

The highlight reel of marxism in american football

[Sport & Tourism](#), [Football](#)



Abstract: During many weeks in 2010, the Football dilemma started to arise as a social issue in society. Raising the question of what should be done if any by the National Football League to prevent traumatic and sometimes deadly hits on the field. Varying degrees of opinions as to what should be done; questions include inquiring on the ethics of the NFL and their lack of safety toward players as any kind of progressive movement. Stagnate would be the suitable term to use as describing the action taken by the NFL. Since the years of President Theodore Roosevelt, who wanted football outlawed in the 1900's.

The president himself could not enact the needed changes. American football is one of the largest industries in the nation with an overwhelming abundance of financial resources. So the question arises, why has there not been any fundamental change in the game or even changes in the guidelines that govern the sport? The answer would be Marxism. This paper will define NFL's match to the Marxist perspective in their handling of players and their stagnant approach to change. This is a social a problem that relates to every aspect of society including the demise of the Americanfamily.

This paper will also define the Marxism theory in relation the American football and the mentalhealthepidemic caused by the dangers of the game. In recent weeks, the full contact sport of football has made headlines in America. There have been an overwhelming amount of injuries due to high impact contact to the head, which leads to various head injuries such as, concussions, spinal cord injuries, and deaths. According to Barry Wilner, The National Football League only represents a fraction of men playing the deadly sport.

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Colleges, universities, high schools, and middle schools have an overwhelming amount of young men who are amateur players. Many of these players suffer from some of the same forms of injuries and deaths as their pro counterparts playing in the National Football League. Leaving many to wonder the lag in the responsiveness for the NFL to make drastic changes after all the NFL is only has approx 1, 900 players a season, leaving the separate class structures such as high school football and college football to absorb the majority of injuries related to football industry. In an article published by Paul Tenorino in, The Washington Post, he interviews George Atallah the assistant executive director of external affairs for the National Football League Players Association says, “ He hoped the recent actions taken by the NFL and its players would help create a trickledown effect about the proper way to handle a concussion. ”

Based upon the actions and the structure of American football and NFL the majority of change is needed on lower levels within its system such as high school and middle school that represents more than 3. million players. Statistics do not lie. The numbers are the numbers. The vast majority of injuries are occurring outside of the National Football League. In a recent report published by Richard C. Senelick M. D has: Determined that there are only 1, 900 active NFL players each season; There are more than 3 million children playing football at the youth level and 1. 2 million more playing high school football levels This report does not count the numerous collegiate athletes that play the sport.

Colleges and universities along with various secondary education institutions have an epidemic on their hands and something needs to change, ...he has estimated that a college lineman experiences over 1, 000 sub-concussive head hits in an average season. He further goes on to say that a line man in the 3 point stance is the most vulnerable of all the players to a brain injury.

Explanation in the lack of commitment in the prevention of injuries from the National Football League can be related to the need for power and the valued economics of the professional athletic system that is described as the Marxist Theory, by taking that approach to football the National Football League developed system that only benefits them. According to Barry Wilner, " The National Football League has begun raising fines for illegal hits from the average \$5, 000 to \$10, 000 to now \$50, 000 and \$75, 000 and has even implemented suspensions for repeated illegal blows. Raising fines and illegal hit, but not changing how the game is played, taking money from the players/workers in order to promote change but not implementing change or being specific to what hits are no longer allowed. Is the money that is taken from fines of players at the professional used in research to develop safer equipment in order to create safer play? No, it is given directly to the pockets of the NFL, and its governing organization.

In Marxist theory, human society and community consists of two parts: Base and Superstructure. The base structure is the material relation and condition of production - division of labor, property relation, employer/employee, slave/master condition and relation. The relations of the base structure fundamentally determines and influences society's other ideas and

conditions, namely the Superstructure - arts, institutions, state, habits, customs, cultural representations like, law, philosophy, science, sports and etc.

We can see this example portrayed out in the design of football in America linked to society within in its class structures of football from pee wee, to middle school, to high school, to college to NFL. According to Imani Cheers, “ Studies have shown that amateur players run a higher risk of head injuries that those in The National Football League. ” All linking classes are a step up from the other one; allowing the National Football League to draw upon the usage of varying football players.

Example: at the age of six little Johnny and his father sit together and enjoy a game of Monday night football, Johnny’s father emotions become ecstatic when little Johnny announces to everyone that he now wants to play football. Little Johnny’s father begins working with him showing him passes catches , the proper way to tackle and ultimately how to become a “ real man” by playing football. Soon, Johnny is registered for peewee league and in now fully indoctrinated into the system set up so well to train that allows the National football league to groom and condition them into their system.

Playing in leagues that are not under any professional governing authority, regulations are not decided based on the protection of the younger player, medical guidelines are not based on the requirements set by standards from any medical organization who would know that; the bone plates in a young child’s head does not full fuse together till after the age of twenty. This

allows the younger players to be very susceptible to head injuries vs their much older professional counterparts.

Eventually, Johnny is known for being dedicated to his favorite sport, in middle school Johnny respects for the game and his training teaches him to take risks on the field trying plays that he has never been fully trained on how to carry out. Soon developing the approach to allow risk taking is a permissible and even heroic if you just win the game. High school for Johnny brings more challenges and opportunity hoping to be spotted by a college scout and achieving the status of "real man" an occasional injury occurs from time to time, but nothing Johnny cannot walk off and then return back to the game.

Finally, a respectable college notices Johnny's dedication and, determination to the sport, they offer him a scholarship if he will play for their school; bringing with it the dream of possibly being drafted into the National Football League. Johnny declares his value as a man to society, with the show of wealth and riches by his multimillion-dollar contract; he finally receives as pay to participate in his loved sport. Johnny begins his college football career with high hopes.

As a college freshman he does well at practices and the coach decides to make him a second string lineman allowing him the opportunity to develop his football skills and sharpen his aptitude on the field. His second year playing college ball he is allowed more playing time during game but is not moved up and a first string lineman, giving him even more opportunity to

develop his tackling regimen, after a couple of head injuries he is benched for the season, hoping he will recover by the start of the next season.

The next season, Johnny's junior year, he is watched even more by coaches and supporting staff to make sure there are no issues from the previous season's injuries. After a few games Johnny is finally moved up to first string lineman, allowing him the opportunity to achieve higher stats, he is further conditioned to play hurt, walking off the field and letting anyone know that he has just had his "bell rung" will only reduce the chance of him being able to play. Without pay, Johnny continues to play, sacrificing all for stats and the hopeful future of being drafted.

Finally, Johnny's senior year, he makes first-string lineman; and is allowed to start the game, giving him even greater need to cover up injuries. During the middle of his senior year, he is injured and benched only for the following next play, he returns to the line of scrimmage; back playing he is knocked around, proving to himself that being a man means to play under any circumstance no matter what. Eventually, he is noticed by professional scouts who take an interest in him because of his dedication to the game and his sacrifice of playing hurt for his team.

After all the hard work he finally is a third round draft pick. Placing Johnny in the top ninety men eligible for recruitment after college, by the professional league and finally earning wages for the sacrifices to his body he has made all these years. The system within the football structure shows a varying display of the different class categories within the professional football league; that organize in the same way as the Marxist set up of workers.

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Starting at the bottom and working your way up through promotions or to the top, the difference is that the football system requires years of hard work and sacrifice without pay until you reach the very top or professional level. The lower class levels in the system are not monitored by any labor board or governing body to insure the safety of players, because all players go without pay until the professional level is reached. All levels have the same positions; same amount of players on the field, and safety equipment.

The majority of the rules are the same with the exception of weight limits in the peewee league. There are not weight limits in any of the other categories of football. In the peewee league, in order to play you can weigh up to a certain amount for position in which you carry the ball, and then after that weight is exceeded, you can only be a center guard or tackle. Meaning, you can have a seventy- five pound quarterback, which is at the top of the weight scale, and the tackle can weigh two hundred pounds. Varying weights depend on each league rules, within that division.

Those divisions is not monitored, by any professional division, only until you play sports within an educational system does a league have governing bodies, charter rules, medical restrictions. Allowing football to becoming more and more dangerous of a sport as the chain of classes develops up the line of class structure by allowing bigger players and no regulation or guidelines monitored by professionals. Marx would tell you, that the type of sport that plays in a given society would precisely reflect its economic/production basis.

All of this given in higher economical societies (superstructure) are reflected and directly influenced by their historical material/economic means; Marxism, the doctrine that the state throughout history has been a device for the exploitation of the masses by a dominant class. That class struggle has been the main agency of historical change, and that the capitalist system, will after a period of dictatorship of the proletariat, be superseded by a socialist order and a classless society. Marxist sociology is based around five main theories that hypothesize as to how a society functions.

Historical materialism, which portrays human history as a series of conflicts resulting from an old system reshaped to fit the interest of the current society. The theory of surplus value, which describes how the capitalist makes a profit from those who they employ; class division and struggle. Which, examines the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and how they conflict; alienation of the proletariat through the means and methods of the bourgeoisie. The “theory of politics” explains how the inevitable transition of capitalism to communism in a society.

The theory of surplus value explains, the way in which capitalists exploit consumers and make a profit from the goods that they sell. The capitalists own the raw material and the means to work with them. Profit, is then added to the raw material through necessary labor from the payment of workers to work with the raw material labor and the payment of labor, longer working hours and cheaper pay for the workers, which together allow the production of more for less. The goods are then sold for more money than was received, was paid to receive, and was paid to have the goods produced.

This process means that capitalists make a profit from the workers and consumers that both produce and consume their products. These capitalists' methods are clearly visible in professional football as identified by Brohm, as the spectator sport of commodity, which sells football along normal capitalist lines. Examples of these capitalist processes are illustrated and discussed in the text, *Sport: a prison of measured time*, authored by J. M Brohm.

In the text, Brohm provides twenty theses on sports, eleven of which discuss the birth of modern capitalist sport. All the structures of present day sport tie in to bourgeois, capitalist society" (Brohm 1978, p. 47). Some of these illustrate how capitalists use the systems present in society in order to make a profit. For a start the very existence of sport on the scale at which it is now played can be attributed to the capitalist bourgeois society, as summarized by Brohm who said, " Sport is a direct consequence of the level of development under the productive forces under capitalism" (1978, p. 176).

What he means by this, is that due to the mechanization of the workforce by capitalists in order to produce more for less, workers found that they had more free time; time in which they took up sport as a form of recreation. This occurred during the industrial revolution, which meant that improved travel and communications allowed newly formed teams to organize, travel and play matches during the free time that they now had. Notice that, the free time, travel and communications that were now available to the working class were all controlled by the bourgeois, -allowing them to effectively continue to profit from the working class population.

The way sports operate can easily be compared to how companies operate in the business sector - different sports compete for viewers (who are effectively consumers as they pay money to the clubs for merchandise or viewing purposes), and the relationships with which the athletes have with the team owners are very similar to wage relations between company managers and workers. Brohm stated that, "The capitalists of sport appropriate players and athletes who thus become their wage laborer's" (1978, p. 76). This view on football enhances feelings that it is as an enterprise more than a competitive form of game used to entertain the viewer - a consequence of football adopted by capitalists as another form of profit. Football players are similar to the workers in the Marxist system - who sells their labor to someone who is willing to pay them. The capitalist then make a profit from the athlete by using them to create entertainment that will draw large crowds who will pay to watch the player perform.

How much the employer makes from the player is determined by the law of supply and demand - if the player has a skill which is not found commonly then people will pay more to watch them and the employer makes a greater profit. Brohm said athletes of, "Amateurism ceased to exist a long time ago. All top level sportsmen are professional performers in the muscle show," meaning that all top level sport is no longer about playing a fair but competitive game; it is about people making a profit (Brohm 1978, p. 176).

This action is demonstrated in the NFL's, lack to make significant changes to the structure in which the game is played. Instead of making changes in the structure, the NFL fines players for aggressive tackles, and further pockets

the money. Never considering the health of players to be important enough to ensure their safety, head injuries are a major concern to the lives of the players.

The future lives of players and the quality of daily living is not being considered when the 3 million children playing football at the youth level and 1. million more playing high school football level, are not protected against the sport of football. There remains a significant issue with medical care, monitoring, guidelines and problems with equipment. The NFL instead for pushing for regulation changes in the lower class structure, “ hope a change in dealing with concussions,” will be a result of the NFL fining players.

Knowing that the lower structures are where they draw their future players from, they refuse to implement real changes that require the structure as a whole to change.

Changing the whole structure, as we know it today would ensure healthier players, giving the majority of players, longer playing time. Longer playing times in the lives of professional players would cost the NFL more money in contracts, health insurance, and retirement pension. No change in the system guarantees the future profits for the teams, and guarantees the NFL an abundance of already trained players, therefore relieving them any responsibility, or commitment in protecting the health of future football players.

Football can therefore be identified as just another tertiary sector in the capitalist system where large amounts of money is stood to be made by investors who hire athletes to essentially sell to consumers, “ Economic

trusts, banks and monopolies have taken over the financial side of sporting activity, which has become a prized source of capitalist profits” Brohm (1978, p. 177). Attempts by capitalists to maximize the profits they are making is shown by the increasing number of competitions and games that are played during each season in order to increase the number of people who come to watch.

In addition to adding more game every year, the games rise in costs. It is not just the viewing rights that capitalists make money from, In order to increase profits further, we can see the production of goods and products, produced with necessary and surplus labor. Advertising rights being sold for money and the establishment of a sports betting industry all of which are sold for a greater cost than was used to produce them, allowing capitalists to benefit further from the sports industry, Leading to the support of hegemony.

Football is a place where we can see the use of hegemony through sport is in class structure and social stratification. Sage, defines social stratification as, “ structures that cause social inequality among groups of people” (1998, p. 35). This involves the bourgeois class using various methods of power to oppress the proletariat class football provide the bourgeois with a prime opportunity to do this. “ The dominant classes control over the working class peoples free time was manifested in sports”(Hargreaves 1986 p. 85).

One of the ways that the bourgeois established control over the playing and administration of sports was that when sports were initially becoming popular among society. Football first played and taught at schools where the majority of pupils came from families of high social status. According to

Sage, " Students of these colleges, that played American Football, when it first achieved popularity, were overwhelmingly from wealthy families" (Sage 1998, p. 44). Apart from not being present in the places where sport was evolving and improving, people from lower class backgrounds also had another disadvantage in that they had less money.

Which limited how much access they could have to sport even if it was available to them, " the higher the economic status, the higher the sports involvement (Sage 1998 p. 44). " These factors meant that by the time working class people were consistently able to participate in sport, the bourgeois class were already in control of game formats, equipment and location, allowing them to continue to oppress the proletariat class of society through sport as well as other social mechanisms.