messner (1999) determined that aggressive play provides evidence of a player's right to participate. Therefore, the players who are described as tough by College Gameday have had their participation approved (1999).

Heroic framing was a popular way to distinguish the top performers from the underachievers. Oklahoma running back Adrian Peterson, for example, was praised for helping his team win. His willingness to withstand physical punishment was praised by coaches, teammates, and College

Gameday. This body-as-weapon framing is a popular way to determine heroic attributes, such as those identified by researchers Messner (1992) and Trujillo (1995).

Heroic framing was also evidenced by assigning players more than human qualities (Whannel, 2002; Vande Berg, 1998). This occurred when players were praised for “perfect” play. College Gameday also identified heroes by calling them Heisman trophy hopefuls, or referencing to them as “remaining in the Heisman trophy hunt.” Furthermore, College Gameday identified heroes as those possessing good moral character (Stempel, 2006). For instance, College Gameday referred to a Florida University’s back-up quarterback as a folk hero and then included that he returned to the Philippines each summer on Christian missions.

Conversely, College Gameday identified those players or coaches who did not live up to the masculine ideal. These players did not exhibit toughness and possessed poor character. Coaches were deemed as failures if they lost control of their teams. For example, John L. Smith’s Michigan State team engaged in an after-game brawl and he was charged with losing control of the team. He was also criticized for admitting openly that he did not know what to do to gain the respect of his team. Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000) determined that the media identifies white men as voices of authority. A coach forfeits his place of authority if he dares to admit that he cannot solve the problems of his team or improve their performance. Stempel (2006)

determined that a coach or player possesses good moral character when they continuously pursue victory.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sports are a major facet of the waking lives of Americans. Citizens bring all of their ideologies and their belief systems to the game whether they are participants or spectators. Furthermore, football is a ritual that has been brought to the public by the media. The media, in fact, are responsible for promoting college football to the public. If they did not promote the sport, no one would know of its existence. At the same time, the media rely upon sports in order to maintain their share of a national audience—the greater their audience share, the more advertising revenue generated.

The sports/media production complex is the framework used to describe the relationship that exists between these two entities. This relationship is commercial in nature—profit-taking is at its core. The media's role in this complex is to promote sports. As a result, they have the ability to shape the public perception of sports. College Gameday was examined as an example of influential media. College Gameday's use of national identity, masculine identity and nostalgia to promote the sport was examined. Nostalgia involves the emphasis of traditions, pageantry, and rivalries. Masculine identity is represented when College Gameday labels players as heroes, praises toughness, and criticizes players, and coaches for their lack of character. National identity is represented by corporate and militaristic terminology.

College Gameday employs the serial approach to reporting in order to increase fan engagement. Each game is the equivalent of episodic television. This ensures that if an episode is missed, the master narrative—the season—can still be enjoyed. Each game is used to promote the following week’s match-up. This encourages fans to tune in so that they may watch the unfolding drama.

Implications for Sport Managers

Sport managers cannot underestimate the importance of traditions to the survival of college football. College Gameday is a show which promotes football to college football fans. These stories of traditions are obviously popular because College Gameday’s ratings continue to climb (Consoli, 2005). Athletic departments could prosper by emphasizing the pageantry and traditions of their institutions, which have already proven to be popular with college fans.

The public has been conditioned to accept the head coach as a voice of authority and a general in charge of his army (Kellett, 2002). The identity of the head coach is a popular way to promote college football. The coach-as-general notion is common in the sport-as-war schemata. Common sense however, should be applied when defining a coach in such a manner, particularly in reference to a marketing campaign. After all, the coach-as-general notion is simply mythology, and as Kellett warns, “could have serious consequences” if it is applied to sport management. Particularly, if there is

public backlash to the usage of coach-as-general analogy (2002). On the other hand, the role of the coach as the voice of authority is also widely accepted and sports marketers could emphasize this leadership role in a positive way (Kellett, 2002).

College Gameday serialized college football. Each match-up was another episode in the master narrative—the season. In addition, each game was used to promote the following week’s match-ups. The serial is, in fact, a popular way to promote an upcoming game (Wernick, 1991; Whitson, 1998). Sport managers could consider using this technique to promote their own team’s upcoming games. This would encourage fans to stay interested in the continuing drama of the season. A recommendation, therefore, would be to present team performance in more of a storyline format to generate fan interest (1991: 1998).

Conclusion

Framing analysis has been applied to sports and the media’s ability to promote sports is well documented. This, however, is the first scholarly effort applied to College Gameday and is, therefore, limited in its ability to construct a complete picture as to the show’s effect upon college football. As a result, the show’s importance can only be quantified in terms of its increased viewer-ratings and this framing analysis. The frames identified in this research, however, do show how the pre-game program has been able to increase its popularity.

Six episodes and their content were examined, excluding commercials. Therefore, recommendations for future research would most definitely include framing analysis of an entire season. Determining the prevalence of the aforementioned themes during particular times of the season would also be of interest, as the show promotes the season-long master narrative. In addition, it would be of particular interest to analyze each episode and include its commercials. This would provide further evidence of the commercially-driven nature of the show and its need to tap into a particular audience base. Furthermore, finding the corporate capitalism frame in reference to college football constructs a new pathway for research. Future research should be conducted to determine the extensiveness of this “sports-as-corporation” frame.

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Vita

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