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Lives of Sports Fans:
Meaning in the Face of Inconsequence

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Abstract

Spectator sport may seem inconsequential to everyday life, yet ordinary people expend intense emotional energy and devote vast amounts of time and money following (and cheering for) their favourites. Emotional whirlwinds and the inevitable suffering that the fluctuating fortunes of sports teams and athletes bring to the lives of fans are familiar to all and yet remain inexplicable to many. Pleasure seekers, socialised agents, members of tribes and subcultures – are some of the labels ascribed to sports fans in a variety of studies tied up with their own disciplinary norms and fixed theoretical devices. In light of seeming theoretical saturation and contextual breadth, I argue that the scholarly interest in sports fandom has either sidestepped or obscured the first order questions of how and why.

To redress this, I explore how and why some people become fans and care about sports despite its apparent irrelevance to their life paths. I posit that these questions can only be meaningfully addressed if contextually situated. To that end, this thesis delves into six life narratives of fans of Australian Rules (footy), cricket and association football (soccer). The narratives produced through a collaborative discourse disturb the hierarchy of the knower and the known and subvert the value-free legacies of dedicated sports fandom scholarship. Therefore, beyond the shared materiality of Melbourne's geography and Australian sporting culture, the stories of fans and their everyday practices are contextualised in relation to ideological constraints and human possibilities.

As the dialogue-based narratives situate the lives of fans at the intersection of individual biography and society, they not only produce a complex picture of diverse ways to engage in spectator sport in a city celebrated for its facilities and a country renowned for its collective passion for sport; but they also illuminate personally meaningful encounters in the face of inconsequential sporting contests. In their collective force, the narratives point to the tensions between the everyday practices of sports fans and their material envelopment; they offer new lenses through which

to understand sports fandom and position the phenomenon as a mirror that accentuates the present interplay of social, cultural and political conditions.

Declaration

I, Elena Balcaite, declare that:

- this thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy;
- due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;
- the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography.

Signed:

Date: 25 February 2019

Preface

This thesis was supported by Melbourne International Research Scholarship and Melbourne International Fee Remission Scholarship. Additional funding for academic conferences and other study related expenses was provided by the Faculty of Arts and the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne.

Parts of Chapter 4 and 8 have featured in an article in *the International Journal of the History of Sport* published online in January 2019.

Acknowledgments

When reading my thesis draft, a friend commented that I sounded angry. He meant it as a cautionary note with a tacit implication that my style, perhaps, would not appeal to many. Despite the contrary intent, I took it as a compliment. PhD candidates often talk about how they ended up writing a different thesis to what they had originally intended. Although my ideas and their scope have unrecognisably changed since the start of my PhD studies, I have struggled to relate to that sentiment. And, not because despite the crystallisation of my initially murky theoretical foresights, the empirical core of this thesis remained true to my original intention of telling personal stories of sports fans.

Rather, I feel that I am a different person to when I started. And yes, I am angrier. In addition to the common petty anger abound in my everyday life, PhD gave me the time to grow and nurture my true anger. The sort of anger that does not release its venom over an open pantry door, misplaced keys, lateness or heavy traffic as the pettifoggery of these everyday irritants can only be serviced by angry annoyance.

The true anger, I am talking about, is a refusal to live in a comfort of couched denial that ice caps are not melting, and the contents of our rubbish bins dissolve once placed in a garbage truck. I am also angered at my own active participation in this destruction with every purchase I make, and every plastic yogurt tub I empty. But how can one reconcile the irreconcilable – living outcome-driven lives on a finite planet? And, here I am producing one more outcome – my thesis, researched and written on the Wurundjeri land – the land that was trespassed and appropriated for infinite growth.

Under these circumstances, writing about sports passions, which even my research contributors often reflected on as insignificant and inconsequential, felt rather futile for the best part of my degree. But, in the end I realised that I can stay in touch with my true anger on these pages by at least in a small way addressing, to my mind, one of the underlying tenets of our irresolvable reality – the inability to understand

complexity beyond a binary and *he-said-she-said* neutrality. My hope is that I have done justice to the stories of my interlocutors and shed light on their multifaceted motivations.

I am so very grateful for their time and their stories. Andrea, Billy, John, Mike, Steph and Zoha — under these pseudonyms hide six incredibly generous people, and this thesis is theirs as much as mine. The thesis would not have been possible without them, nor would it have been possible without Professor Joy Damousi – my joyous and generous PhD supervisor. Despite Joy's and my irreconcilable tennis allegiances – Federer and Djokovic respectively – she has been a perfect match of a supervisor to me. I am grateful for her trust in my ability, her absolute encouragement and the freedom she gave me to explore and discover what worked for me.

I would also like to thank Andy Fuller for his friendship, his genuine and passionate interest in my research and his timely academic advice. I am so very glad to have finished my thesis so that we can work on all those exciting collaborative projects that have been long awaiting. I am looking forward to having many more conversations over coffee that is hopefully served in Keep Cups. Throughout the last four years, I have also benefited from guidance and support of Matthew Klugman, which I am grateful for. Matthew has read some of my first drafts and despite their shockingly poor write-up, was incredibly polite and even managed to find something positive to say.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends for their support and for putting up with my petty and true anger. I am grateful to Annelies Van de Ven for her unconditional support, Gretel Evans for her boundless enthusiasm, Kate Allan for her always thoughtful opinions, Kate Mannell for putting up with my daily and exceedingly petty frustrations, Michael Francis for being an incredibly loyal friend and Susan Wright for being my number one cheerleader.

Last but by no means least, I would like to thank Leo, my partner, for not just putting up with my anger but living with it every single day. Thank you for being my personal

barista, personal driver, personal chef, personal gardener and for doing all of these things incredibly well. There is no way I could have survived the PhD without you and, as discussed, one half of my Doctor title (if and when I get it) most definitely belongs to you. Thank you for making our home and for being my home.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFL	Australian Football League
AFLW	Australian Football League Women's
AFLX	A hybrid a form of Australian rules football introduced by the AFL in 2018
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ASF	Australian Soccer Federation
BBL	Big Bash League
BC	Basketball Club
CBD	Central Business District
CORF	Cutting Off Reflected Failure
CORS	Cutting Off Reflected Success
EPL	English Premier League
EU	European Union
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
IAAF	International Association of Athletics Federation
ICC	International Cricket Council
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IPL	Indian Premier League
MCG	Melbourne Cricket Ground
NFL	National Football League
NHL	National Hockey League
NRL	National Rugby League
NSL	National Soccer League
RFC	Richmond Football Club
SANFL	South Australian National Football League
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service – Australia's multicultural and multilingual broadcaster
Team GB	Great Britain and Northern Ireland Olympic Team

UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
VFL	Victorian Football League

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Prologue

This thesis is about sport, life and the conditions in which the two unfold. Its empirical core are six life narratives, which trace trajectories of six sports fans who all live in Melbourne or close by. The fans' shared geography and intersecting local histories of the sports they follow – footy, cricket and soccer – present the celebrated Australian sporting culture through diverse and idiosyncratic perspectives. Culturally conflicting storylines complicate Melbourne's self-image as a sporting city and the contrasting life paths demonstrate various roles that spectator sport can play in people's personal lives. Jointly, the narratives pose questions about (and offer insights into) the utilities of spectator sport at the intersection of personal life and its material conditions.

The narrative approach situates this thesis theoretically and extends its interdisciplinary reach. The starting point is, however, grounded in sport studies and its encounters with sports fandom through the lenses of psychology, sociology and cultural analysis. Some relevant concepts are, at times, borrowed from fan studies – a subdiscipline of media studies that rarely specifically investigates fans of sport. The thesis does not make an attempt to integrate sports fandom into fan studies, instead its goal is to account for sports fandom over time and in the day-to-day lives via the life narratives of fans.

While this thesis engages in some gentle questioning of the scholarly canon and the tacit hierarchies it produces and reproduces, including those of the colonial making; it is written from a globalised Western perspective. Particularly, when referring to the life cycle or life course, I am aligning with life trajectories of the Global North. In that and similar regards, my analysis does not make claims outside of this cultural and political scope, but it strives for an emic yet critical view.

The life narratives presented in Part Two are true to the discourses generated through the research process both in their content and their context. However,

pseudonyms have been assigned to all research collaborators and some minor contextual details have been altered on their request and for the sole purpose of anonymity. Interview excerpts are presented verbatim retaining interlocutors' spoken mannerisms and, at times, erroneous syntax and grammar.

On occasions, 'football' is used inconsistently to refer to both Australian rules football and association football (soccer). In places where the use of 'football' might be unclear from context, a clarification is provided in the footnotes.

While the narrative chapters (Chapter 3–8) engage in theoretical discussions, narrative flow is sometimes maintained by providing additional theoretical and historical context in the footnotes.

Introduction | In Dialogue with Passions

My first memory of sports passions takes me to an episode in 1998 when Lithuania's most decorated basketball team – Kaunas Žalgiris BC – were making their way through the knock-out stages of the most prestigious European club basketball league – the EuroLeague. I do not have a sharp memory of this. I do not remember watching the games or celebrating the club's eventual triumph in the League's final against the rich and well established Italian domestic league champions – Kinder Bologna.[1] I do not even recall much else other than the collective excitement, passion and what I could at the time emotionally comprehend as national pride that Lithuania, as a small and newly independent nation, seemed to have been entitled to.[2]

This memory, for me, signposts the patriotic beginnings of my passion for sport that later evolved into a naïve adolescent fascination, which although was no longer entwined with patriotism in all of its expressions – I now realise – continued to be aligned with neoliberal narratives of aspiration and personal accomplishment. Indeed, following international sports, for me, offered a window to the world and an ability to position my identity globally, yet this opening came with its overhanging imposition of a nation state and the trappings of individualistic capitalist mentality.[3]

Through the haze of indoctrination, there were occasional moments of clarity. For example, sport opened my eyes to the unquestioned racism in Lithuanian everyday

---

[1] Žalgiris defeated Kinder Bologna by an eight-point margin (82:74). Kinder Bolognia were, at the time, the champions of the top-tier Italian domestic basketball league.

[2] The re-establishment of the state of Lithuania was signed on March 11, 1990 marking the beginning of the end of fifty years of the Soviet occupation. From 1985 to 1987 Žalgiris won three consecutive titles of the USSR Premier Basketball League, which coincided with Mikhail Gorbachev's *Perestroika* policies and precipitated the emergence of Sąjūdis – Lithuanian political organisation which led the struggle for independence. The popular mythology of these events is explored in Marius A. Markevičius, *The Other Dream Team* (Lithuania, USA: The Basketball Future Foundation, Sorrento Productions, Berliner 76 Entertainment, 2012).

[3] The mainstreaming of neoliberal doctrine and the lack of alternative choices in the economic policy as part of the 'Transformation' of the Eastern Bloc is observed in Philipp Ther, *Europe since 1989: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

realities and mainstream discourses, making me, at times, feel foreign in my own country of birth – a realisation that also had some weight in my decision to study overseas. Having moved to what, at the time, seemed as a glistening and welcoming metropolis of London, I became inculcated with a new set of doctrines and was largely uncritical of the political, cultural and historical space I found myself in at the age of eighteen.[4] As my relationship with sport evolved from amateur to academic by my choice to study for an undergraduate degree in Sports Development, in some ways the role of sport in my life became more mechanical and less affective.

Soon after my move to Britain, the emotional grounding of my identity was outsourced to the country's intensifying immigration debate that specifically focused on the European Union arrivals – the grouping I was a part of. In the British summer of 2012, I was faced with my own foreignness as my immigrant status collided with the emotional collectivity engendered by the biggest sporting event on Earth – the Olympic Games. The London 2012 Games uprooted me from my usual uncomplicated place-identity nexus, whereby *residing in* meant *belonging to*. In the unison of British national pride, I felt excluded. The London Games for me exposed just how much I was not a part of the British way of life and how foreign I was in my country of residence.

In hindsight, the London Games were the first moment where I felt really conflicted about sport and its promotion of nation-state-based allegiances. This initiated my gradual withdrawal of support for Lithuanian athletes. Although, at times, it was (and still is) difficult to be emotionally ambivalent to the Lithuanian entries in international sporting contests, on an intellectual level, I see my emotional support as equivalent to the revelling in pride and supremacy that I saw amongst the host nation's fans during that British summer of sport.

[4] Growing up with the stories of resistance against the Soviet regime, I rarely intellectually interrogated injustices embedded in the histories of the Western nations, the UK and the unjust legacies of the British Empire being a case in point.

Although I still find myself swept up by emotions if I make the effort to watch basketball matches contested by the Lithuanian national team, since the London Games it has become increasingly difficult for me to intellectually dissociate sport from jingoism and the grand social and political narratives that elite organised competitive sport seamlessly reinforces and is unavoidably a part of. Indeed, the struggle between visceral and intellectual is at the core of this thesis and the dialogues it evokes and is imbued in.

The stories of resistance against the Soviets, oppression and suffering under a foreign regime – that I grew up with – made me feel entitled to a strong sense of national identity; and its expression in the realm of sport – basketball, in particular – seemed not only benign but fitting. This sense of entitlement created by an internalised narrative of oppression was oblivious to the uncomfortable historical truths of the Lithuanian past.[5] My religious-like following of Lithuanian basketball tradition aligned with such simplifications by not only placing my identity in a perpetual dichotomy between the East and the West but also by trapping my politics and social consciousness in an aspirational paradigm of incessant economic growth and boundless consumption. As my politics were crystallising, I could no longer see the Lithuanian's restored sovereignty independently from the country's turn to neoliberal values, hence the association of the Lithuanian basketball tradition with the nation's peaceful struggle for independence, also, became problematic to me.

My relocation to Australia in early 2015 gave me the necessary distance to depersonalise my British experiences and start seeing the underlying reasons for anti-immigration rhetoric. The relative remoteness of Australia allowed me to be more comfortable with my geographical origins and even, at times, provided opportunities to re-engage with sporting stories of a patriotic interest. Such engagements, however, soon withered away as here, in Melbourne, I was faced with

[5] The most prominent example of a lack of honest treatment of the country's history is the 'Double Genocide' model which seeks to equalise the Nazi and Soviet crimes, see Dovid Katz, 'The Extraordinary Recent History of Holocaust Studies in Lithuania,' *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 31, no. 3 (2017): 285–95.

yet another dominant narrative of sporting pre-eminence, contributing another instalment in my personal dialogue with sport.

I soon found Australian everyday reality confronting in many ways: from cities suffocated with cars and casual racism to historical injustices and the comforts of the World's Most Liveable City built on genocide and dispossession of the First Nations Peoples.[6] And, sport, which continued to be my research interest, was implicated in all of this in both conspicuous and insidious ways. Melbourne's adhesive image of the sporting city is built on the city's expansive and well-kept-up sporting infrastructure, packed yearly sporting calendar and supposedly unparalleled collective passion for sport. Dialoguing with the latter notion moulded my current understanding of sport in Australia and my cultural positionality in relation to the dialogues that make up this thesis.

Dialoguing with Subjectivity and Objectivity

> To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people. This objectivistic position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates people without a world. World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction.
>
> — Paulo Freire [7]

The research presented in the following chapters positions sport in an ongoing dialogue between its hegemonic socio-economic and historical locus and its bodily premise. Sport is, therefore, placed as an object of a conversation, a topic to be dialogued about and an anchor to relational identities. The subject of this thesis is people who are passionate about sport – i.e. sports fans. Their relational identities are interrogated as these fans dialogue with sport in its material objectivity and other people in their personal subjectivities.

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[6] From 2011 to 2018 Melbourne topped The Economist Intelligence Unit Survey as the world's most liveable city.
[7] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005), 50.

The starting point of my research was a simple idea to explore lives of sports fans in context; this notion drove the study's design, which in turn sharpened its aims and scholarly focus. Taking such a 'bottom-up' approach was in line with Roger P. Mourad's thesis of postmodern interdisciplinarity, which mistrusts a theoretical search for overlaps as a legitimate conception of cross-disciplinary conversation and argues that to forge alternative epistemologies it is necessary to step outside of disciplines themselves.[8] This proposition instructs that there is no reality impervious to a research process; reality and its theoretical rendition, instead, emerges as part of (and over the course of) knowledge production.[9] Immanuel Wallerstein argued that concepts only become relevant 'once we have something to explain', which is why 'fieldwork (in the loosest, broadest sense of the term) is our eternal responsibility'.[10] It is this commitment to empirical observation that focalises the subject and, in turn, defines context through a person-to-world direction, whereby a meaningful contextual reality only occurs in an interaction between the subject and the object.[11]

I – the researcher in name – cannot be divorced from this attitude.[12] Erasure of my voice from the process would be dishonest, and in effect would go against methodological rigour.[13] A pretence that any data, let alone what we define as qualitative data, can be somehow uncovered and brought to light for thorough examination is naïve at best.[14] Data are created under the conditions of a particular research design and by all participating actors. These conditions are unavoidably framed by the researcher and in line with norms and expectations of their academic discipline.[15] Since academic disciplines are their own cultures, such standards and

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[8] Roger P. Mourad, 'Postmodern Interdisciplinarity,' *The Review of Higher Education* 20, no. 2 (1997): 113-40
[9] Ibid.
[10] Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Anthropology, Sociology, and Other Dubious Disciplines,' *Current Anthropology* 44, no. 4 (2003): 453–65.
[11] 'Person-to-world' perspective is discussed further in Chapter 2. Michael Bamberg, 'Who Am I? Narration and Its Contribution to Self and Identity,' *Theory & Psychology* 21, no. 1 (2011): 3–24.
[12] Michael Richards, 'Turning Back to the Story of My Life: An Autoethnographic Exploration of a Researcher's Identity during the PhD Process,' *Reflective Practice* 16, no. 6 (2015): 821–35.
[13] Most methodological rigour criteria for qualitative research are underpinned by transparency, see Egon G. Guba, 'Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries,' *Educational Communication and Technology* 29, no. 2 (1981): 75–91.
[14] On construction of textual data see William G. Tierney, 'Undaunted Courage: Life History and the Postmodern Challenge,' in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000), 537–53.
[15] Richards, 'Turning Back to the Story of My Life'.

preferences, Wallerstein notes, are nothing less than 'cultural prejudices'.[16] Employing emergent interdisciplinary approach does not absolve me from my prejudices; instead it affords me a space to actively consider them.

The complexity, fluidity and multidimensionality of my own experiences as a fan of sport inspired me to think beyond rigid categories and ideal-type labels.[17] But, it was the relationality of my fandom experiences to my geography, mobility, politics and changing worldviews that I found most informative in grappling with the utility of sport in my life as a fan. The idea of studying lives in context took shape in light of this self-analysis as well as my scholarly observations. My Master's research revealed to me that national cultures offered shared materiality within which to engage in sports but afforded little clarity on people's personal and everyday negotiations of their fan identities.[18] As I observed both English soccer fans and Lithuanian basketball fans being guided by comparable motives and describing their emotions in similar terminology, I noted that person-to-person differences were often starker than those inflicted by shared cultural paradigms.[19] This simple observation evolved the notion of 'context' as a person-to-world orientation that afforded delving deeper into personal lives of sports fans without a priori of culture.[20] Similarly to the inherent permeability of objectivity and subjectivity, outlined through the words of Paulo Freire in the epigraph, cultures are not autonomous from people nor are they independent from other cultures; but narrator-driven emplotment of lives lived in the contextual realities of culture and society, to me, emerged as a clear site in which porousness of everyday decision making is exposed and its social, cultural and ultimately dialogical underpinnings are made vulnerable.[21]

---

[16] Wallerstein, 'Anthropology, Sociology, and Other Dubious Disciplines,' 453.
[17] On the researcher's self-analysis in narrative research see Corinne Squire, 'From Experience-Centred to Socioculturally-Oriented Approaches to Narrative,' in *Doing Narrative Research*, ed. Andrews Molly, Corinne Squire and Maria Tamboukou (London: Sage Publications, 2013), 47–71.
[18] Elena Balcaite, 'Spirituality in Sports Fanship: The Case of English Football and Lithuanian Basketball Fans' (MSc Res diss., University of Gloucestershire, 2013), 80-81.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Bamberg, 'Who Am I?'
[21] Bruce M. Knauft, *Genealogies of the Present in Cultural Anthropology: A Critical Humanist Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

To this end, the thesis foregrounds lives in context through six personal narratives of sports fans constructed in dialogue and through a close collaboration between the researcher and the researched. The dialogic construction aims to access subjectivity of lived experiences in their intersubjective social and cultural locations and do that in a meaningful way that is rich in discursive context yet open to questioning and further dialogue.[22] My six dialoguers were selected in line with the emergent research design and the evolving narrative of this thesis.

Everyday Life as Fieldwork

> Knowledge doesn't pertain only to the academy but to all realms of our lived existence; and knowledge isn't something that's tested only against the standards of scientific inquiry.
>
> – Arthur P. Bochner [23]

The notion of lives in context immediately pointed me to the life history method which, at the time, seemed to have provided the inquiry with a close attention to lived experiences and offered a holistic insight into personal lives and their contextual underpinnings.[24] The method gradually morphed into a more sustained and well-defined dialogic narrative approach informed by narrative inquiry, personality psychology and sociology of personal life.[25]

Relevant cases to study, similarly, emerged gradually and were informed by one another.[26] The breadth of the overall aim to address the first order questions of how and why some people become fans and care about sports despite its apparent irrelevance to their life paths did not necessitate predetermined selection criteria

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[22] Ardra L. Cole and J. Gary Knowles, *Lives in Context: The Art of Life History Research* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2001).
[23] Arthur P. Bochner, 'Narrative's Virtues,' *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 2 (2001): 135.
[24] Bochner, 'Narrative's Virtues'; Bamberg, 'Who am I?'
[25] The tenets of narrative inquiry are reviewed in Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, eds., *Doing Narrative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2017); personality psychology was specifically adopted in line with Dan P. McAdams narrative approach, see Dan P. McAdams, *The Art and Science of Personality Development* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2015); on sociology of personal life see Vanessa May, ed., *Sociology of Personal Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[26] On emergent sampling see Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002), 240.

other than being a self-identified sports fan. Such an open-ended criterion was not merely opportunistic. It aligned with both my postmodern ethos and Matt Hills's equally postmodern argument that defining terms, such as 'fan' and 'fandom', is not only Sisyphean, but it is also a pursuit that under the guise of academic rigour effectively ignores 'the attachments, emotions and passions of those who self-identify as "fans"'.[27]

Looking for self-identified sports fans in Melbourne – the city that has announced itself as the sporting capital of the world and prides itself on having one of the most passionate citizenries of sports followers – seemed straightforward.[28] Yet, as an outsider I almost instantly wondered what is beneath this seemingly congruent and self-congratulatory narrative. An abundance of supporter clubs of English Premier League sides in Melbourne provided me with an opportunity to utilise my prior research experiences and explore a type of sports fandom that seemed to be peripheral to the collective narrative of 'sport-mad' Melbourne.[29] Equally, the online presence of these supporter clubs gave me an easy access to prospective participants and allowed me to recruit John – a 56-year-old Manchester United fan.

Interactions with John (Chapter 3) generated a workable template for other narratives and moved the method from the notions of life history and lived experiences to co-construction and narrative identity.[30] John's willingness to talk and make a considerable time commitment translated into what some qualitative methodologists refer to as an 'information-rich case'.[31] This observation empirically crystallised my single selection criterion and instructed me to focus on prospective

---

[27] Matthew Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), xi.
[28] Melbourne is often regarded as an exceptionally sport-mad city in popular discourse. This was also signified by the Ultimate Sport City of the Decade award that Melbourne received at the Sport Business Awards in 2016; the statement issued by the state's minister for sport was emblematic of the far-reaching image of Melbourne as a city exceptionally passionate about sports: 'Melbourne – The Sporting Capital of the World,' media release April 21, 2016, Victoria State Government, accessed November 11, 2017 https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/melbourne-the-sporting-capital-of-the-world/.
[29] Patton notes that one of the key qualities of a qualitative researcher is experience, see Michael Quinn Patton, 'Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry,' *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice* 1, no. 3 (2002): 261–83.
[30] The collaborative nature of my research and its narrative lens are discussed at length in Chapter 2.
[31] Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 242.

participants' readiness to engage in the process and a circumstantial capacity to build trust. To me, this meant stepping outside of a canonical rapport building and using a fieldwork strategy of emergent sampling, whereby the researcher is deliberately open to new strands of inquiry as they present themselves.[32] To that end, my day-to-day life became my fieldwork. Such an approach was congruent with my active role in a co-construction of participants' narrative identities and proved to deliver information-rich cases that offered multi-layered and open-ended responses to the original research questions.

The other five participants were, as a result, recruited by following 'leads' that surfaced in my social interactions; the circumstances in which each participant was recruited are briefly outlined at the start of a relevant narrative chapter (Chapter 3-8). But, it is important to note here that my interactions with John and Mike – my first two recruits – gave me some definitive directions on a cultural, geographical and theoretical make-up of the sample.[33] The contrasting narratives of John's soccer fandom and Mike's expert-like following of cricket both utilised Australian rules football as a point of reference to illustrate the distinctiveness of their relationships to soccer and cricket respectively.[34] Coupled with my theoretical awareness, these early empirical observations pointed me to the sports of association football, cricket and Australian Rules and further informed the selection criteria, instructing me to look for contrasting cases that highlighted tensions among and within these three sports and their cultural positionality in Melbourne and Australia at large.[35]

Australian rules football, association football and cricket are three of the top sports in the country, and they act as a synecdoche in signifying Melbourne's diverse populace and the troubled and unjust history of this island continent.[36] Australian

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[32] Patton, 'Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry', 260.
[33] On emerging sampling criteria and revision of sampling decisions see Leonard Schatzman and Strauss, Anselm L., *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hill, 1973), 57.
[34] John's narrative appears in Chapter 3 and Mike's in Chapter 5.
[35] All fans live in Melbourne with an exception of Mike (Chapter 5) who lives in Geelong — a city seventy-five kilometres south-west from Melbourne.
[36] The national competition of Australian Rules – the AFL – and cricket, compared to other sports, have some of the largest television audiences, see Roy Morgan, 'Olympics Top TV Sport Ahead of AFL, Commonwealth Games and Cricket,' 2 March 2018, http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/7508-top-sport-tv-viewing-december-2017-

Rules is the country's only indigenous football code; it is a sport with strong ties – both historically and at present – with the Continent's First Nations Peoples.[37] It is also the most popular sport in the state of Victoria carrying an unparalleled cultural significance in the state's capital Melbourne.[38]

In this thesis, the indigeneity of Australian Rules is juxtaposed to the foreignness of both cricket and association football. The long-standing antipathy between Australian Rules as local and, therefore, culturally authentic and association football as global and, hence foreign carries a long history of marginalisation of soccer and the people who followed the world game, particularly migrants from Continental Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.[39] In between this crude binary of local and global cricket stands as Australia's national sport and the civilising tool of the former British Empire.[40] Despite the obvious ties with the colonial past and its lingering present, cricket beyond its strictly national expressions has also a multicultural current in its popularity with the newer migrant groups from the Indian subcontinent.[41]

These complex relationships and their underhand manifestations are both implicitly and, at times, explicitly interrogated by the individual stories of fans and their

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201803020101. Soccer, on the other hand, has the highest participation figures out of all football codes played in Australia, see Roy Morgan, 'Football Participation Stabilises with more Women Playing,' 25 March 2018, http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/7539-women-in-football-december-2017-201803230556.

[37] Australian rules football code originated on the Australian continent and is indigenous to the land, some also identify a relationship between the modern code of Australian Rules and marngrook – the game of the Continent's First Nations Peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up less than three per cent of Australia's population, yet ten per cent of all AFL players are Indigenous. Cashman posits that sport is a sphere of Australian social life in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's participation is most prominent; see Richard Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: A History of Australian Sport* (Petersham: Walla Walla Press, 2010), 103-16.

[38] The Australian Football League – the most mainstream expression of Australian rules football – has grown from the Victorian Football League. The Victorian origins are still noticeable in the make-up of the League – ten out of eighteen clubs competing in the AFL are based in Victoria with nine of them being from Melbourne suburbia.

[39] The world game – a synonym for soccer that highlights the game's widespread global appeal. The term is particularly meaningful in Australia given soccer's multicultural positionality in the country (e.g., The World Game is the name of the media production on soccer operated by SBS – Australia's multilingual and multicultural broadcaster). The predicament of Australian soccer in relation to other football codes is discussed in Roy Hay, '"Our Wicked Foreign Game:" Why Has Association Football (Soccer) Not Become the Main Code of Football in Australia?,' *Soccer & Society* 7, no. 2–3 (2006): 165–86.

[40] The centrality of cricket in Australian society in relation to the game's English roots and the place in 'the British World' is discussed in Jared van Duinen, 'Playing to the "Imaginary Grandstand:" Sport, the "British World" and an Australian Colonial Identity,' *Journal of Global History* 8, no. 2 (July 2013): 342–64.

[41] 2017 Australia's immigration data indicate that the numbers of immigrants from Nepal, Pakistan and India had some of the highest rates of increase, see 'Migration Australia, 2016-2017,' Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed July 16, 2018. http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3412.0Main+Features32016-17?OpenDocument.

emplotment in the overall narrative of this thesis. The critical insights into the shared geography of the six fans emerged circumstantially and contributed to the inductive make-up of the project, which sought to offer a snapshot of different ways to engage in sports fandom. But, given the participants' shared geography it also offered a snapshot of different ways to engage in sports fandom, specifically, in Melbourne. The emergent personal narratives simply contend that beneath the widely resonant yet unmitigated notion of Melbourne as an exceptionally sport-mad city, there is a diverse range of sports fans' identities and everyday lived experiences that cannot be contained within this top-down collective narrative.

It is, therefore, not the aim of this thesis to scrutinise the history of sport in Melbourne beyond the analysis that emerges directly from my dialogues with the six fans. In that sense, Melbourne's image as 'the ultimate sports city' is seen as a cultural norm, and personal narratives of fans disturb and decentre this norm in the same way that they dislodge the notions of individual and cultural autonomy.[42] The dialogic condition, in which these narratives have been constructed, deliberately embodies contingencies of personal identities as they are laid bare in conversational contention and incompleteness.[43] As I – the researcher – dialogue with the researched, our identities are performed in response to the circumstance and expressed in the language this circumstance commands. This reflects the relational condition of personal identities and the impossibility of personal identity as a finished whole that is communicable in shortcuts and intelligible through a shorthand.[44]

As neither a person nor a story is ever finished, seeking arbitrary finality through categories, theories and causality is not desirable. Open-endedness underpins the person-to-world emplotment of life stories and is, therefore, maintained throughout

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[42] On decentring cultural norms see William G. Tierney, *Academic Outlaws: Queer Theory and Cultural Studies in the Academy* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 13.
[43] Jay L. Lemke, 'Language Development and Identity: Multiple Timescales in the Social Ecology of Learning,' in *Language Acquisition and Lang (Gen): Ecological Perspectives*, ed. Claire Kramsch (London: Continuum, 2002), 72.
[44] Ruthellen Josselson, 'Imagining the Real: Empathy, Narrative and the Dialogical Self,' in *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives Vol 3.*, ed. Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1993), 37.

the data collection, analysis and production of the thesis text.[45] The latter aims to draw the reader's attention to the personal narratives, their contingencies, contradictions and incompleteness by deliberately decentring common identity categories.[46] This not only gives more ownership to the participants over their narrative identities but also seeks to underscore that broad identity categories are equally contingent – culturally conditioned and open to revision.[47]

The written representation of each contributor has been undoubtedly authored by me – the researcher. Nevertheless, the simultaneous processes of data collection, analysis and write-up afforded a degree of collaboration, which not only softened the distinction between the researcher and the researched but also exposed my ideas and frames of analysis to scrutiny from those I was representing and collaborating with.[48]

Each collaboration accumulated five to eight hours of voice-recorded conversations and on average forty thousand words worth of transcripts, but in addition to these material records, each relationship also entailed its particularities regarding initial contact, rapport building, further email or Facebook correspondence. While the recorded conversations ranged from rather formal biographical interviews to discussions of work-in-progress chapters and out-loud draft readings with follow-up discussions; most of them as well as their off-the-record counterparts included tangential exchanges, collaborators' questioning of my own stance and reflective discussions where both dialoguers were open to attentively listening and responding with introspection and reflexivity. Aligning with the dialogic intent of the project, the interviews were seen as interventions; they afforded an authentic voice to the interviewer to ask questions instead of anticipating the interviewee to tell me their

[45] Bamberg, 'Who am I?'
[46] This is in line with the notion of narrative identity, which is given more attention in Chapter 2.
[47] Sharing research ownership with research participants is discussed in Bochner, 'Narrative's Virtues'; on broad identity categories and their ongoing revision see Ronald David Glass, 'On Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education,' *Educational Researcher* 30, no. 2 (2007): 15–25.
[48] The theoretical underpinnings of my collaborative approach are explored in Chapter 2.

uninterrupted life story, which is neither possible nor reflective of dynamic and relational modes of identity construction.[49]

To that end, the narratives presented in Part Two of this thesis are pieced together from the interview data collected through multiple one-on-one recorded conversations over the course of extensive participant-researcher engagement. Although this may seem as an apt description of the process and the production of this thesis, to me it does not feel genuine to the lived experience of my research.

Words such as 'interviews', 'data', 'participants', reduce the process to methodological window-dressing and relegate the time spent, the stories shared and the overall input of my interlocutors to mere 'research data'.[50] And, while narrative scholars continue to debate whether the practice of narrative scholarship can at all be confined to the conventional terminology of 'methodology', 'data' and 'discipline', the canon remains intact in most research on sports fans and beyond.[51] Given that in its most basic proposition my project set out to open the academic discourse on sports fans to new themes, intersections and strands of thought; this singularity and its predetermined constraints seemed improper and a commitment to plurality and creativity seemed not only desirable but necessary.

Scholarship organises knowledge and joins the dots among events, conversations, discourses and knowledge that has come before.[52] David de Vaus in a prosaic research methodology textbook suggests that 'there is no right way of developing ideas', yet the canon of methodological rigour often maintains a problematic separation

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[49] Patton describes interviews as 'interventions', see Patton, 'Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry'; the rift between autobiographical method and research realities is observed and discussed in Delyth Edwards, 'A Methodology of Remembering: The Self Who Was, the Self Who Is and the Self Who Narrates,' in *Cultural, Autobiographical and Absent Memories of Orphanhood: The Girls of Nazareth House Remember* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 69–112.
[50] A thought-provoking discussion on data and what counts as data is offered in Julie Choi, *Creating a Multivocal Self: Autoethnography as Method* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 91-104.
[51] Corinne Squire, Molly Andrews and Maria Tamboukou, 'Introduction: What Is Narrative Research?' in *Doing Narrative Research*, ed. Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire and Maria Tamboukou (London: Sage Publications, 2013), 16.
[52] Richards, 'Turning Back to the Story of My Life.'

between theory and practice observed by Polkinghorne three decades ago.[53] To erase this separation and allow for plurality and creativity the thesis positions reality as an exchange afforded by the constructivist multiplicity and aesthetic quality.[54] The use of expressive voice and, at times, evocative manner intends to break with the scholarly convention in order to extend this exchange by stimulating the reader to come up with their own interpretations and frames of analysis.[55] This further adds to the dialogic condition of inquiry by actively inviting the reader to dialogue with the personal narratives of the six sports fans.[56]

Dialoguing with Theoretical Fanscapes

The research on sports fans is fractured and not integral to both methodology and disciplinary grounding. The diversity of fractures is, however, somewhat misleading in its potential for a variety of views and methods. Despite the diverse range of theoretical angles and influences, empirical encounters with sports fans remain coalesced around a small number of approaches with recurrent lines of empirical theorising. Theoretical and disciplinary ruptures in some cases coincide with the binary of objective and subjective. For example, psychological understandings of sports fans come in either cognitive and behavioural or phenomenological forms.[57] In sociology, however, the ruptures are murkier and are bound to thematic, theoretical, historical, cultural and methodological interests and presumptions.

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[53] David A. de Vaus, 'Tools for Research Design,' in *Research Design in Social Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 23; Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany: Sate University of New York Press, 1988).
[54] Patton, 'Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry.'
[55] Ibid.
[56] Different levels at which life histories can be interpreted and engaged in are discussed in Tierney, 'Undaunted Courage.'
[57] E.g., Jeffrey D. James, 'Becoming a Sports Fan: Understanding Cognitive Development and Socialisation in the Development of Fan Loyalty' (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1997); Alexander Regina, 'A Phenomenological Investigation of Sport and Fandom Through Hans-Georg Gadamer and Maurice Merleau-Ponty' (PhD diss., Duquesne University, 2017).

Methodological range includes old and new ethnographies of football hooligans and fan subcultures respectively and interview-based studies focusing on cultural changes, commodification and gender.[58] The standard lines of distinction lie in privileging traditional fan cultures and communities grounded in locale and shared identities over consumption-oriented spectating cultures or vice versa.[59] While there have been theoretical attempts to reconcile these divisions, they did not lead to innovation in methodology or empirical theorising, failing to traverse the rift between theory and practice.[60]

Fan Studies – an offshoot of media studies – have placed little attention on sports fans. Thus, the criticisms made towards studying media fans through interviews and participant observation have rarely been interrogated in relation to fans of sport. Matt Hills, one of the most prominent scholars in fan studies, argued for psychoanalysis as an alternative lens, which, unlike other qualitative approaches, is able to access meanings that fans are unable to otherwise verbalise.[61] A few Australian scholars have engaged in psychoanalytical frameworks when studying Australian rules football fans. These creative engagements uncovered new strands of thought but have not thoroughly interrogated the material worlds of fans beyond the immediacy of personal and circumstantial memories.[62] Emerging on the periphery of sport sociology and history, they also did not openly or firmly embrace Hills's argument.

Cornel Sandvoss, however, has addressed Hills's critique directly. While continuing to utilise interviews and ethnographic practices, he designed and conducted a study

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[58] E.g., John Hughson, 'Among the Thugs: The "New Ethnographies" of Football Supporting Subcultures,' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 33, no. 1 (1998): 43–57; Stacey Pope, '"It's Just Such a Class Thing:" Rivalry and Class Distinction Between Female Fans of Men's Football and Rugby Union,' *Sociological Research Online* 20, no. 2 (2015), http://www.socresonline.org.uk/20/2/11.html; Kevin Dixon, 'Football Fandom and Disneyisation in Late-Modern Life,' *Leisure Studies* 33, no. 1 (2014): 1–21.
[59] John Williams, 'Rethinking Sports Fandom: The Case of European Soccer,' *Leisure Studies* 26, no. 2 (2007): 127–46.
[60] Kevin Dixon, 'A "Third Way" for Football Fandom Research: Anthony Giddens and Structuration Theory,' *Soccer & Society* 12, no. 2 (2011): 279–98.
[61] Matt Hills, 'The Dialectic of Value: The Sociology and Psychoanalysis of Cult Media' (PhD diss., University of Sussex, 1999).
[62] John Cash and Joy Damousi, *Footy Passions* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009); Matthew Klugman, *Passion Play: Love, Hope and Heartbreak at the Footy* (Melbourne: Hunter Publishers, 2009).

on fans of association football that focused on the everyday context in which the uncommunicable becomes intelligible.[63] Together with the works of Steve Redhead, Sandvoss interest in fans is one of the most notable exceptions across the otherwise divided scholarship of media fandom and sports fandom.

Sandvoss and Redhead's contributions to understanding fandom sit in cultural studies and dwell on fans of sport as well as other objects of popular culture. Sandvoss in his book on fans of diverse genres and objects conceptually anchors fandom within the paradigm of consumption and repeatedly uses examples from sport to illustrate broader points on fans and fandom.[64] Redhead, on the other hand, situates his work on sports fans empirically and historically within sport studies – the ethnographies of soccer fans, in particular – while imbedding his analysis in theories of youth and popular culture.[65] The work of Garry Crawford also aligns closely with fan studies in its theoretical focus on consumption and has made a contribution to both fan studies and sociological thinking on sports fans.[66] The noted authors and a handful of others do not, however, resolve the peripheral position of sport within fan studies nor do they attempt to do so. Instead, their works afford some cross-pollination between fan studies and sociologically grounded scholarship on sports fans.

Despite my broad theoretical reach, I also do not intend to bridge the divide between the two fields. Similarly to Sandvoss, I focus on the context of everyday lives; and in relation to Crawford's theoretically premised arguments, I am interested in how fandom shifts, changes and develops over time.[67] However, my focus on personal life paths is designed to further enrich the two points of departure and offer

[63] Cornell Sandvoss, *A Game of Two Halves: Football Fandom, Television and Globalisation* (London: Routledge, 2003).
[64] Cornel Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Malden: Polity Press, 2005).
[65] Steve Redhead, *Post-Fandom and the Millennial Blues: The Transformation of Soccer Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997).
[66] Garry Crawford, *Consuming Sport: Fans, Sport and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).
[67] Sandvoss, *Game of Two Halves*; Crawford, *Consuming Sport*,

unprecedented access to the subjectivities of fans' experiences which unfold in polysemic yet materially intelligible realities of spectator sport.[68]

Thus, my use of the term fandom is only consistent with fan studies inasmuch as it denotes the totality of practices which are undertaken by those who identify as fans and is not attached to any particular wave or approach in the study of fans, pertaining to either communities or individuals.[69] Instead of pigeonholing the research questions in any one particular paradigm, I situate them in relation to the development of a narrative identity and within previous studies on sports fans in their seemingly incongruent methodological and thematic perspectives (Chapter 2). This provides a necessary theoretical foundation for emplotment of dialogically developed narratives in the empirical chapters (Chapter 3 – 8). The emergent research design afforded by postmodern interdisciplinarity first reached into personality psychology and sociology of personal life. These overlapping fields, which both utilise methods of narrative inquiry, contributed to generating and continually revising my methodological practice as well as rethinking available conceptualisations of sports fans and fandom that reside in sport studies and media studies.[70] Throughout the six collaborations, sport studies provided contextual information and illuminated both global and local conditions of spectator sports.[71] And, as the dialogic form of inquiry actively challenged availability of fixed cultural intersubjectivities, cultural studies and cultural analysis were used to highlight the impossibility of cultural autonomy and the ongoing bottom-up construction of culture and its practices.[72] In accordance to my interdisciplinary reach, the thesis offers a methodological template for studying sports fandom through a person-to-world perspective.[73]

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[68] On soccer as a polysemic text see Sandvoss, *Game of Two Halves*, 27-30.
[69] Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington, 'Introduction: Why Study Fans?,' in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 1–16.
[70] See Chapter 2.
[71] These contextual underpinnings are explored in Chapter 1.
[72] On a bottom-up construction of culture see Knauft, *Genealogies of the Present in Cultural Anthropology*; on the political and economic contingencies of culture see Don Slater, 'Capturing Markets from the Economists,' in *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*, ed. Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 59.
[73] Bamberg, 'Who Am I?'

To this end, this thesis commits to an evolving co-production of knowledge as a fluid and collaborative practice. It centres on the person but sees the person as always in dialogue and hence in relation to others and their environment both immediate and far-reaching. This allows a confluence of big and small story and an active relationship between theory and practice. In these interactivities and relational positionalities, fans of sport are not only afforded the imagination and creativity that fan studies have long since afforded to media fans, but their lives and their stories are treated as plural as opposed to general or binary.[74]

In actively privileging personal stories and discursive constructions of ordinary people over grand narratives and theoretical deductions, I do not posit that six individual stories can thoroughly explicate intersubjective social realities – even if they are culturally delineated. Instead of accessing a reality that resides outside of these stories, the thesis dialogically constructs personal realities of the six social actors and agents and their passionate engagements in sport with an acknowledgement that these realities are situationally conditioned.[75] Yet, their residencies in the broader social and cultural narratives illuminate personal relationships with the intersubjective realities external to the particularities of their personal narratives, which instead of delineating a larger reality of sports fandom and society, illuminates a personal relationship with the structures and macro narratives.[76]

Narrating Passions of Others

By combining precedents and theories of narrative research, premises of biographical method and the critique of existing practices of sports fandom research, my methodological approach is based on rigorous honesty and has practice as its aim and praxis as its product.[77] In the same open-ended vein, the competing notions,

[74] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992).
[75] William G. Tierney, 'Danny's Fight for Life: Cultural Flexibility and Life History Method Re-examined,' *Qualitative Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (2014): 95-107.
[76] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (London: MIT Press, 2006), 6.
[77] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

definitions and distinct terminologies are presented in their changing contextual uses and interrogated in their situational particularities as opposed to abstract generalities. This open-endedness gives precedence to the dialogues, dialoguers, storytellers and their stories but also interrogates their contexts as they are immediately apparent and culturally available.[78]

Grappling with the sport's perpetual dialectic between creative essentialism and engineered materialism offers a critical backdrop to the life narratives of fans.[79] The grounds for this theoretical wrestling are laid in the introductory part (Part One) where Chapter 1 reviews and critiques competitive elite sport as an instrument of today's political economy hoisted by imperial legacies, celebrity-commodity dynamic and other insidious synergies.

The layers of discursive and material control enveloping sport are then interrogated in relation to personal lives, as Chapter 2 sets out to identify and explicate the central guiding principles of dialogic research practice while also theoretically situating them within existing knowledge on sports fans. Part Two builds on this framework in its presentation of the contributors' life narratives. It comprises of six chapters each of which presents a narrative of one of the contributors, positioning their life as a sports fan in relation to the identity dilemmas and contradictions that they and their stories have navigated throughout the years. The six narrative chapters are prefaced by a brief look at Australian sports culture giving another layer of shared contextual materiality to the personal stories.

Following this introduction, Chapter 3 traces the trajectory of the founder of the Manchester United Supporters' Club of Victoria from the dreams of an adoring six-year-old to an enthusiastic organiser and devotee. It interrogates John's prolonged detachment from the team after moving to Australia and the sudden urge to reunite with United that led to the foundation of the Supporters' Club and the friction that ensued when trying to balance competing demands with his love for Manchester

[78] Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 'Narrative Research?', 5.
[79] Richard Gruneau, *Class, Sports and Social Development* (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1999).

United. The chapter investigates the devices that John uses to ensure coherence of his narrative and, in turn, his identity and contextualises his story in relation to his lifelong idol, George Best, Australian soccer landscapes and the global reach of his beloved club.

From the experience of migration and the interest in the global game, the thesis moves to Melbourne's local game of Australian Rules and its Melbourne-born and based follower, Steph, who, unlike John, makes no attempt to tell a coherent life story. Nevertheless, her story and the meandering paths that it takes approaches questions of emotions and emotional belonging through an untenable duality of reality and ritual. Steph's ability to articulate her emotions affords a deeper consideration of the emotional involvement of fans that further erodes the duality of ritual and reality so often utilised to theorise sports fans and their emotional worlds. The duality of agency and structure is also examined through the contextual materiality of Steph's story, most poignantly relating to AFLW and her own experience of being a woman and playing sports.[80]

The undertones of emotional belonging evoked in Steph's story take a different turn in Mike's narrative. Geelong-based cricket purist unwittingly confines his emotional involvement to the big story – the cultural narrative of Australian cricket and its 'British Worldliness'. Here, Mike's personal story and his immediate and sensual sentimentality in relation to cricket is juxtaposed to the cultural narrative and its deep-rootedness in the contributor's cricket practices. Chapter 5, therefore, interrogates the dilemma of solitary and personal commitment and its immediate values in the presence of imposing cultural legacies.

Zoha's narrative in Chapter 6 presents an immediate and striking contrast to Mike's passion for cricket in all regards: ranging from Zoha's dislike of Test cricket to her distain for traditional collectivities. Zoha's cultural mobility and hybridity also sit in a stark contrast to Mike's coherent cultural narrative. It is in this collocation that a

[80] AFLW is a national Australian Rules league for women athletes. Its first season was played in 2017. It will be discussed further in Chapter 1.

complex personal history is revealed; and while cricket is only a small part of that history, the narrative context illuminates the ways in which Zoha's complicated cultural predicament, harrowing life experiences of not fitting in and permanent sense of not belonging have informed and, ultimately, shaped her nonchalant interest in 'the English game' that is built around a father-daughter bond and an immediate access to a momentary feeling of being 'at home'.

From Zoha's casual and sporadic engagement in cricket informed by critical encounters and relationships, Chapter 7 moves to the visceral commitment and passion of Andrea, whose interest in association football is strongly tied to her cultural identification and the politics of cultural expression. Andrea, a second-generation Greek-Australian, positions football as a family tradition and as a political outlet. Her discursive expressions, however, oscillate from self-theorising to storytelling, opening a set of contradictions and illustrating the ability of stories to effectively manage plurality and multiple temporalities.

Billy's narrative in Chapter 8, similarly, positions sport as a latent political outlet in the collaborator's nascent activism in which Australian rules football becomes an accessible entry point to interrogate culture, grasp everyday political encounters and to decolonise himself. The chapter traces the trajectory of Billy's engagement with football and its changing utilities: ranging from large-scale belonging to a creative and fulfilling endeavour – encompassing culture, politics and evolving self-understanding.

The six stories return to their shared materiality, intersubjectivities of the singular research practice and the political economy of sport in Part Three (Chapter 9) which thematically organises the six life trajectories. By examining allying and contrasting narrative episodes in relation to ontologically liquid notions of curiosity, creativity and communion, the chapter returns to the tensions between sport's ludic nature and its material compromises. But, this time the dialectic is underpinned by lived experiences, generating new insights and creating spaces in which to further problematise sports fandom. I, then, conclude with a brief reflection on my active

participation in – as opposed to administration of – the research process and the open-ended strands of my overall argument.

PART ONE | Sports Passions in Flux: Worlds, Persons and Stories

In the tradition of media studies, Cornel Sandvoss denotes sport as a text that can be analysed.[1] As my study is focused on the relationship between fans and their sports, understanding the polysemy of sport is critical to the interrogation of the diverse ways people engage in (and respond to) spectator sport. Part One, therefore, sets out this context and provides a theoretical point of departure.

To that end, Chapter 1 investigates the present condition of sport in its diversity of expressions and in the dialectic of its creative agency and contrived materialism. Chapter 1 uses a number of examples to review different aspects and components of competitive elite sport and to understand their implication in the broader ecosystem of politics, economics and narratives. By highlighting global trends in seemingly local events, the chapter illuminates the absence of cultural autonomy in sports and beyond. This shows that while sports fans' immediate experiences may be unfolding in local cultures, the structures they are navigating in their everyday lives are often underpinned by globalised developments.

While Chapter 1 provides context in which the lives of fans are later interrogated, Chapter 2 outlines the key parameters of that interrogation in relation to the theoretical background and methodological aims.

[1] Sandvoss, *Game of Two Halves*.

Chapter 1 | Worlds of Sport: Tensions, Tyranny and Possibility

> In Australia, you see the women of the one per cent jog from Bondi to Tamarama beach each morning, decked out in cheap lycra made expensive by the addition of – what else? – gold lettering. Their ideology tells them that it is their uniqueness that made them successful, yet they look and behave the same.
>
> – Paul Mason [1]

Expressions of physical activity have long since been trapped in commodity, fleeting fashion trends and prestige. As such, sport is rightly framed as yet another element of celebrity culture of style, excess and individualism. The trappings of this culture extend much further than the women of the one per cent described in the epigraph. Indeed, my own physical activity of commuter cycling is emblematic of that very same culture that is dictated by the commodity fetish and its celebrity embodiments.

Besides a picture of individualised and commodified aspirations to project difference, individuality and uniqueness, there are, of course, expressions of physical activity that are social, communal and playful.[2] While many of them are outside the parameters of the excessive culture of commodity and celebrity, they are regulated by (and continue to hold) both social and cultural frameworks, which produce and reproduce stylised leisure.[3] The implication of leisure cultures in social class and socio-economic inequalities is not, however, exclusive to this moment of social, political and economic trajectory.[4] Yet, their current omnipresence ensures that physical activity has become one of the many sites where the political economy is not simply maintained but is persistently reproduced.

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[1] Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 290.
[2] E.g., Tara Leigh F. McHugh et al., '"Sport Is Community:" An Exploration of Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Meanings of Community within the Context of Sport,' *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 18 (2015): 75–84; Ramón Spaaij, 'Refugee Youth, Belonging and Community Sport,' *Leisure Studies* 34, no. 3 (2015): 303–18.
[3] Jay Coakley, 'Ideology Doesn't Just Happen: Sports and Neoliberalism,' *Journal of ALESDE* 1, no. 1 (2011): 67–84.
[4] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

'In play there is something "at play"' – Johan Huizinga wrote in his seminal text *Homo Ludens*, elevating the act of playing to the quintessence of human condition, culturally essential and creatively satisfying.[5] This may sound platitudinal, and yet even the oldest human cultures had expressions of human movement, play and games that evolved and diffused geographically with time.[6] Play, games and sport have played a part in most human cultures and are indicative of some of their organising principles.[7]

The expression of sport that is most indicative of today's globalised culture is elite, organised, competitive, commercial sports – the most dominant form of sport in the present moment.[8] Here, we encounter sport in its hegemonic masculinity and neo-imperial dogmatism, corrupted in its institutional structures and corrupting individual actors.[9] Its tribalism, jingoism and its, at times, violent character are venerated, placated and yet conveniently criticised when required.[10] In many ways, sport is simply a cog of the broader political economy; it is one of its supporting cultural pillars, seemingly liberating while simultaneously subjugating in its own market of commodity and celebrity.

And yet, in crowded marketised spaces, we find small yet curious fissures of beauty and wonder where human pain, suffering, ambition and vigour are exposed with an extraordinary intensity and integrity, where raw unrestrained emotions and clear consequentiality are brought back to human action.[11] We can easily dismiss these

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[5] Johan Huizinga did not suggest that play was exclusive to human beings. Nevertheless, he posited that play was essential to the lives of human beings; see Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), 1.
[6] Kendall Blanchard, *The Anthropology of Sport: An Introduction* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1995).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Coakley, 'Ideology Doesn't Just Happen'.
[9] Laura Grindstaff and Emily West, 'Hegemonic Masculinity on the Sidelines of Sport,' *Sociology Compass* 5, no. 10 (2011): 859–81; Adam Masters, 'Corruption in Sport: From the Playing Field to the Field of Policy,' *Policy and Society* 34, no. 2 (2015): 111–23; Colleen English, 'Toward Sport Reform: Hegemonic Masculinity and Reconceptualising Competition,' *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 44, no. 2 (2017): 183–98.
[10] This alludes to racist incidents classified as an issue in sport instead of being considered as part of a broader societal landscape. This is exemplified by anti-racism campaigns organised by the sports governing bodies and leagues, e.g., FIFA's now abandoned campaign *Say No to Racism*, *Respect* by UEFA. *Racism: It Stops With Me* – campaign run by Australian Human Rights Commission is different in its scope, it includes a wide range of participating organisations, including NRL and AFL.
[11] Matt Hern, *One Game at a Time: Why Sports Matter* (Oakland: AK Press, 2013).

small openings as temporary, irrelevant and overlaid with layer upon layer of structural control both material and discursive. But, it is difficult to deny the strength of feeling some of us feel and the intensity with which we get enmeshed in sport as practitioners and observers alike.[12]

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At the turn of the 1980s, the new wave of world leaders took power and initiated policy changes in line with an at-the-time obscure political and economic practice.[13] This practice – widely known as neoliberalism – gradually took hold of people's lives in its incessant proliferation and deregulation of markets, privatisation and outsourcing of public provisions to for-profit driven managerial structures.[14] As the doctrine of ubiquitous markets engulfed the world with its simple proposition that the market is a human and a human is a consumer, we, the humans, became attuned to the needs of the markets as well as inclined to solve our problems through the commodified propositions produced by those same markets.[15] In many instances, we became unaware or perhaps unable to act contrary to our gut feeling that many of our, as individuals, immediate and long-standing troubles are caused and conditioned by this doctrine and its implementation and that the solutions to these problems in a form of stylised commodity are precisely the thing that is making us feel inadequate, undeserving and irrelevant.[16] Particularly, when these instantly

[12] Similar arguments are made by a growing body of scholarship on spiritual dimensions in sport from both religious and secular perspectives, e.g., Jim Parry et al., *Sport and Spirituality: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2007).
[13] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[14] Harvey, *History of Neoliberalism*.
[15] David Harvey, 'Neo-Liberalism as Creative Destruction,' *Human Geography* 88, no. 2 (2014): 145–58. The reference to the market becoming a human is derived from anthropomorphic descriptions of financial markets, such a trend in Australian politics is noted in Bernard McKenna, 'Labour Responses to Globalisation: The Australian Experience,' in *Work and Employment in a Globalised Era: An Asia Pacific Focus*, ed. Yaw A. Debrah and Ian G. Smith (London: Frank Cass), 84; and from Margaret Jane Radin's market rhetoric thesis pointing to an increasing number of social spheres which apply market lexicon, see Margaret Jane Radin, *Contested Commodities: The Trouble with Trade in Sex, Children, Body Parts and Other Things* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 6-8.
[16] Luigi Esposito and Fernando M. Perez, 'Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Mental Health,' *Humanity & Society* 38, no. 4 (2014): 414–42.

appealing goods are presented, promoted and advertised by the human synecdoche of good living, problem-free existence and desirable status – the celebrity.[17]

Attainment of (and desire for) commodities tie in with (and in many ways sustain) the overriding narrative of neoliberal capitalism 'that the natural state of humankind is to be a bunch of ruthless individuals, competing with each other'.[18] Competitive sport not just fits within such narrative but is a rather effective force in maintaining it. In some instances, essentialist arguments continue to hold within the terrain of sport, forgetting that standardisation and codification of sport were the requirements of capitalist conditions; hence it was the commercialisation and commodification of leisure that since the eighteenth century gradually morphed modern sport into its current form.[19]

While the processes of sport commodification, privatisation and globalisation intensify via the new forms of media-business synergies either afforded or demanded by neoliberal ethics and practices, sport continues to draw crowds, generate conversations and facilitate personal relationships.[20] It may even seem that sport, in some of its expressions, serves as an antidote to the neoliberal denial of society.[21] Yet, beneath the literal and the immediate, moments of celebration and apparent unity are subservient to the reproduction of individualised lives where everything is monetised and commodified.

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[17] David P. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Robert Fletcher, 'Blinded by the Stars? Celebrity, Fantasy and Desire in Neoliberal Environmental Governance,' *Celebrity Studies* 6, no. 4 (2015): 457–70.
[18] Mason, *Postcapitalism*, xi.
[19] Tony Collins, *Sport in Capitalist Society: A Short History*, *Routledge* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2. A theoretical discussion on how capitalist relations are reflected in modern structures of sport is provided in Adrian Budd, 'Sport and Capitalism,' in *Sport and International Relations: An Emerging Relationship*, ed. Roger Levermore and Adrian Budd (London: Routledge, 2004), 31–47.
[20] General neoliberal trends of hyper-commodification are interrogated in Adrian Walsh and Richard Giulianotti, *Ethics, Money and Sport: This Sporting Mammon* (London: Routledge, 2007), 1-18. In the book the authors do not specifically say that these changes occurred in tandem with the introduction of neoliberal policies, but the provided timeline indicates an alignment between neoliberalism and hyper-commodification in sport. On the continuing acceleration of sport media complex see Collins, *Sport in Capitalist Society*, 119–22.
[21] 'Neoliberal denial of society' is observed in many everyday practices of rampant individualism, but one of the most prominent neoliberal politicians, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, spelled it out: 'and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first.' In 'Interview for Woman's Own', interview by Douglas Keay, September 23, 1987. Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed January 30, 2018 https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689.

Preaching Community through Division

Neoliberalism relentlessly chips away at social bonding and creation of social capital as participating in a goods and services economy, rather than engaging in inconsequential face-to-face interaction, is a more immediate need for surviving and thriving in the present world.[22] And of course, social capital in and of itself is not an uncomplicated and universally positive set of processes. It is awash with conflict and contradiction as its creation, similarly to a sporting contest, results in both winners and losers.[23] Social bonding mostly occurs along the lines of existing cultural, ethnic, geographical or organisational boundaries, sanctioning simultaneous processes of inclusion and exclusion.[24] It is hard to find a phenomenon that is more illustrative of that than sport. Competitive sport does not just pit individuals against each other but also teams, cities, regions, countries while generating the most potent of bonding experiences to those within the respective groups. In a fluid and fragmented contemporary moment, sport has a capacity to anchor identities and create an uncomplicated sense of belonging: all one needs to do is to pick a team to support. Yet, as it will be outlined in the succeeding chapters this is not always as straightforward as it may sound – ultimately, one cannot 'manufacture loyalty by buying a scarf'.[25]

Beyond the rivalries, painted faces, scarves and carnivals, sport in its social and economic construction operates in much more implicit and insidious ways creating and exacerbating social tensions.[26] Commodification here extends its reach and puts an economic value on experiences and feelings; mostly by the proxy of a tangible

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[22] David Harvey, *Marx, Capital and the Madness of Economic Reason* (London: Profile Books, 2017).
[23] Negative aspects of social capital creation are outlined in Pamela Paxton, 'Social Capital and Democracy: An Interdependent Relationship,' *American Sociological Review* 67, no. 2 (2002): 254–77.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Lynne Truss, *Get Her off the Pitch! How Sport Took over My Life* (London: Fourth Estate, 2009), Apple Books, chap. 4.
[26] 'Carnivals' is an allusion to a common reference in sport studies (and particularly when theorising sports fans' behaviours) to Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of 'carnivalesque', see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

asset.[27] In a fast-paced world and amidst urban living conditions, the idea of community represents an anchor for safety and belonging.[28] Although in some instances and in some cultural enclaves local soccer clubs continue to be seen as a bonding symbol of geographical communities of people, this social cement is only sustained by totemic figures as opposed to material continuity.[29] Competitive elite sport capitalises on the contemporary longing for community through religious and nationalist imagery and lexicon.[30] To that end, sport is positioned as a creator and a guardian of communal bonding.

In the US, it is commonplace to justify public spending on sports stadia by appealing to a sense of community and promising economic benefits to the geographical locale surrounding the new sporting venue.[31] Such promises are effectively used by sports franchises in 'political blackmail' operations which not only demand new infrastructure from the relevant local authorities, but also insist on more favourable tax policies in exchange of assurances to stay in their traditional geographical locale.[32]

Similar 'blackmail' operations are undertaken elsewhere in the world, including Australia; where recent plans to rebuild two Sydney's stadiums were met with the wide-spread public outrage. In desperate attempts to change minds, politicians argued for the two-billion-dollar project by appealing to citizenry's economic

[27] Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 1998).
[28] Zygmunt Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
[29] For example, despite the global appeal of the English Premier League many clubs maintain a strong local presence and community bonds. This is well represented in the Netflix documentary series on Sunderland Association Football Club and their unsuccessful fight to return to the top flight of English football, see Leo Pearlman and Ben Turner, *Sunderland 'Til I Die* (UK: Netflix, 2018); Michael Serazio explores Durkheim's ideas of totem in relation to sports fandom in Michael Serazio, 'The Elementary Forms of Sports Fandom,' *Communication & Sport* 1, no. 4 (December 2013): 303–25.
[30] Sport is often described within the terms of 'Durkheimian' functionalist religion see, e.g., Jose Santiago, 'From 'Civil Religion' to Nationalism as the Religion of Modern Times: Rethinking a Complex Relationship,' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 2 (2009): 394–401.
[31] Jason M. Smith and Alan G. Ingham, 'On the Waterfront: Retrospectives on the Relationship Between Sport and Communities,' *Sociology of Sport Journal* 20, no. 3 (2003): 252–74; David Kennedy and Peter Kennedy, 'Towards a Marxist Political Economy of Football Supporters,' *Capital and Class* 34, no. 2 (2010): 181–98.
[32] Walsh and Giulianotti, *This Sporting Mammon*, 3.

acumen.[33] Avoidance to evoke common tropes of sport's cultural significance in Australia, to some, signalled the citizenry's disaffection with such narratives and realisation of who the true beneficiaries are.[34] The creation of new jobs was promised, and the potential loss of major sporting events loomed large, but, unlike in many other examples, Sydney was not threatened with a mass exodus of sports teams, which shared the two stadiums.[35]

This at least symbolically illustrates Australia's already rationalised landscape of sports stadia. For example the Australian Football League's corporate turn and national expansion geographically displaced most of its original clubs either via the interstate relocations or home games played in larger venues outside the geographical locales these teams traditionally represented.[36] Currently, all Melbourne-based clubs play their home games either in one of the two main city's stadiums or at regional or interstate locations.[37] The latter excursions allow the AFL to maintain and grow its markets without forming new teams in places where the game of Australian Rules has been traditionally popular.[38] Such instances of 'fiscally responsible' growth happens simultaneously to the League's unremitting commitment to maintain its national status by propping up the Greater Western Sydney Giants and the Gold Coast Suns – the two clubs founded as part of the AFL's

[33] David Rowe, 'Sydney's Stadiums Debate Shows Sport Might Not Be the Political Winner It Once Was,' *The Conversation*, December 5, 2017, https://theconversation.com/sydneys-stadiums-debate-shows-sport-might-not-be-the-political-winner-it-once-was-88632.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] The AFL transitioned from the state-based competition of the Victorian Football League. This transition, including ground rationalisation and team relocation, is documented in Dave Nadel, 'Colour, Corporations and Commissioners,' in *More than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, ed. Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998), 200–24; Dave Nadel, 'The League Goes National 1986-1987,' in *More than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, ed. Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998), 225–55.
[37] Hawthorn and North Melbourne clubs play some of their home games in Tasmania – the only state without an AFL club. Since 2017, the Western Bulldogs have been committed to playing some of their home games at Mars Stadium in Ballarat. Melbourne Football Club has a partnership with the Northern Territory Government and play some of their home games in Alice Springs and Darwin.
[38] On the AFL's profit-oriented expansion strategy see Sam Duncan, *Footy Grounds and Grandstands: Play, Community and the Australian Football League* (Port Adelaide: Ginninderra Press, 2016), Apple Books, chap. 5; Jonathan West, 'Back to the Future: Has the AFL Lost Its Community?,' *The Conversation*, August 17, 2016, https://theconversation.com/back-to-the-future-has-the-afl-lost-its-community-62100.

expansion to the states with an historically low interest in Australian Rules and a preference for rugby.[39]

The transfer of public funds to private entities that occurs in examples of publicly funded sports venues are comparable to the AFL bending its own rules to support their satellite clubs. Both instances appear to be at odds with the dogma of free markets, but it is exactly this dislodgment that is an unwritten rule of embedded neoliberalism, where the theoretical tenets are applied selectively – or even subverted – to ensure the maximisation of profit.[40] Thus, studying lived realities through ideological principles often leads to conclude that many economic processes are not neoliberal at all.

For example, Jules Boykoff relies on these ideological principles to defend his conceptual use of 'celebration capitalism' as opposed to neoliberalism in problematising exceptional economic and legislative environments created in the Olympic host cities.[41] He specifically quotes private-public partnerships to evidence the point, ignoring that the single enacted pledge of neoliberal capitalism is the maximisation of profit. There are plentiful examples ranging from nation states to national industry sectors where the dogma of free markets is disavowed for exactly that purpose and where free markets can be more accurately described as enabled – i.e. markets which have been facilitated by favourable policy or legislation.[42] The controlled environment created by the host cities' agreement with the IOC allows private entities to access public resources in an exchange of the elusive benefits for the citizenry which are either difficult to intelligibly define or impossible to measure.

Indeed, the adoption of prevailing economic practice in sports ventures often creates more pronounced disadvantages than benefits. For example, Cincinnati's Waterfront

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Noam Chomsky and Robert W. McChesney, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999): 37-38.
[41] Jules Boykoff, *Celebration Capitalism and the Olympic Games* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014); Jules Boykoff, 'Celebration Capitalism and the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics,' *Olympika* XXII, no. 2013 (2013): 39–70.
[42] Chomsky and McChesney, *Profit Over People*; Richard Robinson, 'Neoliberalism and the Future World: Markets and the End of Politics,' *Critical Asian Studies* 36, no. 3 (2004): 405–23.

project was set to redevelop the city's waterfront and build two new sports stadia, which resulted in a countywide sales tax increase and attitudinal fractures in the local community.[43] Although the urban regeneration entangled loyalties to the Reds of the MLB and the Bengals of the NFL as the two venues were being built for the respective franchises, the toxic public debate took place outside of these allegiances. It unleashed multiple divisions between social classes, inner-city and suburb residents and fans and non-fans. In the end, the ordinary citizens were still squabbling among themselves as the two sports franchises were pocketing quite handily from their increased home game capacities and corporate entertainment suites.[44] Pragmatic and dogmatic imposition of neoliberalism erased the promise of community, leaving Cincinnati's citizenry more divided than ever.

Extensive corporatisation of sport, including sports clubs either emulating or completely embracing corporate structures, affords such ruptures of locality, community and belonging, leaving the fans to their own devices in their attempts to create and sustain communities and belonging.[45] This is, however, a double-edged sword as insisting on community in a highly marketised space may turn one into a hostage of commodity, making one perpetually feel only a purchase away from community.[46] Some argue that there is a line between commodification as acceptable condition of competitive sport and hyper-commodification as a current excess that is malign and needs to be reined in.[47] Hyper-commodification, they posit, significantly dents the moral values of sport pertaining to community, fairness and excellence; hence regulating sports markets and reining in their commodified excesses will bring the moral values back to prominence and sport will return as an end in itself rather than the means.[48]

Such arguments, however, conveniently ignore the past and fail to consider that hyper-commodified sports did not spring up out of thin air and neither did the

[43] Smith and Ingham, 'On the Waterfront'.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Extensive corporatisation described in Walsh and Giulianotti, *This Sporting Mammon*, 14; Coakley, 'Ideology Doesn't Just Happen.'
[46] Walsh and Giulianotti, *This Sporting Mammon*, 17.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

possibility of neoliberalism as the status-quo political economy. Thus, the subsequent section considers how the inconvenient legacies and discourses beyond commodification operate within – or utilise – sports.

Under the Guise of Empire

Sport is a multi-billion-dollar industry boosted by its competitive edge – customer loyalty. In the words of the novelist and lifelong Arsenal Football Club supporter, Nick Hornby, '[in football] the consumption is all, the quality of product is immaterial'.[49] The moral values quoted as intrinsic to sport and tainted by the current hyper-commodified predicament are an important part of this proclaimed immateriality, allowing for genuinely emotive, inspiring and aspirational narratives to emerge and, in turn, be appropriated for otherwise blatant acts of profiteering.[50]

The moral and practical qualities of sport, including discipline, health, teamwork and equality, are quoted by many Sport for Development programs as of benefit to society. International iterations of such programs, which have grown exponentially in the recent decades, are a type of foreign aid that developed economies distribute to the developing nations.[51] For example, in 2017 and 2018 Australia spent four million Australian dollars in delivering Sport for Development programs in the Pacific alone, quoting sport to be 'a uniquely effective agent of change'.[52] But, is sport really 'a uniquely effective agent of change'? Or is this simply expedient? Sport has changed some lives of individuals coming from the most deprived regions of the world in a unique and effective way, but has it changed communities, societies or cultures? [53] In the most cynical of terms, Sport for Development programs, while

[49] Nick Hornby, *Fever Pitch* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 142.
[50] Jerald Podair, *City of Dreams: Dodger Stadium and the Birth of Modern Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).
[51] The expansion and complexities of Sport for Development programs are outlined in Danielle Ireland-Piper, 'Development through Sport: Fans and Critics', *Sports Law e Journal* 1, 2013. http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/SportsLaweJl/2013/1.html.
[52] 'Links through Sport', Department of Foreign Affairs, Australian Government, accessed on November 17, 2017, https://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/sport/Pages/links-through-sport.aspx.
[53] There are many inspiring stories of athletes who grew up in extreme hardship and sport has provided them with opportunities to change their lives. For example, Kassim Ouma – Ugandan boxer abducted as a five-year-old child

intended as distributive justice initiatives, have become exercises in soft power, building self-esteem and self-efficacy of select groups of people in deprived parts of the world and modelling them to become *homo economicus*.[54]

These programs are also a great illustration of bridging social capital and the underhand ways in which it operates. Bridging, as opposed to bonding, denotes sociability that is created across the major dividing lines: in the case of Sport for Development initiatives, these lines are imprinted by geography, race and resources whereby the Global North subordinates the Global South for ultimately its own ends.[55] For example, in 1995 sport-loving British Prime Minister John Major strongly supported the project dubbed 'Sporting Missionaries', which was unashamedly reported on by the London press as a rescue of African athletes from their primitive ways in gifting them with the benefits of modern sports.[56]

This may well be a dated example, but the same underlying principles underpin contemporary 'sports missions', where the indented transformation is not only subordinate but also constrained to an individual and individual aspirations. A structural overhaul of developing economies would be rather contentious and also the terms of the subordinate exchange continue to suit the North.[57] Clear subservient relationships and racial subjectivities enmeshed in these exchanges not only illustrate *bridging-social-capital-gone-wrong*, but rather illuminate innocent and underhand ways in which new colonial order emerges, is sustained and fortified.[58] This, in turn, bridges historical and political narratives of the past and material

by Ugandan rebels and turned into a boy soldier, see Uzodinma Iweala, 'I Used to Carry a Gun, Now I Use My Gloves,' *The Observer*, July 27, 2007, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2007/jul/29/boxing.features.

[54] Jason Read, 'A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity,' *Foucault Studies* 6 (2009): 25–36; John McMahon, 'Behavioural Economics as Neoliberalism: Producing and Governing Homo Economicus,' *Contemporary Political Theory* 14, no. 2 (2015): 137–58.

[55] See John Nauright's cautionary assessment of Sport for Development programs in John Nauright, 'Making the World Safe for Capitalism: Sport, "Development" and Neo-Imperialism' (Burris F. Husman Memorial Lecture, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, April 26, 2013).

[56] John Bale, *Imagined Olympians: Body Culture and Colonial Representation in Rwanda* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xvii-xxx.

[57] Coakley, 'Ideology Doesn't Just Happen,' 78.

[58] Nauright, 'Making the World Safe for Capitalism.'

realities of the present. It also questions whether post-colonial sport is a present reality or a quest for the future.[59]

On the other hand, what can be a better demonstration of an equality of opportunity than a standardised sporting contest? The premise of some of the most inspiring sporting narratives is that of an underdog, a small developing country, beating a commanding favourite, one of the world's most powerful nations, at a game of football, basketball or cricket.[60] Indeed, some of these narratives are deeply entrenched in the emancipatory identities of previously colonised nations.[61] This seeming emancipation is, however, not only steeped in colonial history but also occurs on the terms of the colonisers. It only needs to be reminded that out of the twenty-six sports played in the Summer 2012 London Olympic Games, the vast majority of games and events originated and/or were standardised in Britain.[62] This plain statistic vociferously emanates the echoes of colonialism. The echoes that grow even louder when the commanding favourite and the architect of the competition does well.

At the 2012 London Olympic Games, the host nation, which happened to be the creator of modern sport and the home country of the former imperial power, did exceptionally well, generating great atmosphere across the Olympic venues and the sense of national pride up and down the country. This was a triumph in more ways than one. Before they even started, the upcoming Games were used to evoke notions of civic identity and communal values across the United Kingdom.[63] Team GB's success at their home Olympics created a buzz and melded jubilant shouts into a symphony of national pride and nationwide support for the Games. Of course,

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[59] John Bale and Mike Cronin, 'Introduction: Sport and Colonialism,' in *Sport and Postcolonialism*, ed. John Bale and Mike Cronin (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 1–14.
[60] For example, in the 2018 FIFA World Cup Croatia – a nation of four million – made it to the final beating much larger nations, notably Russia and England, on the way. Croatia's performance was reflected in the global media with a fixation on the country's smallness and in relation to the themes of national pride, national unity and an increased global recognition.
[61] For example, the notion of 'beating England at their own game' is often evoked in relation to former British colonies.
[62] Hern, *One Game at a Time*
[63] Dean Garratt, '"Sporting Citizenship:" The Rebirth of Religion?', *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 18, no. 2 (2010): 123–43.

differing opinions and feelings stayed on the margins as in the deafening celebration of twenty-nine gold medals, dissonant voices were shut.[64]

Four years later, the celebratory headlines of social harmony and embrace of diversity were replaced with division, conflict and fear of multiculturalism in the exposing Brexit vote and the surrounding data and discourse.[65] For some London 2012 and Brexit were starkly contrasting moments – it was 'a tale of two nations' as retrospective reflections of the referendum's outcome saw the country's mood in 2012 and 2016 as the polar opposites.[66] The European referendum was dubbed the loss of the Olympic spirit opening up a space to reflect whether the abstraction of spirit was inconspicuously revealing of the actual state Britain was during the 2012 Olympic euphoria.[67]

The jubilant odes for the Games proclaimed that the British society, normally fragmented along regional, racial, urban-rural and economic lines, was suddenly harmonious.[68] The united front was, of course, afforded by silencing the voices of the marginalised who were most affected by the Games. The Olympics promised the regeneration of the London's East End, yet no one felt the need to detail that the redevelopment would be done exclusively for profit, calculatingly changing the social make-up of what prior to the Games was one of few still affordable London's

[64] Great Britain won the total of sixty-five Olympic medals at their home Games in 2012, twenty-nine of which were gold. This meant that the Team GB more than doubled their medal tally in the space of two Olympic cycles and finished third in London.
[65] 'Data and discourse' refer to the Brexit campaign and discussions that preceded the call for the referendum. One of the examples was the discussion on sovereignty, complexities of which are explored in Michael Gordon, 'The UK's Sovereignty Situation: Brexit, Bewilderment and Beyond,' *King's Law Journal* 27, no. 3 (2016): 333–43.
[66] 'A tale of two nations' is borrowed from Dan Hancox who critically albeit briefly evaluates such attitudes in Dan Hancox, 'A Tale of Two Nations: From the London 2012 Olympics to Brexit,' *The National*, August 10, 2016, https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/a-tale-of-two-nations-from-the-london-2012-olympics-to-brexit-1.145350.
[67] Alistair Campbell, 'How Did Brexit Britain Lose the Spirit of the 2012 Olympics?,' *The New European*, July 20, 2017, http://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/top-stories/how-did-brexit-britain-lose-the-spirit-of-the-2012-olympics-1-5115577.
[68] Alison Park et al., *British Social Attitudes 28 2011-2012 Edition* (London: Sage Publications, 2011).

postcodes.[69] No one was interested in the cost of the Olympics during the three weeks of national rejoice and so collateral damage was assessed belatedly and quietly.[70]

In some ways the Olympics dressed the sores of British society with flammable cladding which soon after caught fire and after years of smouldering exploded in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum.[71] Yet, the cladding did not simply provide a temporary casing for the issues and divisions; instead it momentarily reshaped the imperialist sentiment persistently simmering under the surface.[72] While I do not take the view that the EU is innately good and uncorrupted by its own imperial appetites – be it economic, political or territorial – 'colonial melancholia' in modern Britain is well-documented and was not simply revoked by the Olympic Games – if anything it was awoken.[73]

The London Games were a rather benign expression of that sentiment, yet aspects of Brexit rhetoric were more manifestly unsavoury. Cheerful discourse around 're-engaging with the Commonwealth and the real friends we've got out there' was quite literally a manifestation of colonial residue that conveniently whitewashed the past.[74] The Olympics were overlayed with neoliberal deception and their legacy torn up by competing paradigms, both of which, while with differing exteriors, were content with imperialism and division.[75] The Olympic bid was won on multicultural

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[69] In London's Borough of Newham where the Olympic Park was located, many residents were priced out of their properties, and some were left homeless. Sport mega events, more generally, have a legacy of homelessness, see Robin M. Mathy, 'No Christmas Dinner: The Effect of Major Sporting Events on Homelessness,' in *Sporting Dystopias: The Making and Meanings of Urban Sport Cultures*, ed. Ralph C. Wilcox et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 81–94.

[70] Jules Boykoff and Pete Fussey, 'London's Shadow Legacies: Security and Activism at the 2012 Olympics,' *Contemporary Social Science* 9, no. 2 (2014): 253–70; Iain Lindsay, *Living with London's Olympics: An Ethnography* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[71] Brexit vote refers to the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, which took place in June 2016 and resulted in a narrow 51.9 per cent victory for the 'Leave' campaign.

[72] This is an allusion to the Grenfell Tower Fire, which was widely regarded as a damning indictment of neoliberal policies of deregulation by the successive UK Governments.

[73] Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[74] Matthew Whittle, 'Our Friends in the Commonwealth: The Paradox of the Post-EU Immigration Question,' *Northern Postcolonial Network*, July 3, 2016, https://northernpostcolonialnetwork.com/2016/07/03/our-friends-in-the-commonwealth/.

[75] London 2012 Olympic Games had support from both major political parties: while the New Labour Government backed and won the Olympic bid, the Coalition Government of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats protected the Olympic funding but changed the direction of the school sports to a competition-based model. In the popular imagination, the Games were a politically unifying moment. However, given the narrowing gap between

credentials which were also vigorously placated by 'celebration capitalism' during the Games – ignoring pronouncements of the death of multiculturalism and diverging from the country's everyday realities.[76]

The 2000 Sydney Olympic bid was similarly marketed on the city's cosmopolitan zeal; and the celebration of Australia's multiculturalism underpinned the Game's opening ceremony.[77] While some scholarship has reflected on the opening night of the Sydney Games and the choice of Cathy Freeman – an Australian sprinter and a descendant of Kuku Yalanji and Burri Gubba peoples – to light the Olympic flame as a meaningful step towards Indigenous reconciliation, others pointed to the ways in which the neat linear narrative of the nation's history broadcasted to the nation and the world erased clear racial and socio-political tensions.[78]

Of course, it is difficult to see how the 'celebratory capitalism' of the Olympics can afford nuance to complex and troubled national histories. Nevertheless, Teresa Heinz Housel posits that the image of Australia crafted by the Olympic celebrations was reflective of the country's institutionalised multiculturalism that is administrated and managed via the white dominance.[79] Whiteness, in this case, is not merely a racial category but a 'composite cultural historical construct' which continues to instruct the governance of Australian nationalism in its present multicultural iteration.[80] While, according to Ghassan Hage, Whiteness is a more

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the political platforms of the New Labour and The Conservatives, cross-party support for the Games was not particularly unique; see Park et al., *British Social Attitudes*.

[76] On 'celebration capitalism' see Boykoff, *Celebration Capitalism*; Chris Allen, 'A Critical Analysis of Britain's Living, Dead and Zombie Multiculturalism: From 7/7 to the London 2012 Olympic Games,' *Social Sciences* 4 (2015): 18–33.

[77] Alan Tomlinson, 'Magnificent Trivia: Olympic Spectacle, Opening Ceremonies, and Some Paradoxes of Globalisation,' in *Sport and Leisure Cultures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 9–28.

[78] On the choice of Cathy Freeman to light the Olympic cauldron as a meaningful step towards reconciliation see Leanne White, 'Cathy Freeman and Australia's Indigenous Heritage: A New Beginning for an Old Nation at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games,' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 19, no. 2 (2013): 153–70; a contrasting analysis is provided in Teresa Heinz Housel, 'Australian Nationalism and Globalisation: Narratives of the Nation in the 2000 Sydney Olympics' Opening Ceremony,' *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24, no. 5 (2007): 446–61; and Greg Gardiner, 'Running for Country: Australian Print Media Representation of Indigenous Athletes in the 27th Olympiad,' *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 27, no. 3 (2003): 233–60.

[79] Housel, 'Australian Nationalism and Globalisation: Narratives of the Nation in the 2000 Sydney Olympics' Opening Ceremony.'

[80] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 58.

suitable construct to understand these processes, dominant Anglo culture and its values mould Australian mode of Whiteness.[81] As the White Australia policy was replaced by the institutionalised multiculturalism, the reluctant move towards the latter was predicated on non-white arrivals' ability to assimilate into white society, which, again, both extended Whiteness to an axiological milieu and maintained it as a critical feature of Australianness.[82]

Similar white ideals were deep-rooted in the development of modern sport and not only extended to but were situationally upheld and reinvented in the formation of Australian sports.[83] One of the earliest examples of racial ideology in the sporting practice on the colonised continent was the introduction of cricket to the First Nations Peoples as the Christian missions used the 'gentlemen's game' to foist the values and norms of the coloniser upon the colonised.[84] Cricket, to this day, is regarded as Australian national sport despite its continued alliance with 'the British World'.[85] Since 2011 a wider appeal for the game outside its Anglo supporter base has been generated by prioritising Twenty20 format at the expense of Test cricket and its Anglo cultural legacy.[86] This move was, however, primarily driven by the economic opportunities associated with the Twenty20 growth and exemplified by the success of the Indian Premier League.[87]

While, in the case of cricket, bringing diversity to the sport at least on the surface aligned with the profit motive, the focus on economic imperatives had very different effects on other Australian sports. The practice of Australian rules football has been grossly homogenised via the foundation of the national league. For example, the AFL proudly celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' contribution to the

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[81] Ibid, 19.
[82] Matthew Jordan, 'The Reappraisal of the White Australia Policy against the Background of a Changing Asia, 1945-67,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52, no. 2 (2006): 224–43.
[83] Daryle Rigney, 'Sport, Indigenous Australians and Invader Dreaming: A Critique,' in *Sport and Postcolonialism*, ed. John Bale and Mike Cronin (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 45–56.
[84] Jon Gemmell, 'All White Mate? Cricket and Race in Oz,' *Sport in Society* 10, no. 1 (2007): 33–48.
[85] David Utting, 'Multicultural Cricket? National Identity and the Australian Cricket Board's Annual Report,' *Journal of Australian Studies* 39, no. 3 (2015): 362–80.
[86] Ibid, 378.
[87] Peter English, 'Twenty20 and the Changing Face of Australian Cricket,' *Sport in Society* 14, no. 10 (2011): 1369–82.

sport with the annual Sir Douglas Nicholls Round and often presents itself as 'a pioneering leader in race relations'.[88] Although the League affords opportunities of social mobility to some Indigenous athletes, racialised discourses still surround Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander footballers: their athletic competencies continue to be presented in racialised terms and opportunities beyond their playing careers are still limited.[89] The AFL's structural control of the game reflects the continuation of the colonial order in the Australian society at large, which repudiates self-determination of First Nations Peoples.[90] The celebration of the AFL's limited successes also overlooks Indigenous-run clubs, such as Rumbalara and Fitzroy Stars, which embody football's capacity for self-determination of Indigenous communities.[91]

The homogenising control that the AFL possesses over the Australian rules football is akin to the top-down restructuring of Australian soccer undertaken at the advent of this century. Although association football was the first football code in Australia to establish a national competition, due to its ethnic association the National Soccer League was never granted an approval from the Australian mainstream culture and its Anglo heritage.[92] The world game was taken up by migrants from Continental Europe who arrived to Australia in the aftermath of the World War II and established ethnic soccer clubs.[93] These clubs provided the non-English-speaking migrants with opportunities to both play a familiar game and socialise.[94] While the newly established clubs professionalised the game, concerns over ethnic violence and mismanagement were regularly voiced and resulted in multiple inquiries and moves to de-ethnicise the game.[95] Until in 2005, the new league – the A-League – was

[88] Chris Hallinan and Barry Judd, 'Race Relations, Indigenous Australia and the Social Impact of Professional Australian Football,' *Sport in Society* 12, no. 9 (2009): 1220–35. Sir Douglas Round is also known as the AFL's Indigenous Round.
[89] Ibid
[90] Ibid.
[91] Paul Briggs and Michael Tynan, 'How Culturally Competent Is the Australian Football League (AFL)?' *The International Journal of Sport and Society: Annual Review* 3, no. 3 (2016): 191–205.
[92] Daniel Lock, 'Fan Perspectives of Change in Australia's A-League,' *Soccer & Society* 10, no. 1 (2009): 109–23.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Philip Mosley, *Ethnic Involvement in Australian Soccer: A History 1950 – 1990* (Belconnen, ACT: Australian Sports Commission, 1995).
[95] Ibid.

formed on the back of the restructuring efforts initiated by the national team's poor performance on the field.[96] The new League adopted a franchise model and did away with ethnic associations.[97]

The homogenisation of domestic soccer contrasted with New South Wales unsuccessful bids to host the FIFA World Cup which similarly to the Sydney Olympics evoked themes of diversity and multiculturalism.[98] Yet, the contrast may be deceiving as the latter themes in the context of mega sporting events tend to be foregrounded within the constraints of a singular national identity. These events serve global capital, which produces homogenising trends of commodification, Americanisation and globalisation.[99] As these trends expose permeability of national borders, the distinct yet managed national identities are fashioned in line with the requirements of service economy.[100] Nations use major sporting events to brand themselves within the global economy, but certain ideological and geopolitical struggles also continue to be at play.

The Olympic Games – the pinnacle of modern sport – have long since become an ideological project despite their exceptional and self-proclaimed moral and celebratory ethos.[101] Private capital took over the Olympics just as the first wave of the world's neoliberal leaders had made significant dents to the economies and politics of their home countries and the world.[102] Since then the IOC has morphed into a monopoly structure supported by many of its corporate partners that hold dominant shares of their respective markets of consumer goods and services.[103] This

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[96] Lock, 'Fan Perspectives of Change in Australia's A-League.'
[97] Ibid.
[98] Stephanie Alice Baker and David Rowe, 'Mediating Mega Events and Manufacturing Multiculturalism: The Cultural Politics of the World Game in Australia,' *Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 3 (2014): 299–314.
[99] These trends are documented in Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young, eds., *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).
[100] John Nauright, 'Global Games: Culture, Political Economy and Sport in the Globalised World of the 21st Century,' *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 7 (2004): 1325–36.
[101] Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, 'Olympic Ideals and the Limitations of Liberal Protest,' *International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 3–4 (2017): 184–200.
[102] 1984 Los Angeles Games are widely regarded as the first privately funded Olympics. See more on the LA 84 Games in Jules Boykoff, *Power Games: A Political History of the Olympics* (London: Verso, 2016).
[103] Ibid.

dominance coalesced with the deeply ingrained and widely placated ideals of Olympism allows the Games' inspirational sporting storylines to obfuscate the transfer of public monies to corporate hands.[104] The exceptionalism of the Olympics also manufactures consent for severe security measures, increased surveillance and control of the public space.[105]

The most intense period of London 2012 delivery coincided with the sharp economic downturn and extensive public cuts by the Coalition Government making the Olympic transfer of wealth even more discernibly unfair.[106] London's legacy promises were not unfulfilled; instead, they signified a neoliberal co-option, where regeneration meant gentrification and social improvement meant social 'cleansing'.[107] The dire socio-economic outcomes were coupled with the blanket surveillance allowing an unprecedented control of public space, legitimised by the 7/7 bombings and enabling an image of London 2012 as a widely supported public endeavour.[108]

As the party left town, East London was left with a securitised landscape of Olympic-making, manifestly reminiscent of both tangible and intangible legacies of control.[109] These were the same devices that allowed London to boast unanimous public support in the face of uncritical media in the first place. Despite the celebratory spirit and rejoiced apoliticism of the Olympic project, such unquestioning support was not afforded to the London's successors. The 2014 Sochi Winter Games and the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympics were presented as extremely problematic and highly unpopular.[110] In Western media, Sochi 2014 was regarded as unsafe due to extensive

[104] Lenskyj, 'Olympic Ideals and the Limitations of Liberal Protest.'
[105] Ibid.
[106] Boykoff and Fussey, 'London's Shadow Legacies'; Lenskyj, 'Olympic Ideals and the Limitations of Liberal Protest.'
[107] Paul Watt, '"It's Not for Us:" Regeneration, the 2012 Olympics and the Gentrification of East London,' *City* 17, no. 1 (2013): 99–118; Lindsay, *Living with London's Olympics*.
[108] Boykoff and Fussey, 'London's Shadow Legacies.'
[109] Ibid.
[110] On Sochi see Anastasia Bolshakova, 'Russia as the Other,' *Journal of Language and Politics* 15, no. 4 (2016): 446–67; on 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games and public protests surrounding the Olympics see Thiago Rodrigues and Adriano de Freixo, 'In No Mood for Games: The Pale Olympic Flame of Rio 2016,' *The Conversation*, August 5, 2016, https://theconversation.com/in-no-mood-for-games-the-pale-olympic-flame-of-rio-2016-63191.

security measure, disruptive to environment due to expansive new builds required, overpriced due to cost overruns, politicised due to President Putin's involvement and oppressive due the human rights issues in the host nation.[111] While London 2012 could have been described with highly comparable epithets particularly in relation to security and politicisation, Anastasia Bolshakova argues that Western media's representation of the Sochi Winter Games was a textbook use of binary oppositions to portray the distant and markedly divergent other.[112]

It is beyond the scope of my argument, to unpack the most contentious element of the Sochi Olympics – the Gay Propaganda Law.[113] Nevertheless, it is worth reflecting that the law passed less than a year prior to the Opening Ceremony of the Games was not only morally indefensible by any measure of liberal democracy and open society but also was never presented in Western media in a juxtaposition to the complicated and ongoing histories of the fight for the LGBT rights across the Western World.[114] Equally, the inconvenient past and present of gender and sexuality in the Olympic sports and other elite competitions, ranging from gender verification and a slow acceptance of openly gay athletes to persistent othering and sidelining of transgender competitors, seemed to have been forgotten when reporting on the Sochi Games.[115]

Similar juxtaposition was also presented by the competition to host the 2000 Summer Olympics. Sydney's win over Beijing was afforded by the mounting pressure on China's human rights record, which, in the eyes of many, disqualified Beijing from

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[111] Bolshakova, 'Russia as the Other'.
[112] The involvement of the British political class, particularly the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair and his wife, Cherie Blair, is openly discussed in Mike Lee, Adrian Warner and David Bond, *The Race for the 2012 Olympics: The Inside Story of How London Won the Bid* (London: Virgin Books, 2006); Bolshakova, 'Russia as the Other'; Stuart Hall, 'The Spectacle of the "Other,"' in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 223–90.
[113] Gay Propaganda Law refers to the Russian federal law 'for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values' passed in June 2013.
[114] Michele Rivkin-Fish and Cassandra Hartblay, 'When Global LGBTQ Advocacy Became Entangled with New Cold War Sentiment: A Call for Examining Russian Queer Experience,' *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 21, no. 1 (2014): 95–111; Ann Travers and Mary Shearman, 'The Sochi Olympics, Celebration Capitalism and Homo-nationalist Pride,' Journal of Sport and Social Issues 41, no.1 (2017): 42–69.
[115] Eric Anderson, *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006); Michael Messner, 'Gender Ideologies, Youth Sports and the Production of Soft Essentialism,' *Sociology of Sport Journal* 28, no. 2 (2011): 151–70.

purporting the values of Olympism.[116] Yet, few questions were raised about Australia's treatment of First Nations Peoples, and its alignment with both human rights and the values of Olympism.[117] In fact, the Sydney Olympic bid strategically bypassed such questions by employing prominent Indigenous athletes to promote the Games in the media.[118]

As historical narratives are never straightforward trajectories, certain whitewashing of the past and the present is indeed necessary to sustain stark contrasts. This narrative monopoly may seem benign within the Olympic paradigm, only propelling intense sporting competition, and yet it perfectly exemplifies the ways in which modern empires of narratives are constructed and boost the economy of war over the détente and dialogue.[119] The layers of discursive control exerted by media monopolies in either celebrating or lamenting the Olympic Games based on their geopolitical situatedness leave little space to unpack the imperialistic propensities of the Olympic project itself. The propensities that are beholden to the neoliberal present and supportive of the dominant geopolitical regimes.

Violent Politics of Belonging

Sport lends itself to politicisation. It is tied up with notions of territoriality, difference and war, but as the preceding examples show sporting contests are often simply captives of much more complex and insidious histories.[120] Sport is a blank canvas on which narratives can be projected, drawn and redrawn. From politicised football derbies to geopolitically significant international rivalries, sport is there to conceal, dilute, amplify or unearth underlying tensions, divisions, dominance and oppression. In each instance, crude stereotyping and binary distinctions are used to

[116] Barbara Keys, 'Harnessing Human Rights to the Olympic Games: Human Rights Watch and the 1993 "Stop Beijing" Campaign,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, no. 2 (2018): 415–38.
[117] Colin Tatz, *Obstacle Race: Aborigines in Sport* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995), 346-8.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Paul Hoch, *Rip off the Big Game* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1972), 70-99.
[120] Ibid.

enrich the differences while obfuscating often obvious similarities.[121] In sport like in politics, identities of rival teams are built on clear differences between 'us' and 'them' – the starker the perceived contrast between one's team and the opposition, the more anticipated and intense is the sporting contest.[122]

The politics of belonging operate on a number of levels and within a wide-ranging amplitude of intensity and association with relevant political projects.[123] Besides an image of a nation, sporting rivalries can be based on anything stretching from silly pet hates and ill-founded humour to political allegiances, ideologies, ethnicities and religions.[124] For example, Israeli club football is a cocktail of all of the elements on the latter end of the continuum, in which team identities are not only intensified through a clear othering of rival teams but also through politicisation and ethnicisation of football clubs.

Zionist sport federations – Hapoel, Maccabi and Beitar – founded years before the creation of the Israeli state, not only host a number of sports clubs under their expansive umbrellas, but also continue to diverge on political, social and ethnic identities and their competing visions for the future of the state of Israel.[125] Although Zionist clubs strongly align in their national identification as well as in the othering of Arabs, these ideological positions take divergent forms in their lived realities.[126] For example, Beitar Jerusalem signed their first ever Arab player in January 2013 – the move that was fiercely opposed and protested by a significant number of Beitar's most visible supporter groups who until then had prided on their club's exclusion of

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[121] Hall, 'The Spectacle of the "Other."'
[122] Ibid.
[123] Nira Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations* (London: Sage, 2011).
[124] On how Australia's imagined community has been foisted through sport see Richard Cashman, *Sport in the National Imagination: Australian Sport in the Federation Decades* (Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2002). On other types of boundary-drawing, for example, the world-renowned 'El Clásico' contested by Real Madrid and Barcelona football clubs not only represents Spanish football to the world but also carry political, cultural and ethnic currencies, see Jim O'Brien, '"El Clásico" and the Demise of Tradition in Spanish Club Football: Perspectives on Shifting Patterns of Cultural Identity,' *Soccer & Society* 14, no. 3 (2013): 315–30.
[125] Amir Ben Porat, 'The Usual Suspect: A History of Football Violence in the State of Israel', *Sport in History* 36, no. 1 (2016): 98–116.
[126] Some fans, however, engage in more inclusive fandom expressions. For example, in 2007 fan-owned football club Hapoel Katamon Jerusalem was established by some Hapoel Jerusalem fans. The new club is anti-racist, rejects violence and homophobia and is community oriented e.g., Netta Ha-Ilan, 'The (Re)Constitution of Football Fandom: Hapoel Katamon Jerusalem and Its Supporters,' *Sport in Society* 21, no. 6 (2018): 902–18.

Arab players, positioning that not only as a point of difference from other Israeli football clubs but also as a mark of 'purity'.[127]

Beitar and its fans share their political ideology with Israel's Likud party of Conservative leaning. Despite the party's consistent electoral successes since 2009, Beitar's Mizrachi-Jew supporter base deem themselves to be on the margins of the Israeli society, discriminated against in the labour market and historically oppressed by the commonly left leaning Ashkenazi-Jews.[128] Yet, on the football field their archest rivals are Bnei Sakhnin – the club backed by Israel's Arab population. 'Terrorists', 'We hate all Arabs', 'The Temple Mount is ours' are just a few chants regularly directed at the Bnei Sakhnin and their supporters from the Beitar terraces, and it does not take much to exacerbate the tensions and the verbal insults to take on a physical dimension.[129]

Israeli football intertwines politicisation of sport and *sportisation* of politics, echoing the basic binary around aggression in sport of nature and nurture. Yet, unlike in contextually situated example of Israeli football, this dichotomy of biology and culture is blurred by its underlying essentialist nucleus. Norbert Elias argued that 'it is not aggressiveness that triggers conflicts but conflicts that trigger aggressiveness', and yet he also posited that the development of modern sport allows for controlled freedom from emotional norms.[130] The ability to control such freedom was afforded, Elias argued, from the civilising processes which morphed sport into a clearly delimited and regimented form of leisure.[131] It is in this de-historicised proposition and in its privileging of the West that aggression and violence are essentialised just like they are also essentialised by the theories of innate drives.[132]

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[127] Hani Zubida, 'We Are One! Or Are We? Football Fandom and Ethno-National Identity in Israel,' in *New Ethnographies of Football in Europe*, ed. Alexandra Schwell et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 75–96.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Tobias Buck, 'The Not-so-Beautiful Game of Football in Israel,' *Financial Times*, January 2, 2010, https://www.ft.com/content/d6849396-ef64-11de-86c4-00144feab49a.
[130] Norbert Elias, 'Violence and Civilisation: The State Monopoly of Physical Violence and its Infringement,' in *Civil Society and the State*, ed. John Keane (London: Verso, 1988), 178.
[131] Norbert Elias, 'The Genesis of Sport as a Sociological Problem,' in *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process*, ed. Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 126–49.
[132] R.G. Sipes, 'War, Sports and Aggression: An Empirical Test of Two Rival Theories,' *American Anthropologist* 75, no. 1 (1973): 64–86.

Ultimately, both explanations simplify the discourses, behaviours and histories of the Israeli politics and football. Despite positioning sport as a mediator and a catalyst respectively, both theories neglect individual agency, undermine cultural differences and historical circumstances.[133] In line with Elias's observation that 'conflicts ... trigger aggressiveness', sport often soaks up political, regional and ethnic discords, at times elevating and furthering these already imprinted divisions.[134] While the stakes are often elevated from the top down, the blame tends to be assigned to a grassroots insurgence.

Australian soccer, for example, has not only been associated with ethnicity but also violence. Scholarship often focused on the political upheavals in the diasporas' homelands and how that translated into violence in Australian stadiums. Philip Mosley drew clear connections between soccer violence among Yugoslav, Croatian and Serbian migrants and the complex politics of the Balkans.[135] Indeed, it is hard to reject the thesis that ethnic tensions entered Australian soccer and often escalated into violent clashes. Yet, the analysis should not stop at that, because punitive measures taken by the authorities often exacerbated tensions, and the lack of civic power afforded to the new arrivals fixated their political energy to the places, conflicts and issues they had physically fled.[136]

Ongoing marketisation of sports somewhat disturb notions of territoriality and, in turn, obscures the nexus of sport and identity. All of a sudden, a football club does not have to be local and the players do not have to reflect the community they

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[133] See Giulianotti's critique of the application of Elias's theory of Civilising Process in sport in Richard Giulianotti, 'Elias on Sport: The Interplay of Figurations', in *Sport: A Critical Sociology*, ed. Richard Giulianotti (Malden: Polity Press, 2005), 141.
[134] John Sugden and Alan Bairner, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society in a Divided Ireland* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993); Elias, 'Violence and Civilisation,' 178.
[135] Mosley, *Ethnic Involvement in Australian Soccer*.
[136] Punitive approach in attempts to quell the violence is noted in Wray Vamplew, 'Violence in Australian Soccer: The Ethnic Contribution,' in *Ethnicity and Soccer in Australia*, ed. John O'Hara (Campbelltown: Australian Society for Sports History, 1994), 7; Roy Hay presents an alternative argument on Australian soccer and its ethnic associations in Roy Hay, 'British Football, Wogball or the World Game? Towards a Social History of Victorian Sports,' in *Ethnicity and Soccer in Australia*, ed. John O'Hara (Campbelltown: Australian Society for Sports History, 1994), 44–79.

supposedly represent. It appears as though commodity can transcend geography; and, in some cases, celebrity can transcend sectarianism.[137] Although the Israeli example demonstrates that, in some instances, politics continue to prevail, hyper-corporatisation and commodification often invalidate sport as a site of political belonging.

Indeed, the de-ethnicisation of Australian soccer was underlain with corporate interest aligned with the mainstream cultural identity. The new image of Australian soccer is channelled through the A–League – the slick and well-managed Australia's primary soccer competition, which employs commodity and celebrity as a panacea from division.[138] However, one should be mindful that the ever-widening commodity offerings afford new meanings and lines of division that are both semiotically and enunciatively created and often imply new intra-group conflicts while the sporting competition takes care of sustaining the old divisions based on participating inter-groups.[139]

In the increasingly global and mobile world, the vitality of international sporting fixtures, on many occasions, is maintained by corporate interests, whereby collective memory and identity of a nation state is co-opted by multinational businesses through branding and advertising.[140] Similarly, in the absence of material continuity

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[137] For example, George Best, Manchester United's iconic player of the 60s, was seen to have transcended sectarianism in Northern Ireland. Born in Northern Ireland and brought up as Ulster Unionist, George Best was equally loved by people on both sides of the Northern Ireland conflict; see Alan Bairner, 'Where Did It All Go Right?: George Best, Manchester United and Northern Ireland,' in *Manchester United: Thematic Study*, ed. David L. Andrews (London: Routledge, 2004), 133–46.

[138] A number of the A-League clubs have signed international stars in the sunset of their playing careers but with a wide name recognition. For example, excitement around Alessandro Del Piero's arrival to Sydney is captured in John Stensholt and Shaun Mooney, *A-League: The Inside Story of the Tumultuous First Decade* (Collingwood: Nero, 2015), 216-9.

[139] On semiotic and enunciative productivity see John Fiske, 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom,' in *Adoring Audiences: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 30–49. Geoff Pearson suggests that intra-group conflict was more prominent than inter-group conflict in his ethnographic study on Manchester United fans, he specifically notes conflicts between local and distant, old and new fans, see Geoff Pearson, *An Ethnography of English Football Fans: Cans, Cops and Carnivals* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 74.

[140] This is a reference to corporate nationalism – the term coined by David L. Andrews, Michael L. Silk and C. L. Cole, 'Sport and Corporate Nationalism(s): The Spatial Dimensions of Sporting Capital', in *Sport and Corporate Nationalisms*, ed. David L. Andrews, Michael L. Silk and C. L. Cole (New York: Berg, 2005), 1–12. For an example of such corporate dynamics see Steven Jackson, 'Globalisation, Corporate Nationalism and Masculinity in Canada: Sport, Molson Beer Advertising and Consumer Citizenship', *Sport in Society* 17, no. 7 (2014): 901–16.

in club competitions, commodity transports totemic meanings through the imagery and history of particular sports teams, globally galvanising new supporter bases and, in turn, creating new markets. This transporting and transposing are effectively afforded by the unbreakable ties of sport and media industries that endlessly feed off each other.[141]

Sport and Media Synergy

Sport posits a curious relationship between meaning and commodity – an unremitting dialectic between meaningful and monetised. On the other hand, in mediated encounters meaning precipitates consumption.[142] The ability of sport to transcend geography arose from its mediated forms: the globalised mode of the English Premier League was enabled by the BSkyB television deal of 1992 in the same way that the Australian Football League's national expansion was fortified by the League's close-knit relationship with the Channel Seven television network.[143] While for media corporations sport became a key tool in advancing their own agendas, sports enjoyed their expanded reach into the local and global markets.[144] The symbiosis of sport and media is not entirely new and can be traced back to as far as the emergence and 'diffusion' of modern sport.[145] Yet, over the last forty years broadcast television and media monopolies have weaponised this synergy in an

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[141] E.g., Charles Little, '"It's the SANFL Wot Won It:" Sport as the Foundation of Rupert Murdoch's Political Influence,' (presentation, 44th Annual Convention of North American Society for Sport History, Atlanta, GA, May 29, 2016).
[142] Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973); Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding,' in *Culture, Media and Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, ed. Steven Baron et al. (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1980), 91.
[143] On BskyB deal and its implications to English football spectator cultures see John Williams, '"Protect Me from What I Want:" Football Fandom, Celebrity Cultures and "New" Football in England,' *Soccer & Society* 7, no. 1 (2006): 96–114. The relationship between the AFL and the Channel Seven in the context of the League's national expansion is discusses in Bob Stewart and Geoff Dickson, 'Crossing the Barassi Line: The Rise and Rise of Australian Football,' in *The Games Are Not the Same: The Political Economy of Football in Australia*, ed. Bob Stewart (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 71–113.
[144] Andrew C. Billings, 'Utilising Televised Sport to Benefit Prime-Time Lineups: Examining the Effectiveness If Sports Promotion,' in *Handbook of Sports and Media*, ed. Arthur A. Raney and Jennings Bryant (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 253–64.
[145] On the interactivity of media and sport throughout the history of modern sport see Collins, *Sport in Capitalist Society*. 'Diffusion' in relation to the spread of modern sport is coined by Allen Guttmann, *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

unprecedented fashion and turned sport into an indispensable ingredient of the present world order.[146]

In the diverse new media landscapes, the relationship between sport and television that has been steady and reliant in its endlessly increasing broadcasting right deals is bound to change. And yet, in spite of technological innovation and seemingly democratising online spaces corporate hold on sports media content and practices is said to continue.[147] While television changed sport and its expressions by dictating changes to rules and scheduling, the new media reinvigorated athlete-supporter relationship and, in some ways, democratised content production and, in turn, facilitated new modes of sports fandom.[148] In this perpetually in-flux sport and media landscape, we can only attempt to discern what sport is in its mediated and unmediated forms.

It seems obvious that sport exists in unmediated dimensions, yet not in its professionalised capitalist predicament.[149] Sports that enjoy attention from television and other mediums are often compromised even at their direct existence. Television, in particular, has been relentless in making some games adapt to their needs by way of modifying the rules, format and presentation.[150] It is also true that our goalposts of what sport is interesting, exciting and worthy of our attention are informed and formed by the sport-media synergy.[151] For example, the lack of consistently intense and/or highly competitive games in women's competitions can be treated as a concern for their popularity while in the absence of intense on-field

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[146] Jim Mckay and David Rowe, 'Ideology, the Media and Australian Sport,' *Sociology of Sport Journal* 4, no. 3 (1987): 258–73; David Whitson, 'Circuits of Promotion: Media, Marketing and the Globalisation of Sport,' in *MediaSport* (London: Routledge, 1998), 57–72.
[147] Brett Hutchins and David Rowe, *The Internet, Digital Media and the Rise of Networked Media Sport* (London: Routledge, 2012).
[148] A notable new mode of fandom is fantasy football, which has heralded its own scholarly interest, see Tom Isaacson, 'Fantasy Sports and Sports Fandom: Implications for Sports Media Research,' in *Sports Fans, Identity and Socialisation: Exploring the Fandemonium*, ed. Adam C. Earnheardt, Paul M. Haridakis and Barbara S. Hugenberg (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 255–74.; on scheduling changes see Walsh and Giulianotti, *Ethics, Money and Sport*, 30.
[149] Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 3-10.
[150] Marc A. Krein and Sheree Martin, '60 Seconds to Air: Television Sports Production Basics and Research Review,' in *Handbook of Sports and Media*, ed. Arthur A. Raney and Jennings Bryant (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 265–76.
[151] Ibid.

battles men's competitions rely on media production and narratives to sustain their unquestionable viability.[152]

From boxing at the Olympics to the rising financial remunerations – recent years have seen some positive developments in women's sport.[153] Yet, our idea of what gender equity looks like on the sporting field is not only engulfed in the hegemonic masculinity indisputably shadowing all aspects of elite competitive sport but also the media imagery that not only fits within but rather continually reproduces such order.[154]

The introduction of the AFL Women's League (AFLW) in 2017 was Australia's shining example of the changing trends in sport and a move towards gender equality in the country's most watched football code.[155] There is no doubt that the AFLW in its first three seasons has had a positive influence on women's sport in the country at large. In fact, women's grassroots participation in Australian rules football sharply increased since the announcement about the competition's inception was made.[156]

The celebratory commentary surrounding the League was at times broken up by concerns over changes to the rules and a wide pay gap between women and men's competitions. Some controversies have also emerged in the League's rudimentary

[152] For example, in February 2018 it was reported that AFL officials expressed concerns to the AFLW coaches about the low-scoring matches at the start of the second AFLW season. The opinion that the game's attractiveness needs to be worked on through rule changes was also expressed by media commentators, e.g., Jake Niall, 'AFL Should Have Acted Sooner to Fix Problems Facing AFLW,' *The Age*, February 8, 2018. https://www.theage.com.au/sport/afl/afl-should-have-acted-sooner-to-fix-problems-facing-aflw-20180208-p4yzrf.html.

[153] Despite some prize money increases and emergence of other lucrative opportunities for the high-profile female athletes, sport is far from gender parity: Valeria Perasso, '100 Women: Is the Gender Pay Gap in Sport really closing?', *BBC World*, October 23, 2017. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-41685042. These recent developments were preceded by the positive changes of the past decades, see Margaret Carlisle Duncan, 'Gender Warriors in Sport: Women and the Media,' in *Handbook of Sports and Media*, ed. Arthur A. Raney and Jennings Bryant (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 231–52.

[154] Michael A. Messner, 'Centre of Attention: The Gender of Sports Media,' in *Taking the Field: Women, Men and Sports*, ed. Michael A. Messner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 91–133; Janet S. Fink, 'Female Athletes, Women's Sport and the Sport Media Commercial Complex: Have We Really "Come a Long Way, Baby"?' *Sport Management Review* 18, no. 3 (2015): 331–42.

[155] Australian Rules is the most popular televised football code in Australia based on the AFL viewing figures, see Roy Morgan, 'Olympics Top TV Sport ahead of AFL, Commonwealth Games and Cricket.'

[156] Michelle Willson et al., 'Framing the Women's AFL: Contested Spaces and Emerging Narratives of Hope and Opportunity for Women in Sport,' *Sport in Society* 21, no. 11 (2018): 1704–20.

seasons. For example, the now iconic picture of Tayla Harris – Carlton FC footballer – kicking for goal attracted online abuse and was deleted from Seven Network's – one of the League's broadcasters – social media feeds and reposted with an accompanying apology after criticisms of their reaction were voiced.[157] The picture showcased the athleticism of women's football, yet the surrounding controversy demonstrated that women's physicality and appearance continue to be regulated.[158]

Through the exclusion of Hannah Mouncey – a transgender sportswoman, the regulation of gender boundaries was also performed by the League itself. Similar to the IAAF's dithering over the widely reported case of Caster Semenya – South African female middle-distance runner deemed to have intersex traits – an evidence-free approach taken by the AFL to prevent Mouncey from playing Australian Rules professionally exposed arbitrariness of both gender and sex.[159] However, maintaining the present male-led order of competitive sports is subject to a preservation of a clear-cut gender binary.[160]

A sports *heroine* is supposed to be both heroic and inferior to a hero via her femininity.[161] Thus, limits on a female body are imposed both openly and insidiously while the simultaneous revelling at the demolition of a male body takes place.[162] Self-evidently, the media does not demonstrably rejoice at the irreversible physical damage inflicted on athletes, but they pay scant attention to it.[163] As we stand in awe

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[157] Patrick Wood and James Maasdorp, 'Tayla Harris Says Trolls' Social Media Comments on AFLW Photo Were "Sexual Abuse,"' *ABC News*, March 20, 2019, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-20/tayla-harris-felt-sexually-abused-aflw-photo-trolls-seven/10919008.
[158] On the construction and regulation of gender in sport see Michael A. Messner, *Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
[159] Catherine Ordway and Allistar Twigg, 'By Excluding Hannah Mouncey, the AFL's Inclusion Policy Has Failed a Key Test,' *The Conversation*, October 19, 2017, https://theconversation.com/by-excluding-hannah-mouncey-the-afls-inclusion-policy-has-failed-a-key-test-85900; on Caster Semenya and her representation in the media see Cheryl Cooky, Ranissa Dycus, and Shari L. Dworkin, '"What Makes a Woman a Woman?" versus "Our First Lady of Sport:" A Comparative Analysis of the United States and the South African Media Coverage of Caster Semenya,' *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37, no. 1 (2013): 31–56.
[160] English, 'Toward Sport Reform.'
[161] Jennifer Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000).
[162] Long and gruelling Grand Slam tennis matches played in extremely hot conditions are a good example of this, particularly because men play best of five while women – best of three sets; but this is also a more general trend in athletes' routines and an understanding of bodies as something to be managed, see Nancy Theberge, '"Just a Normal Bad Part of What I Do:" Elite Athletes,' *Sociology of Sport Journal* 25 (2008): 206–22.
[163] E.g., Kurt Samson, 'Former Players sue NFL Alleging Cover-up of Concussion Risks,' *Neurology Today* 11, no. 16 (2011): 3–4.

of the accomplishments of those female athletes that had the resources and the media exposure to achieve their potential and be noticed, it seems that we almost deliberately demand more from the male body so that the gender segregation remains an unquestionable norm.[164]

The historically shifting yet 'scientifically' justified limits of a female body produce cultural narratives which insist on banal femininities and masculinities in mediated sports offerings.[165] As these are continually reiterated and internalised, the fight for equality turns into a fight for recognition within hegemonically masculine institutions of sport instead of aiming to disrupt and subvert their sedimented structures and perceptions.[166] Stories of female athletic brilliance become narratives of exceptional ability rather than the evidence of an athletic capacity of what we elect to be a female body.[167] Changing modes of sports media, on the one hand, complicate expressions and the imagery of femininity in sport while, on the other, expose female athletes' internalisation of empowerment through enterprise and commercially viable destinies.[168]

Media narratives of celebrity female athletes allow for an easy integration of feminist struggle into neoliberal ontologies.[169] In its drive for equal opportunities, sport becomes yet another sphere of society which, instead of questioning and subverting the structures that produce and reproduce gender inequality, works towards markers of equality that are economically viable as opposed socially and morally necessary.[170] Sport, as we understand it, is fundamentally tied to the binary of winning and losing.

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[164] In popularly liberal terms, it still often is the case that while gender is accepted as a social construction, sex remains a biological characteristic. This dynamic is challenged through a critical appraisal of the development of gender science and the symbiotic relationship between gendered social norms and science in Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
[165] Ibid.
[166] Helena Tolvhed, 'Sex Dilemmas, Amazons and Cyborgs: Feminist Cultural Studies and Sport,' *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 5 (2013): 273–89.
[167] This is a mark of neoliberal feminism as noted in Holly Thorpe, Kim Toffoletti and Toni Bruce, 'Sportswomen and Social Media: Bringing Third-Wave Feminism, Postfeminism and Neoliberal Feminism into Conversation,' *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 41, no. 5 (2017): 359–83.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Elisabeth Prügl, 'Neoliberalising Feminism,' *New Political Economy* 20, no. 4 (2015): 614–31.
[170] For example, Kim Toffoletti has investigated how sexy female sports fans have become a viable economic proposition for sports marketers, see Kim Toffoletti, 'Sexy Women Sports Fans: Femininity, Sexuality and the Global Sport Spectacle,' *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 3 (2017): 457–72.

Commerce and media, however, intensify this binary by propelling the very best male and female athletes (or those that are marketable for other reasons) into the celebrity stardom.[171] The replacement of meaningful collective narratives with the celebrity cult is symptomatic of the current cultural and political moment, and it is largely this narrative that effectively captivates us and turns our gaze inwards as we look to better ourselves instead of bettering the society.

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'Natural' forces of the market are positioned as morally defensible by some in their ability to give us an increasingly high quality of sporting spectacle through well-paid athlete labour and well-equipped sporting facilities.[172] Such crude explanations are quick to abandon radical critiques of markets by pointing out that highly-paid sport celebrities who benefit from both their staggering wages and inflated sponsorship deals are not subjugated.[173] In instances like this, the socioeconomic dynamics of race are also bypassed, forgetting that the economic rewards of black athletic prowess are unequally distributed among capitalist overlords, athletes and those on whose unfulfilled ambitions this celebrity rests.[174] While the rewards may still be excessive, they come from the pursue of Western structures of capitalist-making, white dominance and colonial legacy.[175]

It is true that high profile athletes – male or female, black or white – cannot be simply seen as members of the subjugated proletariat. Nonetheless, as sports fans' social media feeds are populated with stories and images of successful celebrity-athletes elevating their appeal and, in turn, increasing their monetary value, it is worth remembering that these stories are inspiring at the expense of all of those who

[171] Sut Jhally, 'Cultural Studies and Sports-Media Complex,' in *The Spectacle of Accumulation: Essays in Culture, Media and Politics*, ed. Sut Jhally (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 140.
[172] Walsh and Giulianotti, *Sporting Mammon*.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 348.
[175] These and other subtilties of identity construction in relation to multiculturalism and race in English football are addressed in Les Back, Tim Crabbe and John Solomos, *The Changing Face of Football: Racism, Identity and Multiculture in the English Game* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

worked hard but did not make it to the top of the competitive elite sport. For example, in Australia, sport is a significant feature of the country's egalitarian mythology. Yet, empirical evidence easily dispels the myth and, additionally, shows that only on rare occasions sport is a means for climbing up the social ladder.[176] Instead, unfulfilled sporting aspirations too often rest on economic deprivation and a lack of alternative choices.[177]

To this end, this chapter has contextualised sport in its relationships to the key attributes of the social world. The attributes that are either expected from the subjects who form a society or evidently required for a formation of some social solidarity and, in turn, social grouping. Through a number of specific examples and theoretical lenses it has demonstrated how sport is exploited by – and embedded in – the present political economy in its flexible and transformable quest to continue the unquestionable hold on people's lives. The leitmotifs of bonding, empire, belonging and mediation used in this chapter exemplify the global trends that influence (if not underpin) local sports contexts. They also signify and conjoin problematic elements buoyant in the structures of sport and, therefore, are utilised in Part Two to illuminate the meeting points of personal stories and grand narratives. It is these meeting points that the following chapter interrogates through problematising narrative research and its capacity to productively uncover and question the intersections of personal passions and social structures.

[176] Jim McKay, *No Pain, No Gain? Sport and Australian Culture* (Harbord: Prentice Hall, 1991), 12.
[177] For example, the study of Irish youths in deprived communities indicated that teenage males see soccer as the only structured occupation to which they can aspire, see Mary Beth Gallagher, Judith Pettigrew and Orla Muldoon, 'Occupational Choice of Youth in a Disadvantaged Community,' *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 78, no. 10 (2015): 622–29.

Chapter 2 | Worlds of Passionate Stories: Enactment, Agency and Authorship

> We watch in the moment and we await that moment of moments when something extraordinary happens: a sudden burst of acceleration from a throw-in, a fast interchange between players, a defender slips, the attacking player jinks to the right, a space opens, a shot is fired and then there is a goal. A flare detonates somewhere in the stadium. Red smoke scatters over the heads of wildly jubilant fans. People – proper, grown-up, intelligent, thoughtful people, some of them with careers and deep into middle age and even beyond – kiss, high-five and hug each other in delight.
>
> — Simon Critchley [1]

In the gloomy world of 'enabled markets', sport continues to shimmer with moments of creative spontaneity and collective joy, reminding us that within the shackles of a master narrative raw and unrestrained human emotions, even if fleetingly, find ways to manifest.[2] The roar of a jubilant football crowd is conspicuously loud as it melds thousands of individual voices, expressions, sentiments and responses into a monolith of cultural and totemic symbolism.

Immediately, the roar is uplifting in its mechanical solidarity and communal promise.[3] Yet, on reflection this momentary bliss is most likely only fuelling the longevity of the neoliberal project, sport industry and its consumerist economy. Beyond the fusion of the roar, there is, however, a plurality of voices where each voice is an embodiment of a distinct creative engagement with the structures and symbols that make up the grand narrative. Each voice is also its own story narrated, negotiated and lived in relation to the big story. [4]

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[1] Simon Critchley, *What We Think about When We Think about Soccer?* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 26.
[2] 'Enabled markets' is a reference to the discussion in Chapter 1.
[3] 'Mechanical solidarity' alludes to Emilé Durkheim's distinction between mechanical and organic forms of solidarity, see Emilé Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, ed. Steven Lukes, trans. W. D. Halls (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984).
[4] On the interactivity of small and big stories in narrative research see Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 'Narrative Research?', 9.

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We tell stories to make sense of ourselves, our commonness, uniqueness and our place in the world.[5] Humans are both 'storytelling' and 'self-interpreting' animals, meaning that our ability to tell stories is not merely a condition of our livelihood but rather a tool for understanding the self and its environs.[6] This, of course, underscores the importance of story in our everyday lives and in the structures, which inform and condition those lives. From the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to Hollywood blockbusters – stories offer moral underpinnings that either align with (or become) conventions of the day.[7] The stories of great resonance and popularity are most likely governed by the culture and the historical moment which we find ourselves in. Turning inwards and above all else appealing to individual responsibility is one of the ways to survive and thrive in the age of ubiquitous markets; hence the popularity of stories of redemption, perseverance and individual success.

The consumerist culture turns commodity into a key attribute of identity construction, yet short-lived gratification provided by stylised material goods only works to further disintegrate an already unsettled modern self.[8] As new for-profit industries are created to resolve unsettled identities by promoting self-improvement and highlighting personal responsibility, questions of identity are once again outsourced to commodity, constraining the self and its fulfilment within the parameters of today's political economy. In other words, the self-help industry and its ever-widening variety of wholesale offerings designed to fill a gaping hole of meaning and purpose in our neoliberally conditioned lives in a long run only serves to perpetuate this condition, precisely because its prescribed solution to wide-spread societal problems both stops at the hands of an individual and produces more decadent commodities in already saturated consumer markets. In this cyclical

[5] Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).
[6] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 126. Charles Taylor, 'Self-Interpreting Animals,' in *Philosophical Papers V. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 45–76.
[7] Squire, 'Approaches to Narrative.'
[8] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 196-200.

dynamic, a story – an autobiography, in particular – is turned into yet another commodity that quietly takes society apart while proclaiming the key to a better life to be within an individual self.[9]

The lived individualisation is, also, exemplary in sport where individual stories have a propensity to become tools of common morality. *Unstoppable*, *Unbreakable*, *Running my Life*, *Running for my Life*, *Walk Alone*, *My Story* – these are a few recent titles of prominent athletes' autobiographies.[10] The narrativisation of a sporting career often takes a *rise-and-fall* trajectory where inborn talent, heroic accomplishments, public worshipping are dimmed by scandalous behaviour and waning glory and then later re-evoked through devices of redemption.[11] Yet, the quoted book titles, also, indicate that such fluctuating narrative arcs are spun inwards as if the key to these athletes' talents, successes, failures and redeeming moments lies in their innermost self.[12] The look inwards is the canon of genre, yet the proliferation of such texts is indicative of the present moment and its guiding principles, particularly in their extension to therapeutic and self-help solutions, where the authoring of self-narrative becomes a tool for gaining control and achieving one's full potential.[13]

A deficit of human face in the media's representation of the economy and the society only fuels the thesis of personal responsibility and the accompanying self-help

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[9] For example, Oprah Winfrey, the media mogul, is a capitalist storyteller whose narration is person-centred and hides political, economic and social realities, see Nicole Aschoff, *The New Prophets of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015). A more complex interrogation of Oprah's place in the neoliberal American culture is offered in Janice Peck, 'The Secret of Her Success: Oprah Winfrey and the Seductions of Self-Transformation,' *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, no. 1 (2010): 7–14.

[10] Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualisation: Institutionalised Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (London: Sage Publications, 2001); Đokić and Jess Halloran, *Unbreakable* (Sydney, NSW: Penguin Random House Australia, 2017); Maria Sharapova and Rich Cohen, *Unstoppable: My Life So Far* (London: Penguin Books, 2017); Sebastian Coe, *Running My Life: The Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012); Craig Johnston and Neil Jameson, *Walk Alone: The Craig Johnston Story* (Sydney: Collins Australia, 1989); Steven Gerrard and Donald McRae, *My Story* (London: Penguin, 2016).

[11] Garry Whannel, *Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and Moralities* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[12] Perceived intimacy that audiences have with their adored athletes is identified and discussed in David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson, 'Introduction: Sport Celebrities, Public Culture and Private Experience,' in *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, ed. David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson (London: Routledge, 2001), 1–19.

[13] Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 'Narrative Research,' 5. Recently hyper-commodified expressions of narrative therapy have also been promoted and utilised by celebrity academics – most notably, Jordon B. Peterson. This adds another layer of co-option to both narrative as a research technique and the corporatisation of academia.

economy while the void in public storytelling is filled with confessional redemptive narratives in popular media and scholarship.[14] This vacuous filler does not, however, mend the fracture between the individual and the society, but only helps to further divorce the two.[15] In other words, while the grand narrative of the society reduced a person to a figure and a moving part in the economy, the autobiographical story too often exclusively concentrated on the individual, insulating the self from the societal processes and the politics of the day.

As alluded to before, this rift has not been avoided in scholarship, where motifs of redemption and individual agency became an important analytical arsenal.[16] The neglect of relationality in academic varieties of storytelling, in many instances, arises from the inbuilt hierarchical structures in the production of such knowledge as well as from both assumed and actual lack of impact in its dissemination.[17]

Even if genuinely present, relationality is often clouded by the fixation on identity, which in its discursive implication often carries disconnectedness as opposed to connectedness.[18] Instead of an active acknowledgment and interrogation of the coincident necessity and impossibility of identity, personal stories are, at times, employed as evidence for known categories, theories and grand narratives.[19] Stuart Hall posits that identity is a 'meeting point' where transient attachments can find discursive expressions.[20] Yet, while these expressions allow multiplicity, the content of that plurality is subjected to the availability of discursive heuristics, which are frequently the known identifiers of class, gender, race, ethnicity and age. Their

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[14] Luke Temple et al., 'Neoliberal Narrative in Times of Economic Crisis: A Political Claims Analysis of the U.K. Press, 2007-14', *Politics and Policy* 44, no. 3 (2016): 553–76. Alexander Freund, 'Under Storytelling's Spell? Oral History in a Neoliberal Age,' *The Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (2015): 96–132.
[15] Freund, 'Under Storytelling's Spell.'
[16] Dan P. McAdams in his life narrative research has noticed a trend for middle-aged people to narrativise their lives along the trajectory of redemption. See Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). This analytical framework has been adopted by other narrative scholars as well. I do not dispute that many people may be primarily narrativising their lives in this way, but I argue that narratives like that should be analysed more closely in relation to their contexts.
[17] Some of these criticisms have been communicated in relation to oral history scholarship in Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method,' in *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics*, ed. Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies (London: Routledge, 2006), 392–484.
[18] Carol Smart, *Personal Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
[19] Both impossibility and necessity of identity is identified in Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs "Identity"?,' in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 1–17.
[20] Stuart Hall, 'Fantasy, Identity, Politics,' in *Cultural Remix: Theories of Politics and the Popular*, ed. Erica Carter and James Donald (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995), 65.

entrenched presence in people's vocabularies is an inevitable reality of storytelling, but, I argue, that it should not be central or guiding to our interpretative readings of people's stories and, in turn, our understandings of personal identities.

Narrative has an exceptional capacity to connect subjects, events, patterns, trends and, ultimately, agency and structure. Thus, if identity is a 'meeting point' of intersubjective discursive categories and subjective practices, then its discursive expression does not lie in discrete identifiers – be they multiple or intersecting. Instead, it lies in personal narratives unfolding amidst (and dialoguing with) material history, cultural legacies, political realities and narratives of others. Narrating personal stories is not about doing the impossible of seizing identities in lexicon and syntax but rather about capturing moments of ceaseless negotiation between sameness and uniqueness, temporality and continuity.[21]

Narrative identity is 'a certain temporary and precarious management of plurality and heterogeneity' – Martin Klepper suggested elaborating on Paul Ricoeur's notion of narrative as an alternate mode of identity mediation.[22] Narrative is a hermeneutic mode of expression and understanding which can meaningfully explain human action.[23] Narrative identity traverses both identity and storytelling and, as explained by Ricoeur, is not a mode of identity that dictates a narrative but a narrative plot in which the character of a human-subject can be intelligibly captured in its unfolding dynamism.[24] Here, a person's identity is neither defined nor definable, but is given an intelligible form in the act of narration, which transforms common identity dualities of uniformity/difference, constancy/change and structure/agency into 'dilemmatic spaces'.[25] In the narration of these dilemmas the question of who one is or would like to be is given a meaningful response.[26]

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[21] Paul Ricoeur, 'Narrative Identity,' *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (1991): 73–81.
[22] Martin Klepper, 'Introduction. Rethinking Narrative Identity: Persona and Perspective,' in *Rethinking Narrative Identity: Persona and Perspective*, ed. Claudia Holler and Martin Klepper (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), 1; Ricoeur, 'Narrative Identity.'
[23] Polkinghorne, *Narrative* Knowing, 145.
[24] Paul Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative,' in *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1991), 20–33.
[25] Bamberg, 'Who Am I?'
[26] Ibid.

Narratives and narrative identities are indisputably idiosyncratic and person-centred. This sensitivity to the particular and the circumstantial is, nonetheless, circumscribed by the structures of society and macro narratives. C. Wright Mills remarked that 'neither the life of an individual nor the history of society can be understood without understanding both' – these words paved the way for the person-to-world perspective in sociological thinking.[27]

Through committing to this simple sociological proposition, my research both aligns with personal sociology in the detail and nuance it affords to the lives of ordinary people and progresses its aims by positioning the relational necessity of these lives beyond immediate social interactions.[28] A person-to-world perspective does not imply that the subject has an unreserved control over their narrative and that individual agency is inhibited; instead, it underscores that the narrative unfolds and becomes meaningful in the subject's interaction with the world and its intersubjective reality.[29] In other words, the world and its material reality are only meaningfully palpable in relation to the subject and the subject's immediate experience.

The ongoing dialogue between the subject and the world is metaphorically replicated in my research methodology through a dialogic construction of unfolding and shifting personal narratives of sports fans, their passions and their lives. The dialogues between the six sports fans and myself both acknowledge and enact the self as dialogic, simultaneously separate from (and oriented to) the other and the world.[30] Dialogic dynamic permeates collaborative process beyond its immediate physical and discursive identity enactment and traverses memory and imagination in the dialoguers' reflections and ensuing expressions of the self.[31] In this dialogic immediacy, subjectivist essentialism and contrived faceless materialism are

[27] C. Wright Mills, *Sociological Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.
[28] Smart, *Personal Life*; Vanessa May, 'Introducing a Sociology of Personal Life,' in *Sociology of Personal Life*, ed. Vanessa May (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1–10.
[29] On dilemmatic spaces see Bamberg, 'Who Am I?'
[30] Hubert Hermans and Harry Kempen, *The Dialogical Self: Meaning as Movement* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001), 79.
[31] Ibid., 71.

transcended and sport and its passions are considered for what they are in the dialoguers' everyday lives.[32]

The polarity of essentialism and materialism does not wholly capture the full diversity of scholarship addressing sports fans and fandom, yet it signposts its deceptive ontological ruptures and its restrictive milieu. In the plethora of conversations on sports fans' motivations, experiences, cultures and identities, methodological and discursive divisions are evident; and yet clear points of alignment across the full spectrum of this scholarship throttle its epistemological plurality.[33]

The remainder of this chapter constructs a template for narrative research and charts its gamut of possibilities in managing plurality, which yield a multiplicity of meanings and interrogate lived contradictions.[34] It highlights the limits of existing scholarship on sports fans and fandom in relation to personal identity construction as outlined by Dan McAdams – a scholar who proposes narrative as an integrative theory of personality development.[35] I employ his tripartite personality model as a theoretical vessel, in which to order the existing body of knowledge in relation to the objectives of my empirical endeavour. In line with the model, I discuss key themes and concepts on sports fans and fandom regarding three stages of personality development: actor, agent and author.[36] Through this interrogation of top-down conceptions and large-scale theories, I put forward the case for dialogic narrativity in the study of sports fans.

[32] On the essentialist and materialist duopoly in sport scholarship see Gruneau, *Class, Sports and Social Development*, 2-26.
[33] This was discussed in Introduction.
[34] On contradictions in narrative see Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 'Narrative Research,' 2–3; in the same edited volume Squire posits that the same story is told differently each time: Squire, 'Approaches to Narrative.'
[35] McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[36] Ibid.

Enactment: Performing Passion

McAdam's tripartite personality model is founded on complex forms of human eusociality, which generate an apparent objective of social subjects: 'getting along and getting ahead'.[37] This unarguable fact that human beings live amongst each other is, however, founded on an even more indisputable truth that human beings feel things. While *feeling things* may be intrinsically experienced, handling those feelings (while living amongst others) inevitably becomes a social phenomenon.[38] The social world is a stage on which these internal feelings come to the surface: they are expressed and observed by social actors. Even newborn babies use emotional cues to express their inner feelings in ways that are intelligible to surrounding social actors, who observe – and react to – those cues.[39]

In line with Goffman's front stage and backstage analogy, McAdams elaborates that throughout our lives we develop more sophisticated ways to express emotional states that are tailored to the particularities of our socio-cultural encounters and in line with our own character and personality.[40] The reference to emotions is, however, not entirely lucid. As internal feelings become 'emotional displays' in a process of conversion from what is felt by one to what is intelligible to others, here emotions remain a dubious category of socially expressed intrinsic sensibilities.[41]

According to Thomas Dixon, 'emotions' are an overly inclusive and vague grouping.[42] It has been such since the nineteenth century when the emergence of psychology as a secular science erased the distinction between passions and affections.[43] This transition from the theological understanding of passions and affections to emotions

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[37] Ibid, 35.
[38] Ibid, 37.
[39] Ibid, 45.
[40] This is informed by Goffman's dramatic realisation and idealisation thesis see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990).
[41] McAdams, *Personality Development*, 45.
[42] Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of the Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[43] Ibid.

as a psychological category of bodily expressions and measurable behaviours demanded scientific inquiry and knowledge of human physiology, privileging hard over soft sciences in the domain of emotions.[44] This enshrined the necessity to observe and measure, which is also present in the foundations of McAdams's model where emotions are *performed* to express inner states and feelings such as joy, excitement, anger and sadness. Understanding emotions as neurological responses to physiological antecedents permeates much of the psychological discourse on cognitions and behaviour, where emotions are considered in relation to their activation, function and regulation.[45] It is, thus, not surprising that the conduct of sports fans, which unarguably involves emotionally driven behaviours, has also been psychologised within the parameters of emotion management.

In line with McAdams's social enactment dynamic, psychologically grounded theories of sports fans and their behaviours mostly operate as a transaction between inner feelings and their social expressions where an affinity for a sports team is expressed through measurable and observable behaviours, such as attending games or purchasing the supported team's merchandise.[46] This inner motivation is known as team identification – a concept that has by now become a *cul-de-sac* of psychologically grounded research on sports fandom. Sports fans' measurable levels of team identification are used to predict immediate behaviours and prolonged psychological states, ranging from particular narratives of believing in team curses to more general notions of social well-being.[47]

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[44] Smart, *Personal Life*, 54.
[45] Carroll Izard, 'The Many Meanings/Aspects of Emotion: Definitions, Functions, Activation and Regulation,' *Emotion Review* 2, no. 4 (2010): 363–70.
[46] E.g., Keith D. Parry, Ian Jones and Daniel L. Wann, 'An Examination of Sport Fandom in the United Kingdom: A Comparative Analysis of Fan Behaviours, Socialisation Processes and Team Identification,' *Journal of Sport Behaviour* 37, no. 3 (2014): 251–67; Masayuki Yoshida et al., 'Conceptualisation and Measurement of Fan Engagement: Empirical Evidence from a Professional Sport Context,' *Journal of Sport Management* 28 (2014): 399–417; Galen T. Trail, Dean F. Anderson and Janet S. Fink, 'Consumer Satisfaction and Identity Theory: A Model of Sport Spectator Conative Loyalty,' *Sports Marketing Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (2005): 98–111.
[47] Daniel L. Wann, Christi L. Ensor and Jaye K. Bilyeu, 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motives for Originally Following a Sport Team and Team Identification', *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 93, no. 2 (2001): 451–54; Audrey J. Murrell and Beth Dietz, 'Fan Support of Sport Teams: The Effect of a Common Group Identity.', *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* 14, no. 1 (1992): 28–39.

Since the 1990s, a number of inventories have been produced to measure sports fans' levels of team identification and comparable constructs, such as commitment and loyalty.[48] These methodological instruments have often combined behavioural and attitudinal measures, including intended time and financial commitment as well as expectations for the future team performances. They fixed sports fandom to a particular template and enabled a development of marketing theories to incentivise fans with lower levels of commitment; these theories focus on achieving higher behavioural loyalty in an absence of an attitudinal shift. [49] Such strategies, although extrapolated from context-specific samples, have become empirical generalisations, constructing theory and furthering inquiry without appreciating the diversity of circumstances in which identifications can be forged.[50]

Despite the self-identificatory premise of team identification, its analytical underpinning mostly rests on Henri Tajfel's social identity theory concerned with in/out-group dynamics.[51] While some analyse social interactions through Stryker's identity theory and make a distinction between personal and social identities in explicating sports fandom, socialisation in its different forms and expressions remains the most widely discussed causal story of becoming a fan of sport.[52] From the influence of family and close friends to one's local community and their nation state, micro and macro social environments are understood to condition people's

[48] Daniel F. Mahony, Robert Madrigal and Dennis Howard, 'Using the Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) Scale to Segment Sport Consumers Based on Loyalty,' *Sport Marketing Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (2000): 15–25; Daniel L. Wann and Nyla Branscombe, 'Sports Fans: Measuring Degree of Identification with Their Team,' *International Journal of Sport Psychology* 24, no. 1 (1993): 1–17.
[49] Mahony, Madrigal and Howard, 'Psychological Commitment.'
[50] For example, the following studies have used convenience samples of university students: Galen T. Trail et al., 'The Effects of Vicarious Achievement on BIRGing and CORFing: Testing Moderating and Mediating Effects of Team Identification,' *Sport Management Review* 15, no. 3 (2012): 345–54; Brendan Dwyer, Terry Eddy and Carrie W. LeCrom, 'Destined to Succeed? Team Identification and the Attributional Bias of NFL Fans,' *Journal of Sport Behaviour* 37, no. 4 (2014); Wann, Ensor and Bilyeu, 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motives.'
[51] Henri Tajfel, 'Social Categorisation, Social Identity and Social Comparison,' in *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Behaviour*, ed. Henri Tajfel (London: Academic Press, 1978), 61–76.
[52] Sheldon Stryker, 'Identity Salience and Role Performance: The Relevance of Symbolic Interaction Theory for Family Research,' *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 30, no. 4 (1968): 558–64. Distinction between fanship and fandom is noted in Stephen Reysen and Nyla R. Branscombe, 'Fanship and Fandom: Comparisons between Sport and Non-Sport Fans,' *Journal of Sport Behaviour* 33, no. 22 (2008): 176–93. Some caution against an 'over-socialised' image of a fan, see Peter Mewett and Kim Toffoletti, 'The Strength of Strong Ties: How Women Become Supporters of Australian Rules Football' (presentation, Annual Conference of the Australian Sociological Association, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, December 2–5, 2008.

support for particular sports teams and athletes. While there is an amplitude of modes in which socialisation is presented within the contexts of sports fandom formation, ranging from a strictly theoretical category to a family tradition passed on from generation to generation, it is a widely used theoretical heuristic which diminishes the need for further situational inquiry into sports fans' motivations at the formative stages of their commitment.[53]

Socialisation fits with the foundational supposition of McAdams's personality development model, where human beings are essentially striving 'to get along and get ahead' in their social worlds.[54] Indeed, the learning, internalising and the enacting of the norms and the habits of one's socio-cultural locus are key to being accepted within a particular social grouping. Therefore, supporting a sports team that is followed by your family, friends and other proximally located social actors can be seen as a social norm, compliance to which aids the task of getting along. This transactional trend is observed on familial, communal, regional and national social plateaus. For example, people keenly display their support for national sports teams as a mark of belonging and a badge of patriotism.[55] Similarly, but on a more consistent basis, social actors who are united by smaller geographical units, such as towns, cities and suburbs, come together to support their local sports teams and, in turn, foster a sense of belonging to a place and a community of people.[56]

This, of course, creates an in/out-group dynamic among different supporter communities that is strikingly underscored by the endeavour of competitive sports.

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[53] On socialisation from the perspective of marketers see Jeffrey D. James, 'Sport Fan Socialisation: Becoming Loyal to a Team,' in *Routledge Handbook of Theory in Sport Management*, ed. George B. Cunningham, Janet S. Fink and Alison Doherty (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 263–70; theoretical and qualitative studies in sports sociology often use socialisation as a theoretical heuristic, e.g., Richard Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs: A Taxonomy of Spectator Identities in Football,' *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 26, no. 1 (2002): 25–46; Pope, '"It's Just Such a Class Thing."'

[54] McAdams, *Personality Development*, 39.

[55] That sporting successes induce national pride is a widely agreed upon orthodoxy despite the complexities of pride as an emotional state, see Ivo van Hilvoorde, Agnes Elling and Ruud Stokvis, 'How to Influence National Pride? The Olympic Medal Index as a Unifying Narrative,' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 45, no. 1 (2010): 87–102.

[56] Links between sports teams and localities in the history of Australian sport are discussed in Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*; affection to a place in sporting context is discussed in John Bale, *Sports Geography*, 2nd Ed. (London: Routledge, 2003).

However, sports fandom presents a peculiar relationship among normally tightly connected concepts of social categorisation, social identity and social comparison.[57] Social categorisation underpins group formation and reinforces differences which sustain the in/out-group boundaries among fans of rival sports teams and inform individual fans' social identities. But, evaluations drawn from social comparison do not necessarily result in an active effort to part with the reflected social identity by becoming a member of a more socially elevated group (i.e., shifting their allegiance to a different team). Some fans attempt to boost their self-esteem by choosing to support historically successful teams, clubs or franchises.[58] Sporting success is, however, transient and even the steadiest performers experience periods of decline; and while, in instances like that, some actively engage in 'damage control' through practices known as 'cutting off reflected failure', others pride on their loyalty and unwavering allegiance in the face of crushing defeats.[59]

Behavioural and attitudinal research shows that those who possess high levels of team identification are unlikely to dissociate their identities and self-image from their supported teams even in testing times of sustained underachievement.[60] As regular patterns of impression management and social comparison take hold of fans with more fleeting levels of team identification, there is no reason to discount McAdams's social enactment dynamic.[61] Instead, the focus should be placed on the variation in these cyclical trajectories of self-expression.

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[57] Leon Festinger, 'A Theory of Social Comparison Processes,' *Human Relations* 7 (1954): 117–40; Tajfel, 'Social Categorisation, Social Identity and Social Comparison.'
[58] Robert B. Cialdini et al, 'Basking in Reflected Glory: Three (Football) Field Studies,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 34, no. 3 (1976): 366–75.
[59] Theories of BIRGing (basking in reflected glory) and CORFing (cutting off reflected failure) also point out that higher levels of team identification reduce the likelihood of CORF, see Daniel L. Wann and Nyla R. Branscombe, 'Die-Hard and Fair-Weather Fans: Effects of Identification on BIRGing and CORFing Tendencies,' *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 14, no. 2 (1990): 103–17; Hyungil H. Kwon, Galen T. Trail and Donghun Lee, 'The Effects of Vicarious Achievement and Team Identification on BIRGing and CORFing', Sport Marketing Quarterly 17, no. 4 (2008): 209–17.
[60] This essay written by a West Ham United fan reveals a divergent inner psychology of a soccer supporter: Sam Delaney, 'Match Made in Heaven,' *New Humanist* 126, no. 5 (2011): 30–33.
[61] McAdams, *Personality Development*.

Social enactment is foundational to human eusociality; it is an in-born social reflex which morphs into more complicated choreographies as part of growing up.[62] The added complexity arises from unique way of fashioning self-expression in relation to one's temperament and contextual reality.[63] Sensitivity to particularities of any given socio-cultural context means that our instinctive eusociality is also contingent on our long-term plans, their contextual situatedness and life-course implications. Increased sensitivity to the social and cultural surroundings marks a development of agency; whereby social actors expand a level of control over their social reflexes and promote their impromptu performances into scripted plays.[64]

Agency: Customising Passion

Contemporary spectator sport is a hegemony of both imperialism and masculinity, and thus it unavoidably creates a context in which certain forms of enactment of internalised team identification are deemed authentic while simultaneously being restricted to particular groups of social actors based on their class, gender, ethnicity and race. For example, a permanent tattoo is an appropriate expression of soccer allegiance in a traditional English working-class community.[65] Conversely, an Asian-American female would be much less likely to use such an expression in support of an ice-hockey team in the NHL.[66] In fact, even if she externalised her support through a more contextually fitting means, such as wearing a team jersey, her commitment may still be doubted.[67] The two expressions are not only contingent on their cultural context, but also dependent on the personal constructions and social navigations of the two human agents concerned.[68]

Contextual variations in sports fandom scenarios and, in turn, appropriate scripts for performing or expressing a sports fan identity across those differing settings

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs'
[66] Anne C. Osborne and Danielle Sarver Coombs, 'Performative Sport Fandom: An Approach to Retheorising Sport Fans', *Sport in Society* 16, no. 5 (2013): 672–81.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

question external validity of measurable variables, such as team identification and psychological commitment. Indeed, an appropriate form of outward expression as well as attitudinal dispositions vary across context, time and place. Contexts and scripts demarcated by a particular sport, game or team are then further fragmented by the familiar divides of old and new; traditional and emerging; committed and opportunistic, which perpetuate the idea of an authentic fandom and, in turn, an authentic self.[69]

Despite a more common acceptance of diversity among sports fandom expressions, much of academic inquiry either explicitly or implicitly retains contextually accepted ideal type of fan often shaped by racial, ethnic and gender hegemonies. Even the scholarship that aims to uncover the sidelining of particular demographic groups often actively promotes notions of inclusivity that way preserving as opposed to undoing restrictive and prescriptive understandings of sports fans' identities and collectivities.[70]

It is not possible to circumvent socially deep-rooted identity categories: beyond being simply entrenched in our everyday vocabularies, they present a starting point in understanding both divisions and alliances among peoples, persons and stories.[71] The trappings of social identity paradigm, however, insist on a degree of uniformity amongst fans that share an object of their adoration and support. This neglects (or at least sidesteps) private fandom experience as self-identifications are required to be socially expressed.

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[69] A historical emergence of the binary between 'traditional' and 'new' fan in English football is outlined in Carlton Brick, 'Taking Offence: Modern Moralities and The Perception of the Football Fan,' *Soccer & Society* 1, no. 1 (2000): 158–72; these binaries and their perpetuation in scholarly work have been since problematised, e.g., Crawford, *Consuming Sport*; Sandvoss, *Game of Two Halves*; these revised conceptualisations most often fixate on either consumption or media, see Williams, 'Rethinking Sports Fandom.'

[70] E.g., Aarti Ratna, '"Who Are Ya?" The National Identities and Belongings of British Asian Football Fans,' *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 3 (2014): 286–308.

[71] Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?'

Team identification like any other form of self-identification is an inner commitment which exists without being socially affirmed.[72] It may be an internalisation of social group identity, but equally it can be a 'feeling at home' and a personally anchoring sense of safety.[73] To underscore the autonomy of a fan's private experiences, Reysen and Branscombe make a strict distinction between fanship as an identification with the object of interest and fandom as an identification with others who share that same object of concern.[74] Although arbitrary distinctions between unavoidably porous phenomena are not always helpful, in this case drawing (be it) an arbitrary line between private and social reclaims agency of sports fans.

The decentring of external categorisation does not submit to agency.[75] Instead, it merely suggests that sports fans enjoy a human capacity to act with considered intent which extends beyond bodily drives and social controls.[76] In other words, agency simply reintroduces a sense of sovereignty to a person and a decision-making power in the unfolding of their life cycle.[77] Psychologists observe that as children reach the age of around five to seven, they start to plan beyond their immediate futures, developing goals and projects that are no longer simply reactions to cues and, therefore, cannot be instantly fulfilled or discontented.[78] This ability to strategically project into the future is a layer of personality that has some control over the social actor – the agency.[79] While we continue to be entangled in the causal chains of social identity formation and impression management, our agentic capacity allows us some oversight and control over this otherwise reflexive predicament.

Research into sports fans and fandom that aims to measure conceptually operationalised variables predictably disregard agency and scrutinise fans' practices

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[72] Daniel Lock and Bob Heere, 'Identity Crisis: A Theoretical Analysis of "Team Identification" Research,' *European Sport Management Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (2017): 413–435.
[73] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Politics of Belonging*, 10.
[74] Reysen and Branscombe, 'Fanship and Fandom.'
[75] Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?', 2.
[76] Charles Taylor, 'What Is Human Agency?,' in *Human Agency and Language. Philosophical Papers Vol. 1* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15–45.
[77] Patrick Haggard and Manos Tsakiris, 'The Experience of Agency: Feelings, Judgments and Responsibility,' *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18, no. 4 (2009): 242–46.
[78] McAdams, *Personality Development*, 139-148.
[79] Ibid.

strictly within the role of a social actor. The narrow lens of such positivist understandings often extends to their interpretivist counterparts. For example, it is not uncommon for progressively minded commentators and researchers to either directly or indirectly appropriate the famous Marxist view of religion being 'the opium of the people' to sport and its fandom expressions.[80] These appropriations do vary in their form and content, but the most potent argument, which insidiously finds its way into scholarly work, favours physical activity and sees sports spectatorship as a chief distraction from the 'real issues'.[81] In popular discourse, such arguments usually have a classist undercurrent: most entertainment is considered to be a pastime, a mental diversion or a temporary escape, and yet it is highly unlikely for similar sentiments to be simultaneously applied to music, theatre, fine art or dance.[82]

Despite the shared elements across the spectrum of cultural pastimes (not least the essentialism of play), class and other intersecting presumptions relegate spectator sport to an irrational appetite as opposed to an expertise-driven interest.[83] Equally, some admirers and followers in the spheres of low cultural standing, for example media and mass entertainment, engage in classifications of style and form that simulate the divisions of high and low culture within the singularity of their object of interest.[84] Although the casual use of classist arguments continue to enter some conversations, the economic capacity of mass entertainment decentres the alignment of class and culture.[85]

In a culture premised on economy, very few cultural expressions are ideologically challenging as opposed to ideologically subservient. By the same token, while the

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[80] Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegels Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 131.
[81] Many attribute mental diversion to experiences of sports spectatorship, e.g., Stephen J. Grove, Michael J. Dorsch and Christopher D. Hopkins, 'Assessing the Longitudinal Robustness of Spectators' Perceptions of the Functions of Sport: Implications for Sport Marketers', *The Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 20, no. 1 (2012): 23–38; Daniel C. Funk et al., 'Measuring the Motives of Sport Event Attendance: Bridging the Academic–Practitioner Divide to Understanding Behaviour', *Sport Marketing Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (2009): 126–38.
[82] This also aligns with the inclusiveness and breadth of Schechner's Performance Theory pointing to the synchronic underpinnings of play, art and rituals, see Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988).
[83] Joli Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterisation,' in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 19.
[84] Fiske, 'Cultural Economy of Fandom,' 36.
[85] Ibid, 31.

ownership of competitive, elite, organised sports lies in the hands of media and business overloads, who give us many reasons to view sports spectatorship strictly within the boundaries of a contemporary 'opium of the people', sport in its socially, culturally and arbitrarily contrived cosmos continues to serve up unscripted moments of contestation surrounding race, gender, politics and cultural hegemony.[86] These critical openings promote otherwise neglected issues to the popular discourse and offer ample opportunity for semiotic and enunciative productivity which contrasts with the dominant representations and, in turn, aids personally tailored expressions of identity.[87]

Despite clear intersections of 'real issues' and spectator sport, common representations of spectators and fans continue to deny their agency. Emotional public displays of sports fans have been historically pathologised through seemingly innocuous and yet purposely affective reporting of sporting events. Words with pathological connotations, such as 'crank', 'barracker' and 'fever', first appeared in the popular Australian, North American and British print media as early as the late 1800s and were used to underscore unusually emotive expressions and behaviours of sports crowds.[88] Comparable labels and epithets continue to populate sports pages and broadcasts to this day. As they insidiously underscore emotional and hence irrational excesses of sports fans, scholarship of an open-ended leaning too often sidelines emotional engagement of fans to either the temporality of Bakhtinian carnival or the liminality of communitas.[89]

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[86] E.g., Black Power Salute at the Mexico City Olympics in 1968, the sacking of Maria José Martínez-Patiño from the Spanish Olympic Team following a failed gender verification test in 1986, more recently Colin Kaepernick's *Take the Knee* protest and the controversies that ensued, including Kaepernick's lucrative *Nike* deal.

[87] On semiotic and enunciative productivity see Fiske, 'Cultural Economy of Fandom'; Kristina Busse and Jonathan Gray, 'Fan Cultures and Fan Communities,' in *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, ed. Virginia Nightingale (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 425–43.

[88] Matthew Klugman, 'The Passionate, Pathologised Bodies of Sports Fans: How the Digital Turn Might Facilitate a New Cultural History of Modern Spectator Sports,' *Journal of Sport History* 44, no. 2 (2017): 306–21.

[89] See examples of a few ethnographic investigations that use either liminality or carnival as their central theoretical framework: Christian Derbaix and Alain Decrop, 'Colours and Scarves: An Ethnographic Account of Football Fans and Their Paraphernalia,' *Leisure Studies* 30, no. 3 (2011): 271–91; Davide Sterchele and Chantal Saint-Blancat, 'Keeping It Liminal. The Mondiali Antirazzisti (Anti-Racist World Cup) as a Multifocal Interaction Ritual,' *Leisure Studies* 34, no. 2 (2015): 182–96; Pearson, *Ethnography of English Football Fans*.

The latter theoretical constructs are regularly deployed to bypass the complexity of origin, practice and consequence of sports fans' emotional excesses. In their varying façades, these theoretical heuristics are used to either purposely or inadvertently discount fans' experiences as temporary deviations from the ordinary. This evades the urgency to contextualise and once again strips sports fans of agency. The reluctance to take a deep empirical dive into fans' emotional encounters is afforded by the earlier noted wholesale simplification of emotions, which is exemplified by the diversity of states, desires, feelings and sentiments being attributed to a single category.[90] As remarked earlier, Thomas Dixon argues that this diversity of both mental and physical phenomena was reified into a category of emotions by the scientific discipline of psychology in its departure from theological thought and tradition.[91] It is, therefore, curious that in the case of sports fans, empirical analyses of emotions consistently halt at allusions to liminality – a phenomenon originally termed by Victor Turner as a bridging moment in a ritual or a religious rite that provides a temporary break from social norms and momentarily extends the limits of the ordinary.[92]

The assumed irrationality of emotions prevents meticulous inquiry into fans experiences as long-term events and instead focuses on momentarily physiologically manifest and, hence, observable episodes. This is a pervasive issue in scientific psychology, more broadly, where emotions are operationalised into measurable and, therefore, researchable variables through their physically discernible forms. Yet, everyone who has ever felt angry, sad or happy knows that in those moments their moods and feelings are not confined to physiological cues. They are also not outright irrational. Emotional reactions are always preceded and succeeded by something – events unfolding in material time and space. Understanding the before and the after demystifies emotions by shedding light beyond what is immediately evident. To this end, our tools and data are restricted to linguistic devices, discursive constructions

[90] Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

and social interactions.[93] While an emotion may only be 'that immediate contact with the world', its cause, effect and proximate and consequent value can only be revealed in a narrative description.[94]

Disallowing agency means submitting to categorical abstractions and far-reaching generalisations – something that sports spectatorship scholarship has done plenty of by way of segmenting and typologising. The crowded and contested space of today's political economy limits the exercise of agency. And yet, sport is a part of life for many of us; it somehow fits within our goals, motivations and long-term projects.

The diversity of expressions and engagements that exists even within the limited space of contemporary elite organised sport and its spectatorship is vast and point to agentic choices. Thus, furthering our understandings of sports fans and fandom requires transcending prescribed strategies of inquiry, fixed vocabularies and their agreed upon meanings.[95] In line with approaches of personal sociology and narrative research, it demands complexity in depicting emotional worlds of fans and their fandom trajectories.[96]

Authorship: Authoring a Life of Passion

The place of agency in narrative is contested. For some agency does not reside in narrative while for others it is through narrative that both agency and personal identity take shape.[97] Narrative allows a contextual residency for an individual agency via the idiosyncratic understanding of experience. Social actors react and enact in the present while agents have a capacity to look to the future and make choices in relation to their life cycle. Yet, the overlapping trajectories of the two

[93] Rom Harré, 'An Outline of the Social Construction Viewpoint,' in *The Social Construction of Emotions*, ed. Rom Harré (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 5-6.
[94] Jack Barbalet, 'Introduction: Why Emotions Are Crucial?,' in *Emotions and Sociology*, ed. Jack Barbalet (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 1.
[95] Mark Nesti, 'Sport Psychology and Spirit in Professional Football,' in *Theology, Ethics and Transcendence in Sport*, ed. Jim Parry, Mark Nesti and Nick Watson (London: Routledge, 2011), 160.
[96] Smart, *Personal Life*, 61-87.
[97] Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 'Narrative Research,' 8.

maintain ignorance to the past until, according to McAdams, the third and final tier of personality starts to form gradually overlaying the actor-agent dynamic.[98]

McAdams suggests that as human agents reach late adolescence, they start to seriously and meticulously grapple with who they are and actively construct their personal identities.[99] From late adolescence to early adulthood, the contextual realities of young westerners throw many new, challenging and testing experiences at them, creating new contexts in which to perform social roles and exercise their agency.[100] It is at this juncture that people start to selectively reflect on their past tying it with their *here-and-now* and their projected futures and, consequently, emploting themselves into a particular narrative. Indeed, this is when we become authors of our own personalities and our own narrative identities. This is not to say that a particular narrative defines us, but that we define ourselves in narrative.[101] We make sense of who we are, what we have done and what we plan to do through a telling of a coherent life story.[102]

Coherence does not mean permanence, stability, or singularity. Instead, it is a way to organise – and make sense of – change, contradiction, plurality and incoherence.[103] It is also a way of challenging the lineage of time and understanding the self as constructed by the past, in the present and for the future.[104] While a person's life story may be a single narrative at a glance, it is a whole of many parts, grounded in experience, social interaction, reflection, but, most importantly, in our ability to tell stories.

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[98] McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[99] Ibid.
[100] 'Young westerns' alludes to the divergent life patterns in the Global North and the Global South due to colonial legacies and/or neo-colonial conditioning.
[101] This goes back to the argument made earlier in this chapter: narrative is only a momentary snapshot of plurality and complexity of identity, see Klepper, 'Rethinking Narrative Identity.'
[102] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: International University Press, 1959).
[103] On bringing contradictions into an effective whole see Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 'Narrative Research,' 2.
[104] Paul Cobley, *Narrative*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 15-19.

According to Jerome Bruner, narrative is a way of organising lived realities and making sense of fleeting lived episodes.[105] In other words, the narrative structure gives sense to our social encounters, interactions and experiences, implicating storytelling in most aspects of our social and private being.[106] While a life story is a way for a human-subject to connect their past, present and future, narratives are also key to human interactivity of the everyday. Some make a distinction between big stories that inform lived personal identities and small stories that are at work in episodic social exchanges.[107] The two are, however, intertwined in their construction and in the human ability and proclivity to narrate.

Interactivity between big and small stories is displayed and, at times, implicitly interrogated in some of the more innovative experience-grounded research on sports fandom. For example, many topically positioned interview-based studies display some episodic interaction between the two in their interrogation of personal accounts in relation to class and gender.[108] Surpassing the fragmented storytelling of a conventional research interview, some have employed the aca-fandom intent of fan studies in their autoethnographic portrayals of lived sports fandom experiences.[109] These methodologically dissenting accounts, unfortunately, confine rich narrative data to prescriptive theoretical conceptions, including theories of socialisation and obsessive passions; which, at times, further limit these data to positivist scaling and measurement of human experience.[110]

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[105] Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 120–3.
[106] Ibid, 59-65.
[107] Bamberg, 'Who Am I?', 16.
[108] E.g., Melissa Walsh, 'Club Identity/Class Identity: Negotiations of Popular Memory by Followers of the Australian Football League,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 13 (2015): 1593–1610; Stacey Pope, '"Like Pulling down Durham Cathedral and Building a Brothel:" Women as "New Consumer" Fans?,' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 46, no. 4 (2011): 471–87.
[109] Aca-fandom – a concept popularised by the two most prominent scholars in fan studies – Henry Jenkins with his seminal book *Textual Poachers* and Matt Hills with his equally important contribution, *Fan Cultures*. It represents a softer and more honest academic entry point to studying media fans where scholars openly disclose and interrogate their own fan identities, often by way of autoethnography. Aca-fandom by now has become its own tradition and method. Nevertheless, the implied use of autoethnography is confused in its process and data. For example, Matt Hills approaches autoethnography as a cultural critique of his own fandom as opposed to an ethnographic narrative grounded in personal stories and lived experiences, see Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 71-89. Having attended several academic conferences on fan studies, I have observed a slapdash engagement with an autoethnographic method, mostly in name only.
[110] On obsessive passion see Keith D. Parry, 'Game of Two Passions: A Football Fan's Autoethnography,' *Qualitative Research Journal* 12, no. 2 (2012): 238–50; on socialisation see Jorge Knijnik, 'Feeling at Home: An Autoethnographic Account of an Immigrant Football Fan in Western Sydney,' *Leisure Studies* 34, no. March (2014):

While these self-reflective accounts most probably unwittingly tie in with the self-theorising tendencies of aca-fandom and, in turn, the often-self-serving use of autoethnography in fan studies, they also offer a hyperbolic image of the predicament of descriptive experience-grounded data across sports fandom scholarship. Indeed, there are ample descriptive accounts in the field that offer a deep understanding of a variety of issues and processes within the cultures of sports fandom pertaining to class, gender and masculinity. These accounts often highlight changing sports spectatorship cultures and, hence, the need to rethink binary understandings still pervasive in the field.[111] This trend of research based on genuine regard for lived experiences is a positive development, providing much needed nuance and plurality on female fandom, ultras and fan activism.[112] It has also complimented existing theory by accounting for changeability across the life span and diversity of everyday practices.[113]

These useful endeavours have opened the field to new insights beyond measurable variables and restrictive taxonomies as well as afforded more palpable intersections with the cultural studies paradigm of fan studies. Yet, the pre-existent categories foreclosed otherwise inductive opportunities to both define sports fandom in the words of fans and to directly grapple with what sports passions are and the place they occupy in a life of a person-in-society. More than quarter of a century ago the media scholar, Joli Jenson, wrote:

> I believe what it means to be a fan should be explored in relation to the larger question of what it means to desire, cherish, seek, long, admire, envy, celebrate, protect, ally with others. Fandom is an aspect of how we make sense of the world, in relation to mass media and in relation to our historical, social, cultural location. Thinking well about fans and fandom

34–41. In the case of Parry's autoethnographic exploration, the analysis is confined to Vallerand's theory on obsessive and harmonious passions which was empirically verified by survey studies with large student samples Robert J. Vallerand et al., 'Les Passions de l'Ame: On Obsessive and Harmonious Passion,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85, no. 4 (2003): 756–67.

[111] Williams, 'Rethinking Sports Fandom.'

[112] Kim Toffoletti, *Women Sports Fans: Identification, Participation, Representation* (London: Routledge, 2017); Mark Doidge and Martin Lieser, 'The Importance of Research on the Ultras: Introduction,' *Sport in Society* 21, no. 6 (2018): 833–40; Dino Numerato, *Football Fans Activism and Social Change* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

[113] Crawford, *Consuming Sport*, 103-53.

> can help us think more fully and respectfully about what it means today to be alive and to be human.[114]

Jenson's remark is forthright in its contextualisation of fandom as being within the contemporary human condition. It may seem evident, and yet most scholarly inquiry into sports fans has overwhelmingly neglected this positionality and has not actively sought to join the dots among being a fan, being a human and living in the world today. To me, Jenson's words resonate in their emphasis on the interactivity between emotions and sense-making; individual and the society; past and present; and, ultimately, small and big stories.

In fact, these interactivities have been evident in a number of autobiographical accounts of sports fans, which, in the absence of celebrity narrativities, view personal lives in the context of history, society and their moving trajectories.[115] For example, Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch*, St. John Warrens's *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer* and Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Wait till Next Year* put forward new vocabulary and afford new meanings to theoretically contrived lexicon.[116] They yield person-to-world perspective, ensuring narrator's agency and authority over the content, form and style of their story; but, more importantly, they present a convergence of personal narrative and history, which challenges the linear time and brings the past to the present.[117] Narrative emplotment affords a dynamic understanding of time through symbols and intersubjective meanings.[118]

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[114] Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology,'26–7.
[115] Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf, 'Introduction: The Biographical Turn,' in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Sciences: Comparative Issues and Examples*, ed. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf (London: Routledge, 2000), 1–30.
[116] Mark Nesti has indicated the rift between scholarly terminology on fans and fans' own lexicon as curious and warranting further inquiry, see Nesti, 'Sport Psychology and Spirit in Professional Football, 149–60; examples of autobiographies include Hornby, *Fever Pitch*; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Wait till Next Year: A Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Warren St. John, *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer: A Journey into the Heart of Fan Mania* (New York: Random House, 2004).
[117] Bamberg, 'Who Am I?'; Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 86.
[118] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol 1.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 54-55.

The same story can be told in a variety of divergent ways and always takes on a new shape when retold.[119] In other words, stories are told with the listener in mind; this highlights the evident relationality of storytelling and people's lived identities. Furthermore, the co-constructive reality of such a dialogue also manifests in relation to time, place and social context. In dialogical narration, these contingencies can be both intersubjective and subjective as dialoguers lay bare their subjectivities selectively. Therefore, when using dialogue as a research tool, selectivity that is at play in the synthesis of intersubjective context and personal subjectivities requires careful attention.[120]

Collaboration: Authoring in Dialogue

McAdams lays the tripartite personality model on the inherent human eusociality – a form of social organisation that is not unique to our species. Nonetheless, complexities observed in human forms of eusocial organisation are unparalleled. These intricacies are available due to shared intentionality and language, both of which are critical to narrative. They facilitate the ability of narrative to present people's lives in their contextual complexities, ongoing evolvement, personal reflections and unintentional incoherence.[121] Stories are not only narrated through language, but they emerge and are constructed in language – a process that is both shared and collaborative in its motivation and intent.[122]

Stories and storytelling are inherently social in both their structure and their practice.[123] Stories are always narrated to social beings either imagined or real, creating intertextuality between narratives of the teller and the listener and their narrative identities.[124] Researching narratives and with narratives is a process layered with different intertextualities and other interactivities. The types of layers depend

[119] Squire, 'Approaches to Narrative', 2.
[120] Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 'Narrative Research,' 6-7.
[121] McAdams, *Personality Development*, 20-22.
[122] Michael Tomasello et al., 'Understanding and Sharing Intentions: The Origins of Cultural Cognition,' *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* 28, no. 5 (2005): 675–735.
[123] Squire, 'Approaches to Narrative,' 5.
[124] Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative.', 26.

on the procedural steps and, therefore, can vary considerably. Nonetheless, for a story to be used as 'data' it needs to be told or constructed, and it is over the course of this that the story evolves, changes and is authored (or affected) by a diversity of subjects and objects. The simplest way to understand the process of narrative reconfiguration is through the practice of reading, which is at the core of narrative research: either hearing or reading transfers texts from their authors to their listeners and readers and opens them up to a multitude of interpretations, whose validity is created through thorough argumentation as opposed to empirical verification.[125] Hence, in an undertaking of narrative data collection, the 'collected' stories are altered even prior to their analysis. The choice here lies with the researcher whether to reconfigure the stories in collaboration with their immediate author – the teller – or in isolation and under the guise of rigorous research.[126]

Michael Frisch distinguishes between 'shared authority' and 'sharing authority' in oral history scholarship by underscoring an inherent collaborative nature of interview-based research.[127] In this division, 'shared authority' is simply an unquestionable reality that needs to be recognised and interrogated whereas 'sharing authority' is a conscious decision and an active engagement in a collaborative practice of research.[128] Dialogue is central to my methodological praxis: it accentuates an inherent sociality of narrative and the collaborative nature of the process. Here, the storytelling occurs amidst conversational flow, shaping and affecting emergent storylines, that bring both dialoguers – 'the researcher' and 'the researched' – into a process of narrative construction and make it actively shared and openly collaborative.

Each collaboration, presented in this thesis, followed a comparable trajectory, starting with an initial contact, rapport building and arranging an introductory interview which then facilitated further follow-up conversations. The initial

[125] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 175-6.
[126] Squire, 'Approaches to Narrative', 14.
[127] Michael Frisch, 'Sharing Authority: Oral History and the Collaborative Process,' *Oral History Association Commentary* 30, no. 1 (2016): 103–10.
[128] Ibid.

conversation, loosely termed as a biographical interview, inquired about the fans' first recollection of their supported sports and/or teams leaving the space for each contributor to shape the discursive exchange from thereon in. In some cases, this required further probing that pertained to the chronology of their narrative and the causal stories surrounding their choices whereas other conversations were more free-flowing and only needed minimal probing. The initial conversations followed some tropes of biographical interviewing where periods of narration were succeeded by questions relating to topics and events that had been previously mentioned but given little attention.[129] The integrity of the canon was, however, supplanted by the collaborative inevitability of interviewing, which delivered procedural differences among the six collaborations.[130] In a similar vein, storytelling at times brought up restrictive identity categories, concerning gender, ethnicity and class. They were, therefore, interrogated in their discursively normative expressions or problematised implicitly through the unfolding of narrative.

The successive conversations, similarly, followed both my predetermined agenda in asking questions that my analysis and narrative drafting required but also left the space for the contributors to introduce new topics or reflect on the past events that the initial conversation had not accounted for. In most instances biographical and follow-up conversations yielded sufficient amount of transcript to write up a near-complete draft of a relevant narrative chapter, which then facilitated another audio-recorded meeting and discursive exchange with the contributor in question; as part of which I read the relevant draft (or excerpts from it) out loud, asking the contributor to either formulate their response or reflect further on the issue at hand. In some cases, these discursive exchanges facilitated important additions to the narrative chapters and allowed me to reconsider my analytical devices and frames of inquiry.

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[129] Gabriele Rosenthal, 'Reconstruction of Life Stories: Principles of Selection in Generating Stories for Narrative Biographical Interviews,' *in The Narrative Study of Lives vol. 1*, ed. Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 59–91.
[130] Elliot Mishler, *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 52–65.

Despite the replicable procedural steps, each collaboration developed differently and had distinct character owing to my differing positionality to each contributor.[131] Similarly, some collaborators were more inclined to follow narrative trajectories and were immediately open to sharing small stories pertaining to their fandom experiences while others were comfortable to engage in self-theorising. Particularly explicit forms of self-theorising discourse that appealed to intersubjective standards of argumentation are denoted as *paradigmatic expressions* across the life narratives, and explicit instances of episodic storytelling – as *small stories*.[132]

Each recorded conversation lasted between an hour and two hours (in some cases longer), amounting to five to eight hours of audio-recordings and, on average, forty thousand words of transcript for each contributor. Besides the total of thirty-eight hours of recorded conversations, some collaborations also involved email, Facebook messenger exchanges, and phone conversations that contributed to the chapters either directly or indirectly. (All recorded conversations are indicated in the footnotes at the start of each narrative chapter.) I also kept a research diary, which was primarily made up of my reflections on my encounters with the contributors. The normally distinct research steps of data collection and analysis, in this case, were designed to overlap. This meant that my own writing was an integral part of the process; it often shaped follow-up conversations, which, in turn, guided and enriched my continuously evolving drafts of the collaborators' stories.

Amidst this collaborative practice, layers of storytelling are intertwined with dialogues and authorship that are respectively occurring and are being exercised on a number of plateaus. In its immediacy, collaborative practice is a conversational dialogue – a data collection method that conventional academic wisdom denotes as a research interview, where the researcher questions the researched. However, in my

[131] This is commented on in the introductory notes that precede each narrative chapter (Chapter 3–8).
[132] The term 'paradigmatic expression' is borrowed from McAdams, *Personality Development*, 241; McAdams distinction between paradigmatic expression and narrative is, in turn, built on what Jerome Bruner defines as a type of thinking and communication that is anchored in (aspires to) mathematical form of explanation, see Jerome Bruner, *Actual Mind, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 12-13. Small story is discussed above in this chapter.

collaborative research practice, the interview label is only applicable so long as it denotes a 'form of discourse' and does not imply any other particularities either communicative or behavioural.[133]

These dialogically constructed discourses are contextually rich and, as a result, facilitate interpretative and multilayered individual accounts that illuminate personal realities of the six sports fans and offer an understanding of how these people engage in their fandom and the cultural and social narratives that underpin it. By way of dialogue and within a template of narrative, the personal realities of the six contributors are described richly and meaningfully, offering theoretical analysis while also retaining the authenticity of their language.

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Dissecting existing body of knowledge on fans in relation to the stages of personality development disclosed different levels of concern that are at play when thinking about sports fans and fandom. In the range spanning from reflexive identifications and their performative presentations to the fandom realities entangled in personal biographies, methodological scope appears to be diverse, yet empirical theorisation is rather uniform. There are differences in disciplines, forms, styles, frames of analysis and application, but besides a few exceptions, there is a lack of aspiration to tackle questions directly relevant to the lives of sports fans as opposed to momentary experiences, reflections on cultural transitions, reactions to stimuli and group identities.

Amidst this broad-stroke theoretical synchrony, the personality stages present the necessary ingredients for meticulous scrutiny of the lives of sports fans which join nominal identifications with lived experiences, life trajectories and interpretative sense-making. The addition of collaboration not only acknowledges relationality of personal identities even in the face of pervasive individualisation but also connects

[133] Mishler, *Research Interviewing*.

the micro and macro levels of analysis in its commitment to illuminate the relationship between personal stories and grand narratives.

Dialogical premise of this research is implicated in the object and subject dynamic, whereby exclusivity of both objectivity and subjectivity are implausible.[134] Neither the research practice (outlined above) nor the lives of six sports fans written about in the following chapters occur in their singular realities safeguarded from interaction with the world and its cultural, social and economic actualities. Instead of espousing to either objective deduction or subjectively rich description, the research practice and the narrative chapters illuminate the interactivity between the two. The narratives of fans present their discursively constructed realities at the intersection with culture, politics and history.

[134] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

PART TWO | Sports Passions in Discourse: Dialogues, Theories and Stories

Many social and political commentators pontificate on the centrality of sport in Australian identity.[1] The idea that this settler-colonial nation is somehow uniquely or at least exceptionally sport-mad is prevalent in popular and academic discourses.[2] Some scholarship challenges this view pointing to both negative aspects of Australian sport and its fragmentation.[3] For example, David Rowe posits that the unity purported by the official narrative of Australian sport, endorsed and embraced by the Government, can be easily disrupted at the intersection of national and popular cultures.[4] It is also not sustainable in a multicultural society like Australia.[5] That said, while Rowe challenges uncritical narratives of sport as an important element of Australian national identity adopted by the Commonwealth Government, he defines people's multicultural experiences through their connections to different nation states, which assumes a degree of cultural autonomy and, in turn, foreshadows nation state and national identity as indisputable materialities of the past, the present and, most significantly, the future.[6]

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[1] This common cliché is openly acknowledged in Chris Hallinan and John Hughson, 'The Beautiful Game in Howard's "Brutopia": Football, Ethnicity and Citizenship in Australia,' *Soccer & Society* 10, no. 1 (2009): 1.
[2] Cashman, *Sport in the National Imagination*; Graeme Davison, 'The Imaginary Grandstand,' *Meanjin* 61, no. 3 (2002): 4–18.
[3] The most detailed account of Australian sport that challenges this view is presented in Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, *One-Eyed: A View of Australian Sport* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000).
[4] This refers to the Discovery Project, funded by the Australian Research Council and led by David Rowe, see David Rowe, 'A Nation of "Good Sports?" Cultural Citizenship and Sport in Contemporary Australia,' Open Forum, 2014, https://www.openforum.com.au/a-nation-of-good-sports-cultural-citizenship-and-sport-in-contemporary-australia/; David Rowe, 'Cultural Citizenship, Media and Sport in Contemporary Australia,' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 53, no. 1 (2018): 11–29.
[5] Ibid.
[6] As an example of an uncritical narrative pertaining to the relationship between Australian sport and national identity, Rowe cites a learning resource for the Australian citizenship test, see Department of Immigration and Border Protection Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond* (Canberra, ACT: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2018), 43.

I do not advocate the detachment of the past and present materiality from intersubjective collective narratives. These are necessary attributes in discursively problematising the current social and political condition, including sport and its subordinate inflections. Yet, a space should be left (or created) to reimagine sport anew, and hence outside of the corporate capture and the global modalities conditioned and restricted by the notional and intersubjective reality of nation states and their corporately driven conglomerates.

Referring to Australian national identity indivertibly evokes notions, legacies and ongoing manifestations of colonialism and the former British Empire. The same goes for its sporting expressions.[7] Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for less than three per cent of Australia's populace, but make up close to thirty per cent of the country's prison population.[8] This is one of the many statistics that fail to match the country's postcolonial appearances and multicultural credentials. But, it is in this space that Indigenous athletic successes are co-opted by the feel-goodness of unity of the colonial nation state.[9] The on-field accomplishments purport to give agency to Indigenous athletes when, in fact, they are both afforded and bounded by the colonial project and the consequent state of affairs.[10]

As noted by Colin Tatz, 'sport represents the worst and the best in black-white relations.'[11] Opportunities of social mobility have been afforded to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes and, in some cases, racism 'has been suspended while they have been at the height of their glory'.[12] However, this suspension of racism indicates that Australian nation state only grants individuality to First Nations athletes when their on-field performances and off-field behaviour meet the

[7] Rigney, 'Sport, Indigenous Australians and Invader Dreaming.'
[8] Gardiner, 'Running for Country'. 'Prisoners in Australia,' Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed December 13, 2018.
http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4517.0%7E2018%7EMain%20Features%7EAboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20prisoner%20characteristics%20%7E13
[9] Ibid.
[10] See the discussion on Sport for Development programs in Chapter 1.
[11] Colin Tatz, *Obstacle Race: Aborigines in Sport* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995), 341.
[12] Ibid, 341.

norms and expectations of the white society.[13] In similar denial of Indigenous agency, media constructs certain images of indigeneity which renders Aboriginality of some Indigenous athletes invisible or inauthentic.[14]

Whiteness is not merely a racial category.[15] In fact, Whiteness is a particular worldview and a set of values, which can be adopted and internalised by non-white subjects. Indeed, compliance to white norms and values accrues white capital and humanises non-white subjects in the eyes of the white society.[16] This is not to deny the role that Australian rules football plays in many regional communities where grassroots clubs facilitate a space for engagement between Indigenous and non-indigenous people that transcend sport itself.[17] Local football is also where Aboriginality can be defined outside the confines of white Australia. Indeed, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are overrepresented in the AFL, the League's structures restrict their agency to the 'special skillset' on the field of play and preclude their potential contributions to governing the game and strategising the play.[18] Such views, according to Hallinan and Judd, are underpinned by 'enlightened racism', which covers up structural barriers and discrimination with celebratory displays of respect and appreciation.[19]

Australia's multicultural image is also embedded in the colonial project and its internal logic of race and nation, which further demonstrates that national identity is a top-down invention. To this end, sport is a tool to emotionally impose this

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[13] The lack of agency afforded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander footballers is discussed in Chris Hallinan and Barry Judd, 'Duelling Paradigms: Australian Aborigines, Marn-Grook and Football Histories,' *Sport in Society* 15, no. 7 (September 2012): 975–86.
[14] Jess Coyle, 'Where Are All the Koorie Football Players? The AFL and the Invisible Presence of Indigenous Victorians,' *Sport in Society* 18, no. 5 (2015): 604–13.
[15] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (New York: Routledge, 2000). This argument has been developed in Chapter 1.
[16] Hage, *White Nation*; on white capital see Catrin Lundström, 'The White Side of Migration: Reflections on Race, Citizenship and Belonging in Sweden,' *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 7, no. 2 (2017): 79–87.
[17] Sean Gorman captures the significance of Australian rules football in Western Australia's regional communities in Sean Gorman, *Brotherboys: The Story of Jim and Phillip Krakouer* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005).
[18] Chris Hallinan and Barry Judd, 'Changes in Assumptions about Australian Indigenous Footballers: From Exclusion to Enlightenment,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 16 (2009): 2358–75; Chris Hallinan and Barry Judd, 'Race Relations, Indigenous Australia and the Social Impact of Professional Australian Football,' *Sport in Society* 12, no. 9 (2009): 1220–35.
[19] Hallinan and Judd, 'Race Relations, Indigenous Australia and the Social Impact of Professional Australian Football.'

materially constructed unity.[20] While this utility is not exclusive to Australia, the mix of settler-colonialism and multiculturalism provides a particularly clear case of downwardly foisted sporting harmony.

To varying degrees, most Australian sports are enmeshed in the colonial history and the cultural dominance of Anglo-Celtic Whiteness, including the three sports followed by my collaborators. Cricket signifies Englishness as the game's colonial roots continue to reproduce Anglo-Australian relations and national identities that are bound up with the narratives of the Empire.[21] Given the emotional – if not material – ties with marngrook, the seeming indigeneity of Australian rules football appears to be the least colonially corrupted.[22] As the so-called history wars over the connection that Australian Rules share with marngrook are ongoing, the enduring influence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had on Australian rules football is what makes the game indigenous.[23] Nevertheless, the game was codified by the British and for the British through the processes and considerations entwined with the gold-rush growth of the city of Melbourne and embedded in 'the British World' through the influences of other football codes played across the home nations of the Empire and some of its satellites.[24] Similarly, soccer was imported by the Scots in the late 1800s, who founded the first clubs tied to ethnic and religious identities.[25] The post-war migration from Continental Europe, however, saw the ethnic Britons disavowing the code as soccer clubs affiliated with the new migrant groups mushroomed across Australian cities.[26]

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[20] Cashman, *Sport in the National Imagination*.
[21] van Duinen, 'Playing to the "Imaginary Grandstand"'; C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London, Yellow Jersey Press, 2005).
[22] Marngrook – a ball game of the Continent's First Nations Peoples. Some claim that Australian rules football drew inspiration not only from the codes played in the British public schools but also from the Indigenous games. The summary of this thesis (first developed by Jim Poulter in 1983) and opposing arguments are provided in David Thompson, *The Rules that Made Australian Football: The Evolution of a Unique Game, 1858-1879* (Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2013), 19-37. Historian Geoffrey Blaney discounts both Gaelic and Aboriginal influences in Australian Rules as myths in Geoffrey Blainey, *A Game of Our Own: The Origins of Australian Football* (Melbourne: Information Australia, 1990).
[23] Ciannon Cazaly, 'Off the Ball: Football's History Wars,' *Meanjin* 67, no. 4 (2008): 82–87.
[24] Jared van Duinen, 'Bodyline, the British World and the Evolution of an Australian National Identity,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 2 (2014): 250–64.
[25] Paul Mavroudis, 'Against the Run of Play: The Emergence of Australian Soccer Literature,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 5 (2013): 484–99.
[26] Ibid.

The culturally homogenous face of Test cricket conflicts with the game's national standing in this proudly multicultural nation and its growing popularity with new migrant groups from the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless, 'the imperial game' is deemed to be Australia's national sport played and watched throughout the summer months across this vast country.[27] The support for (and the cultural standing of) soccer and Australian Rules are more geographically specific. While the 'Barassi Line' – the geographic and historic marker distinguishing between the parts of the country that prefer Australian Rules to rugby league and vice versa – has lost its realpolitik significance, Melbourne remains the stronghold of Australian Rules where other football codes exist on the margins.[28] The game's supposed indigeneity continues to be juxtaposed to the global reach of soccer, which is deemed to be culturally homogenising.[29] The crudeness of this binary does not only overlook the grassroots spread of association football but also ignores expansionist ambitions of the Australian Football League.[30]

Melbourne's self-image as the pre-eminent sporting city in the world is also awash with homogenising coarseness, where pride for well kept-up infrastructure, excess of international sporting events and hard-to-measure collective passion for sport foreshadow any interest in (and study of) sport in the city.[31] In turn, this obscures critical on-field moments of the past and the unpleasant cultural realities embedded in them: from Nicky Winmar taking a stand against racist abuse to the mainstreaming of soccer at the expense of its proud cultural communities – sport and sporting

[27] 'Imperial game' is a historically relevant name for cricket but also a reference to the book: Brian Stoddart and Keith A. P. Sandiford, *The Imperial Game: Cricket, Culture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), on cricket's place in Australian culture see Wray Vamplew et al., 'Cricket,' in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 115–22.
[28] The Barassi line is a geographical line representing the division between rugby and Australian Rules, the term was first introduced in Ian Turner, 'Ron Barassi Memorial Lecture, 1978,' in *The Great Australian Book of Football Stories*, ed. Garrie Hutchinson (South Yarra: Currey O'Neal, 1983).
[29] Buck Clifford Rosenberg, 'The Australian Football Wars: Fan Narratives of Inter-Code and Intra-Code Conflict,' *Soccer & Society* 10, no. 2 (2009): 245–60.
[30] Soccer is a popular pastime with refugee youth and among migrant communities, see Spaaij, 'Refugee Youth, Belonging and Community Sport.'
[31] See Victoria State Government, 'Melbourne – The Sporting Capital of the World.'

passions in Melbourne are not a singular narrative that could be easily embodied in a monolith of the-sporting-capital-of-the-world label.[32]

The life narratives of sports fans reveal passions that cannot be summed up in the theatrics of the Boxing Day Test crowds at 'The G' or critically contrasted through the historic antipathy between soccer and Australian Rules.[33] These intersubjective realities merely offer a backdrop for the passionate encounters with sport in the city of Melbourne, some of which align with the grand narratives while others either contest or complicate the *sportscapes* of the city. The six stories presented in the following chapters disturb these comfortable narratives of a classless metropolis, where the oval-ball code is watched by the poor and the rich and the multicultural nation where the archetype of the Empire is supposedly the sport of national unity.[34]

[32] Matthew Klugman and Gary Osmond, *Black and Proud: The Story of the Iconic AFL Photo* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2013); Lock, 'Fan Perspectives of Change in Australia's A-League'.
[33] 'The G' is a widely used nickname for the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Rosenberg, 'Australian Football Wars.'
[34] While Melbourne, unlike Sydney, adopted a single football code shared across social stratus, the undertone differences among classes still existed, see Peter Burke, 'A Social History of Workplace Australian Football, 1860 – 1939' (PhD diss., RMIT University, 2008).

Chapter 3 | John – Manchester United is a Calling

John was my first recruit and the only one that was successfully recruited online. He responded to the contact form I had filled out on the Manchester United Supporters' Club of Victoria website as he was compelled enough to tell me his story. Indeed, John seemed to have had a particular story to tell – the story of the Manchester United Supporters' Club of Victoria that he started in 1994 following an abrupt re-engagement with association football.

I reached out to John through the Club's website in early August 2015, and by the end of the month I was speaking to him in his home in one of Melbourne's north-east suburbs. Following the initial conversation, we met two more times in 2015 and in early 2016 and talked at length about his passion for United, his love for soccer and how and where the two sat in his everyday life.[1] I, then, corresponded with John via email in late 2018 and early 2019 to check whether and how his relationship with United had changed since we last spoke in person.[2]

When I first met John, United had just started their second season under the management of Louis van Gaal – an experienced manager brought in following the sacking of Alex Ferguson's hand-picked successor – David Moyes.[3] Throughout a three-year-period of talking with (and writing about) John, the famous soccer side won a few minor trophies and generally were performing below the expectations of their global supporter base.

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[1] Recorded Conversation with John, August 22, 2015; September 20, 2015; January 17, 2016.
[2] Email correspondence with John, November 22, 2019; January 29, 2019.
[3] Sir Alex Ferguson managed Manchester United from 1986 and retired from football at the end of 2012/13 season, in which United once again lifted the English Premier League trophy. Ferguson's hand-picked successor – David Moyes – did not last a single season. United finished the 2013/14 season in an uncharacteristically low seventh place in the EPL. The following two seasons the club was managed by Louise van Gaal, who did not significantly improve United's performance and was replaced with Jose Mourinho in 2016. In the 2016/17 season United managed to win UEFA Europa League, Community Shield and the EFL Cup, but did not improve their performance in the EPL. Mourinho was sacked mid-season in 2018.

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> But, I think that you feel as though that your spirit is being, sort of, given to the players. And, you're being like the twelfth player on the ground. So, if you're louder than the home crowd when you've, sort of, got one better than the home supporters.

When describing his role as a Manchester United supporter, John evokes the figure of the twelfth player.[4] To him, the experience of live match attendance – something that as a distant supporter he does not get to do all that often – resembles surrendering his spirit to the players. In the following comments, John deliberately disowns the reference to the word 'spirit': 'I wouldn't say a spiritual sort of thing, but it is the most exhilarating …'– my collaborator struggles for words in an attempt to redefine his emotive encounters with soccer. I am intrigued by the notion of 'spirit' and come back to this highly charged description in our follow-up conversation. John is happy to further interrogate his choice of words:

> Yes, spirit. Yeah, that's a very powerful word. I think, your spirit … cause your spirit is everything about you. [It] is your whole essence. And, we often see it, you'll see it with certain players sort of turning to the crowd and waving their hands and gesturing: 'Come on, lift us, give us some noise!' And, I think everybody wants to give their all. We can't put boots on and kick the ball, but if just by doing that cheering and singing and carrying on can get our players do what they do, then that's part of why we do it. So, it is … it is giving your spirit for them on a match day, match day only.

The tenuous link between John's experiences and the word 'spirit' becomes tangible in this reflection as the contributor tacitly withdraws his disownment of the word and instead draws a clear connection between experience and description, between agency and structure.[5] The lifelong relationship with Manchester United here is channelled into an opaque moment of clarity where the interdependence of structure and agency is redrawn. While the word 'spirit' offers an interesting insight into John's perceptions of his passion for United, the extended description is far more substantively valuable.

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[4] Hiroki Ogasawara, *Performing Sectarianism: Terror, Spectacle and Urban Myth in Glasgow Football Cultures* (London: Centre for Community Urban Research, 2003); Bruna Zani and Erich Kirchler, 'When Violence Overshadows the Spirit of Sporting Competition: Italian Football Fans and Their Clubs', *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 1, no. July 1990 (1991): 5–21.
[5] Barbalet, 'Why Emotions are Crucial?'

John implies that for the thrill of Man United's win he is ready to temporarily give up his 'whole essence', pointing to the liminal break and realignment between structure and agency: 'Your spirit is everything about you, it is your whole essence'.[6] John's term, 'whole essence', points to a certain holism in his fandom experiences – the notion which John's paradigmatic expressions, intertwined in his narrative, continually question and disturb. The remark, however, demands an intelligible response to the question: 'Who is John?' and, in turn, a narrative of John's life and his passion, illuminating the place that the famous soccer club occupies in his life.[7] Resolving the mystery of 'spirit' means capturing an ongoing mediation between continuity and volatility. Therefore, the research meta-narrative presented in this chapter grapples with narrative coherence and, in turn, coherence of personal identity. Through the interrogation of John's career-like engagement with his passion for Manchester United, it presents a template for the other five narrative chapters which seek to emplot dialogically emerging and often conflicting narrative moments.

Continuity *vs*. Volatility

> No … there was no one else in my family [who followed United] … They followed other teams: my brother follows Arsenal, my dad follows Crystal Palace … had some uncles, who were Chelsea supporters. So, for me, it was like I was out of mould, anyway. But, that didn't weigh, that didn't stop [me].

When I first met John in August 2015, he was fifty-six years old and had been the President of the Manchester United Supporters' Club of Victoria for twenty-one years. The shared experience of migration and the time I spent living in his hometown of London, made the conversation easy from the start. Before switching the recorder on, I learned that John migrated to Australia from London, England in 1970 at the age of eleven. This was his family's second attempt to relocate. In 1966

[6] Turner, *Ritual Process*.
[7] Ricoeur, 'Narrative Identity.'

when John was only three years old, his family spent several years in Western Australia before returning to London – the city where John's passion for association football was ignited.[8] Growing up in the English capital, John, a son of Irish immigrants, curiously supported not one of the many teams in the city, but instead travelled around different London grounds to cheer for Manchester United whenever they played an away game there. John's love for United is in no way related to an influence of his family or friends. With his family being originally from Ireland, there was no familial single soccer team tradition passed on from generation to generation, 'my brother follows Arsenal, my dad follows Crystal Palace … had some uncles who were Chelsea supporters' – John explains.

A lack of family tradition enabled the young John to choose his own team. However, John does not suppose that there was ever a decision to be made as his support for Manchester United evolved organically from his idolisation of the three iconic United players of that time: George Best, Bobby Charlton and Denis Law. He particularly highlights the impression that George Best had on him as a child that is vivid in his memories and continues to be effective and affective today. Echoing the popular memory, John explains that Best 'was seen as the first pop star', that 'he had long hair' and good looks and that 'everybody liked him'.[9] The collaborator also stresses the player's extraordinary skills, which, at the time, were unseen, and which he used to attempt to emulate when dribbling a soccer ball on the way home from school.

Beyond John's childhood fascination, George Best is regarded as one of the ingredients which laid the ground for United's global appeal.[10] Best's celebrity became of interest to researchers in the prominence of another Manchester United's iconic player and a celebrity in his own right – David Beckham.[11] Both footballers within their own generations embodied the consumer capitalist consolidation of commodity and celebrity in sport and beyond. Yet, both embodiments

[8] John's family came to Australia via the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme. John referred to himself as a 'Ten Pound Pom', see James A. Hammerton and Alistair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
[9] George Best was a football player from Northern Ireland who played for Manchester United from 1963 to 1974. He was widely regarded as the first celebrity footballer.
[10] Bairner, 'George Best, Manchester United and Northern Ireland.'
[11] Ibid.

metaphorically signposted distinct iterations of the political economy in Britain and the world: while Best's star rose in the booming 60s and, therefore, embodied 'the new working-class dream of individualism, easy consumption and spectacular mobility', the prominence of David Beckham signified the triumph of neoliberalism and corporatism amidst the continuing collapse of the British working-class and near complete stasis in social stratification.[12]

Although John's personal narrative and his idolisation of Best are undoubtedly implicated in fluctuations of the cyclical boom and bust economy, for him the iconic player is a much simpler figure. John likens his soccer icon to a currently playing and former Manchester United star Cristiano Ronaldo, suggesting that seventeen-year-olds, who first saw the Portuguese athlete in a Man United shirt more than a decade ago are now at the forefront of a new generation of the United fans.[13] This analogy sums up John's own evolution to a committed United supporter as his love for the team grew from his fascination with one player, in particular. 'It was the player that got me first and then the club' – the committed soccer fan admits. John continues to evoke this sense of continuity in his narrative by juxtaposing past and present motifs. To me, this appears as a deliberate way for John as a narrator to create a sense of continuity in an otherwise fractured and confused trajectory.[14]

The trajectory along which John's passion originated and evolved is familiar. Star players are often quoted as one of the avenues to forge allegiances with sports teams and develop team identification.[15] It is also theorised, however, that allegiances engendered through player idolisation often wither away as the star player leaves the team to play somewhere else – a commonplace scenario in a contemporary moment,

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[12] Richard Giulianotti and Michael Gerrard, 'Evil Genie or Pure Genius?: The (Im)moral Football and Public Career of Paul 'Gazza' Gascoigne', in *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, ed. David L. Andrews and Steven J. Jackson (London: Routledge, 2001), 135; Julie Burchill, *On Beckham* (London: Vintage Books, 2001).
[13] Cristiano Ronaldo played for Manchester United from 2003 to 2009 winning three English Premier League trophies with United.
[14] Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*.
[15] Shih-Hao Wu, Ching-Yi Daphne Tsai and Chung-Chieh Hung, 'Toward Team or Player? How Trust, Vicarious Achievement Motive and Identification Affect Fan Loyalty,' *Journal of Sport Management* 26 (2012): 177–91.

where players are traded, loaned and borrowed like commodities; where players are, indeed, commodities.[16]

Many argue that it is exactly the marketisation of football that not only altered the trajectories of players' careers but also disturbed traditional football fan cultures grounded in locality, kinship and working-class disposition.[17] In many ways such observations buy into a strict dichotomy of now and then, depicting the present moment as more uncertain, perplexing and, most importantly, more volatile than the recent or bygone past. As noted in Chapter 1, neoliberal capitalism has accelerated processes of marketisation, corporatisation and commodification in many social spheres, including sport; the mainstreaming and realisation of this ideology was and continues to be historically unfolding and evolving narrative in its own right. While the last four decades have brought about significant changes to spectator sport delivered via rampant commodification and expansion of the managerial class which resulted in the global homogenisation of spectatorship experiences; cultural subjectivities and individual fan agency may have withered, but they did not dissipate. At first glance, John is a victim and an accomplice of the homogenisation of the sporting spectacle in his support for the football club of global standing – the standing that is, in part, achieved at the expense of the club's locally granted and perceived cultural authenticity.[18] Nevertheless, the contributor's story intersects both agentic choices and structural hegemonies.

John, while from a working-class upbringing, has never been a local supporter. London may have been proximal to his allegiance, but Melbourne proved to be distal both physically and intangibly. John recalls that as his family settled down in – by his own description – a 'hard-edge' outer Melbourne suburb of Frankston, he soon

[16] Daniel L. Wann, Kathleen B. Tucker and Michael P. Schrader, 'An Exploratory Examination of the Factors Influencing the Origination, Continuation and Cessation of Identification with Sports Teams', *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 82, no. 3 (1996): 995–1001.
[17] This observation is specifically informed by the processes that occurred in English club football and the changes that were inflicted on the spectatorship and fan cultures, as a result, which are addressed in the taxonomy presented in Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs.'
[18] On how Manchester United became a club supported nationally and internationally see Gavin Mellor, 'The Genesis of Manchester United as a National and International "Super-Club", 1958-69,' *Soccer & Society* 1, no. 2 (2000): 151–66.

realised that in these new surroundings 'to be liking soccer was a bit of a no-no'; hence he kept his allegiance to Manchester United quiet.[19] Given a limited technological development and despite the acceleration of globalising trends, soccer fandom was not easily accessible to John.[20] The contributor notes that during the first twenty-four years in his new country, he would only a couple of times a year find something written about Manchester United in Australian newspapers, which starkly contrasts today's world where the latest scores and sports news from around the globe are within the reach of one's smartphone. It was not until the 1990s that the FA Cup finals started to be aired on Australian television allowing John to reconnect with his beloved sport and the team.[21]

The soccer supporter cannot quite explain the force that in 1994 drove him to one of Melbourne's pubs to watch Manchester United in the FA Cup final. This was, however, a pivotal point in his continuing relationship with United. Having experienced an emotional uproar of watching the game with three hundred other people with the vested interest in the outcome of the match, John thought to himself: 'I've got to do this, this is fantastic!' The newly found enthusiasm urged the Man United faithful to make an instant phone call to Old Trafford to inquire about the nearest supporters' club. John admits that he was quite disappointed by what he heard on the other end of the phone line: 'Oh, yes! There's one in Sydney!' However, when explained that Sydney is a nine-hour drive away from Melbourne, John's interlocutor hinted: 'Well, you can always start one!' And, that was it. John who, by his own admission, had never been involved in organising anything even remotely similar to this became subsumed by the idea of founding the Manchester United Supporters' Club of Victoria.

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[19] Frankston is an outer suburb of Melbourne, south-east to Melbourne CBD. The suburb grew in the period from 1966 to 1976 by seventy per cent and had a disproportionately high concentration of residents born in the UK; at the time the suburb also had deep socio-economic divisions, see Michael Jones, *Frankston: Resort to City* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989); the dislike for soccer in Australia will be given more attention in Chapter 7; Australia's soccer history is detailed in Roy Hay, *A History of Football in Australia: A Game of Two Halves* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books, 2014).

[20] Mike Cronin, *Sport: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[21] John is referring to the SBS – Australia's multicultural broadcaster – that since its foundation in the 1980s became the nation's 'home of soccer', on the SBS and the relationship between soccer and television in Australia see David Rowe and Callum Gilmour, 'Getting a Ticket to the World Party: Televising Soccer in Australia,' in *The Containment of Soccer in Australia: Fencing Off the World Game*, ed. Hallinan, Chris and John E. Hughson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 9–26.

It is difficult to explain the yearning that John was almost possessed by as he sacrificed his leisure and family time to put things together for the club: designing an official logo and letterhead, opening a bank account, advertising the initiative to attract prospective members – all but a few administrative tasks that needed to be completed for the Supporters' Club to start and, more importantly, for it to be officially affiliated with Manchester United. This single-mindedness is also compounded by the fact that in that twenty-four-year period without much of a contact with soccer, John had been indoctrinated into Australian rules football and it is not something that he regrets or has since deserted. St Kilda, the AFL side supported by John and his family, seems to enrich his life with similar facets to those presented by Man United as he likens them both to a thread going through his life and fitting in and around his prime engagements, such as family and business.[22] The alignment of the two passions makes one wonder why this committed Australian Rules fan was so driven to reinstate his soccer passion and to build a community of people around it.

Themes of unwavering loyalty, lifelong commitment and abiding allegiance evoke notions of static personal identities.[23] It is clear that John's commitment was unsteady and interrupted. Still, when asked to clarify the urge that enveloped him over two decades ago, John evokes an image of a 'planted seed', referring to the impression the iconic Manchester United trio had on him as a kid. John continually reiterates its significance: 'The seed was planted then as a kid, and you know that's a very important thing,' in this instance he moves away from his love for United to kindling that feeling in others, 'If our members who have young children, if we can give them a shirt or … a ball – that's their first memory of something connected to Manchester United.' In this reference of nurturing the next generation of Man United supporters, the metaphorical notion of a 'planted seed' transforms from a personal

[22] St Kilda FC, also known as the Saints, is an Australian rules football club competing in the AFL. St Kilda has only won a single Premiership although it was one of the eight clubs that played in the VFL's inaugural season in 1897.
[23] For example, Amir Ben Porat observes fandom as a steady lifelong commitment in Amir Ben Porat, 'Football Fandom: A Bounded Identification,' *Soccer & Society*11, no. 3 (2010): 277–90.

reference to a totemic meaning of continuity.[24] Such symbolic meanings are central in John's narrative which seeks coherence in the face of evident ruptures. When the contributor is asked to explain how he copes with disappointing results, the incoherence of his personal narrative catches him off guard:

> I think, following a side: your dedication to them will tell you a lot about your character. If you can withstand criticism from other people … So, now that I'm saying that out loud, I'm thinking about what happened to that twenty-four years when I was straight here from England, when I sort of kept my like for Man United a bit, sort of, dimmer … So, I didn't really see anything. I think, I was young and easily influenced, didn't really … and because once we moved away from England, we didn't have much, sort of, anything to do with soccer.

It seems that John, perhaps not entirely consciously, attempts to defend his own actions of muting his passion for soccer for the first twenty-four years on a foreign land.[25] With hardly any encouragement from me he suddenly starts to reflect on this inconsistency and (as implicitly recognised by him) weakness in his normally unwavering character. For a split moment, the United supporter becomes vulnerable in questioning his own choice: 'So, now that I'm saying that out loud, I'm thinking about what happened to that twenty-four years, when I was straight here from England'. He, then, quickly reinstates his strength of personality by ascribing that choice to his youth and particularly unfavourable circumstances for soccer fandom in Australia in the 70s. It appears that not disclosing his soccer allegiance as well as quickly taking up Australian rules football allowed for an easier than expected assimilation to Australian society.[26]

John's narrative here intersects with the broader story of Australian soccer and its containment. As Scottish newcomers brought association football to Australia in the 1880s, they established the first football clubs that were inseparable from cultural and religious affiliations.[27] Yet, almost a century later John – as a British migrant –

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[24] Serazio, 'Elementary Forms of Sports Fandom.'
[25] This seems to be a pattern of an emerging redemptive life story as described in McAdams, *Redemptive Self*.
[26] Victorian Football League was a state-wide competition which in the 1990 formally became the national league and was renamed as the Australian Football League (AFL). The transition and its implications for spectator culture and individual fans will be given more attention in Chapters 4 and 8.
[27] Hay, *History of Football in Australia*.

found himself in a rather different predicament in Melbourne's suburbia. Since the 1950s Australian expressions of the world game became intrinsically linked with post-war immigration from Continental Europe.[28] The dominant Australian discourse riddled the game with xenophobic undertones – the apogee of which was soccer's unofficial renaming as 'wogball'.[29] In this hostile atmosphere, members of Anglo-Celtic communities were not keen to get involved in the local competition and its development.[30] However, some evidence shows that this ignorance of association football from British migrants was confined to the game's Australian expressions as many retained their allegiances to their British clubs.[31] Yet, as avenues to express such loyalties, at the time, were few and far between, many of these passions, like John's, were left dormant.

Although unpleasant remnants of soccer confinement continue to persist and will be explored in the subsequent narratives; with deliberate rebranding and mainstreaming of Australian soccer, following the Crawford Report and the introduction of the A-League, there was a clear-cut space for John to engage with Australian expressions of the world game.[32] Yet, that never crossed his mind. As neither the Three Lions nor the Socceroos have drawn John's support, association football remained bounded by his identification with Manchester United and entwined with the childhood spent in England.

To ascertain John's discursive willingness to explore his own identity and various cultural influences it entangles, I used nation-bound identifications to get to his culturally hybrid positionality. When I straightforwardly asked John whether he identified with England in any regard, his response did not sound hesitant:

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Mavroudis, 'Against the Run of Play,' 487.
[31] Although British migrants would turn up to see touring British football clubs, propositions to form a British based local team did not get much traction, see Roy Hay and Nick Guoth, 'No Single Pattern: Australian Migrant Minorities and the Round Ball Code in Victoria', *Soccer & Society* 10, no. 6 (2009): 831.
[32] The Crawford Report was an independent review into the state of Australian soccer: David Crawford, *Report of the Independent Soccer Review Committee into the Structure, Governance and Management of Soccer in Australia* (Belconnen: Australian Sports Commission, 2003). The recommendations outlined in this report led to the establishment of a new national soccer competition – the A-League. This will be given more attention in Chapter 7.

> Yes, for sure. We were born there and born of Irish descendants. The Irish, the English and then the Australian. And more now, because my children were born here and we've become citizens, so we're now Australian; but always we have an English heritage, and part of that growing up was soccer. And, it's only that we've come to this country, that they have footy [Australian rules football]. Never heard of it [before].

Despite notional multiplicity, John's cultural identity is circumscribed by the 'British World'.[33] In the early moments of his Australian experience, John felt somewhat foreign and harboured his Englishness under-surface, but the comfort found in his Australian citizenship coupled with his 'Anglo capital' gave him a licence to belong.[34] John's present realities seem to be comfortably removed from his personal history and cultural negotiation. The Supporters' Club is a good example of this enacted distance: supporting a globally adored club in a multicultural space of Melbourne.

> There's Greeks, Italians, Polish, there's all sorts of people, cause you know, we are a real potpourri of people living here. All of them … Well, I'm saying all of them, [but] my personal attraction was always first to the player that I first loved, to George Best, and then he was playing for Manchester United. So, my allegiance was to him, and I'm sure that if you check with most of the people in my club – my club? – our club, you'll find that it's because we liked a certain player, like a young person would say they love Ronaldo …

Just as the effigy of George Best transcended sectarian identities in Northern Ireland, John uses a faceless figure of a star player when returning to the current example of Cristiano Ronaldo to harmonise the cultural and transcultural entanglements of the space of Melbourne and, in turn, the Supporters' Club.[35] John's fixation on celebrity players taps into and, in many ways, aligns with the globalising strategies of football, wherein star footballers play the key role in the dispersion of the game and its market offerings across different national cultures.[36] In such a climate, a star player, a

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[33] Neville Meany, 'Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections,' in *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, ed. Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 120–35;
[34] Citizenship often only extends inclusion to selected groups, in the West this inclusion is likely to be underpinned by what Catrin Lundström calls 'white capital' in Lundström, 'The White Side of Migration'; in Australia a more specific modality of Anglo-Celtic privilege exists, see Kay Anderson and Affrica Taylor, 'Exclusionary Politics and the Question of National Belonging: Australian Ethnicities in "Multiscalar" Focus,' *Ethnicities* 5, no. 4 (2005): 460–85.
[35] Bairner, 'George Best, Manchester United and Northern Ireland.'
[36] Harald Dolles and Sten Söderman, 'Globalisation of Sports – The Case of Professional Football and Its International Management Challenges' (working paper, German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo, 2005).

football celebrity, is a global archetype of a homogenous neoliberal condition: a glistening advert of a liberal democracy and free market led aspiration whose only true utility is a quick grab of a market share.[37] The Supporters' Club is a familiar space of fandom where ideologically subservient narratives are both incorporated and resisted.[38] The figure of a celebrity footballer and specifically the figure of George Best has, however, a simpler role in a strictly personal narrative of John – it is the unifying motif of his fragmented storyline. The fascination with George Best not only ignited the passion for United, it has remained intact symbolically as John continually reimagined the 'planted seed' through his changing circumstances and the club's fluctuating fortunes.

John's way of reimagining taps into nostalgia and only partially resolves the question of identity. Whenever asked about other reasons for sticking with United, John is consistent in referring to the club's proud history: 'United seems to put together periods in its history, when it's just something … that captures the magic of everything'. This implicit aggrandising of the past is not bound up with restrictive identities but rather pertains to immediate memories. While listening to John, I think of unstructured sentimentality and longing and instinctively utter the word 'nostalgia'. Johns reacts enthusiastically to my interjection although within the bounds of our ongoing conversation on identity construction:

> I think the nostalgia [is] more [important] than the English thing. Again, because of the history and all the things that happened to us like the Busby Babes and the plane crash.[39] It's important to me that I belong to something that's of history and I'm creating history here. You know, I've created this club. And, you know, maybe they'll look back in fifty years and they'll say 'oh, the founder of it was …' I'm really attracted to history things and now belonging to that I feel more akin to it, you know. It's my history now, because I belong to that team. So, I feel a part of it. So, I'm leaving it as an entity [the Supporters' Club]. I don't want it to die. That's a really important thing [to] keep it going as long as I possibly can until somebody can take over, because I don't want it to stop …

[37] The relationship among athletic talent, celebrity, commodity and the sustenance and expansion of capitalism in the American culture is observed and interrogated through Michael Jordan's stardom in Walter LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).
[38] Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination* (London: Sage, 1998).
[39] *The Busby Babes* – a group of Manchester United players of the 1940-50s who progressed through the club's youth team and were later managed by Sir Matt Busby. *The Busby Babes* were caught in an air disaster in February 1958, known as the Munich air disaster, in which eight of them died.

My reference to nostalgia was confined within the narrow notion of selective memory and mystification of the past, but in John's remarks 'wistful longing' emerges as 'an intra-personal expression of self', which provides his passion for soccer and Manchester United with a sense of continuity amidst volatile and changing trajectories.[40] John recounts importance to 'belong to something that's of history' and, thus, connects past and present and seizes the legacy for the future. The Supporters' Club is the legacy and the continuing presence in John's life, the link between now and then: childhood affinity, the years of separation, hostile Australian context, the reunification and the future generation of United supporters.

Longing means not belonging, but it is also an active state of searching for belonging and 'feeling at home'.[41] It was this active practice of longing, of re-contextualising his childhood memories and channelling the nostalgia of the past into the future of the Supporters' Club which unchained John's identity from imposing and inflexible labels and offered a space to redefine his narrative. While the celebrity appeal of George Best and his aspirational individualism attracted John to United as a kid, later in life and amidst different cultural and geographic circumstances an active practice of nostalgia allowed him to reimagine the famous football club anew. This reimagination required initiative and continuous effort, amidst which George Best as a settling device of continuity lost its utility.

Parts *vs*. Whole

> I mean there's parts of me would say, you know, if I was a single man again … and I'd probably move back to Manchester and just follow them [Manchester United] at home and away and just go to away games.

When recounting his recent trip to England to see Manchester United play, John's nostalgia and childhood reminiscences expound to conditional projections of future

[40] Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 19.
[41] Marco Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework,' *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 644–59; Susan Pattie, 'Longing and Belonging: Issues of Homeland in Armenian Diaspora,' *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 22, no. 2 (1999): 80–92.

possibilities and, in turn, highlight that there are circumstances in which his identification with United would grow and be more easily maintained. These conditions not only include John moving back to England and changing his supporter status from distant to local but also changing his marital status; because as often transpired in our conversions, John, on many occasions, saw his passion for soccer as something coming in the way of his family life. To his mind, however, he has learned throughout the years to exercise his passion in a balanced and measured approach so that it does not affect his roles and responsibilities as a husband and a father.

The theme of incongruence in life demands and football starts to consolidate when I prompt John to talk about his football disappointments and ways in which he overcomes them. Here the notion of compartments emerges:

> Well, you have to compartmentalise. Put the football in one little box and since [I] walk in [through] the door here, the kids might be having a bad day or the wife might be having a bad day. So, you've got to again put that at the back of your head … You know, I'm self-employed, and I have boys who work for me. I've got to switch over and think businessman and work again in a building trade. So, somehow you juggle all that.

This verifies John's fan identity to be neither consistent nor autonomous but rather flexible and varying in synchrony to his everyday realities that evoke a set of other identifications: family man, businessman and, as John noted humorously, 'Mr Suburban'.[42] The observed flexibility makes the exercise of compartmentalising inherently contradictory as the distinct roles appear to be in a continuous dialectic. It is this contradiction that moves the dialogue from the discourse of recollection to the construction of renewed self-understanding.[43]

When meeting John for the second time, I start the interview by asking whether he had any reflections on the memories and topics covered a month ago. John is quick to respond as he opens the conversation with a revealing observation:

> When we were sort of talking last time about how I hadn't wanted to interrupt my family's life, that was sort of confronting, cause I hadn't actually said that out loud to anybody before. To compartmentalise was

[42] Osborne and Coombs, 'Performative Sport Fandom.'
[43] Ricoeur, 'Narrative Identity.'

> quite an interesting exercise so just to make sure that it didn't overlap. So, I think at the beginning it really did, it got really too out of control … And, I was giving the club all my time and effort. And, we had a newborn baby, my daughter. And, my wife, of course, needing to bring up a child, and all that sort of thing. So, now I am very cautious not to let it interrupt.

The notion of compartments structures this reflection. Yet, its meaning is contingent on the dialectics of John's distinct social roles. Here, he also hints at his assumed ability to re-evaluate and reconstruct his social roles in the manner of impression management.[44] The notion that is confirmed and elaborated in the ensuing remarks:

> So, in the early days, I think, I've got caught up in all of that and I've got so focused on trying to build the club and make sure those meetings went well that I lost track of what was happening here at home, and things like that. So, I've reassigned that, I've made sure now that, you know, home and business and everything else doesn't suffer.

Despite this immediate clear-cut segregation, the place of soccer fandom in John's life continued to be contested throughout our initial meeting as he repeatedly referred to Manchester United as a thread fitting in all of the things that he does. Dialogically emerging discourse evoked conflicting notions of identity coherence and self-continuity: the ease with which John spoke about adjusting the importance of social roles was unconvincing, lacked detail on how such role-restructuring was undertaken and was invalidated by conflicting contextual storylines.[45] Locating the story of compartments means understanding it within the notion of a thread that John evoked early on in our initial conversation. Is Manchester United a compartment or a thread in John's life? John's initial use of the word 'thread' points to the blurry lines, intermingling with implicit notions of compartments and articulated themes of continuity and social role adjustment.[46]

> I make Manchester United fit in all those things. It's like a thread through it all. One is not more important than the other, but family comes first, business comes next, and then somewhere in there is all the sports allegiances. Like we follow St Kilda as well … So again, St Kilda is a bit of a thread through our life. And so, Man United is a thread, but I've learned now not to make it too big, not to be too involved.

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[44] Stryker, 'Identity Salience and Role Performance.' Performative fandom and its association with role specific identities was noted in Chapter 2.
[45] Disparate stories need to be localised in the whole story. See Rosenthal, 'Reconstruction of Life Stories.'
[46] Stryker, 'Identity Salience and Role Performance.'

This paradigmatic expression is constructed in the first half of the initial conversation and in hindsight seems to preface the ensuing inconsistencies with a blanket resolution.[47] While the notion of the thread may have been premeditated, the exercise of compartmentalising emerged as part of an immediate discursive moment. To understand the intermingling of social learning, self-continuity, narrative coherence and social roles, I follow the peripheral mention of St Kilda – the AFL side that John has supported since his very first years in Melbourne.

In the preceding quote, John likens both Manchester United and St Kilda to a thread, establishing at least a definitional similarity of the two allegiances. However, an ad-lib comparison of the two teams ruptures in John's subsequent reflections on emotive spectating practices, which reveal a stark contrast in his visceral responses to the EPL and AFL sides, prompting a markedly different emotional investment:

> We were with the players; we feel every bump and move … See, when I go to the footy, Aussie Rules, I don't get any of that. Well, only if we're losing, and then suddenly we have a win. You know, suddenly we fight back …[48]

The spontaneously emerging contrast is later reaffirmed by a less emotionally charged reflection:

> See, I am a St Kilda supporter, but I don't know if I'm … Well, we're passionate, we go to the footy every week if it's on … Aussie Rules … but I don't have the strong biases. And, if somebody did something wrong in our club, well I would probably hang them out as well, you know … I don't know why I don't have the same allegiance as I do to Man United. Maybe, it's just longer in me that I'm a Man United supporter. St Kilda … I followed St Kilda since we lived here, since '71, but no, it is different.

As John and I attempt to unpack this contrasting emotional investment, articulated trough a notion of bias, he clings on to the contingency of time, suggesting that United has been present in his life for much longer than St Kilda. I contest such

[47] McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[48] Investment here is specifically concerned with an inexplicable investment of sports fans that pertains to their perceived self-image and their sense of self relating to the immeasurable category in Personal Investment Theory as explained in Daniel L. Wann and Jeffrey D. James, *Sport Fans: The Psychology and Social Impact of Fandom* (New York: Routledge, 2019), Google Play Books, chap. 5.

reasoning by reminding John that he has supported St Kilda from a fairly young age and given the twenty-four years of dormant connection with United, the AFL side has been actively present in his life for just as long as (or even longer than) the English club. Despite my interjection, John's response exemplifies differing experiences of time that both narrative and a sporting contest are incredibly good at exposing. John's support for St Kilda has occupied his narrative chronology, but it has lacked affective punctuations that prolong the sense of time as personally experienced and make that moment in time a thematic core of the narrative plot.

The biases that John has in his vision of United traverse his experience of time. Sports fans' subjectivities in relation to their teams are recognised in discourse, cognition and behaviours across their various communities and in a form of perceptual, behavioural and attributional biases.[49] John's differing experience of time in relation to St Kilda and Manchester United may be a manifestation of perceptual bias. Yet, the formation and maintenance of this predisposition is uncertain. Theory continually evokes themes of socialisation and self-esteem enhancement while John's thoughtful remark on his biases towards United – 'you are what you can't change' – reveals a sustained connection of a more intuitive nature.

This brief remark, while again disturbs the notion of compartments in assuming a degree of determinism about John's identity, strikingly underscores a lack of general understanding of how sports passions are maintained. In light of John's difficulties in balancing his passion and family life, and the pressure they inflicted on him; the question remains: why has John's passion for United endured? Why is something that seems to have no unequivocal practical benefits (on the contrary, John admits to having spent tens of thousands of dollars on supporting United throughout the years) and appears to have caused an array of issues in negotiating key social roles somehow important enough to sustain?

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[49] Dwyer, Eddy and LeCrom, 'Destined to Succeed?'; Rodney J. Paul and Andrew P. Weinbach, 'Are Behavioural Biases Consistent Across the Atlantic? The Over/Under Market for European Soccer,' *Journal of Gambling Business and Economics* 3, no. 2 (2009): 89–101.

Similarly to sports passions, 'the most glaring gap in our knowledge [of love] lies not in mate selection but in relationship maintenance'.[50] Some scholars have previously spoken of sports passions in the context of love either through a psychoanalytical lens or as an opportunity to broaden the restrictive vocabulary around passionate engagements with sport.[51] In John's narrative, love emerges as a seemingly valid explanation of his struggles to negotiate between his passion for soccer and his family life. Love combines both madness and passion, just like Manchester United brought both benefits and detriments to John's life.

While John never directly infers that what he feels for United is love, references to love are plentiful: loving the experience, 'love the adrenaline of watching them play', 'love watching that shirt going around' and falling in love with George Best:

> They [Manchester United] presented me with George Best and I fell in love with him, and so it's been a lifelong thing.

George Best attracted John to United, and the nostalgic sentiment engendered by this love facilitated continuity in the contributor's relationship with the club. George Best anchored John's passion across time and space. The notion of love captures ineffability of John's feelings for United, which have proven to be difficult to compartmentalise.

Social roles can be adjusted and social identities can be re-ranked, but as John notes 'you are what you can't change'.[52] The motif of 'thread' was John's discursive attempt to gloss over the tensions imposed by his soccer passion, to reassure himself of the continuity of his identity and to rise above conflicting social roles while observing, recalling and articulating narratives that clashed with the continuous notion of the self.[53] While George Best anchors John's passion in the emplotment of his personal

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[50] Robert J. Sternberg and Michael L. Barnes, *The Psychology of Love* (New York: Yale University Press, 1988).293
[51] Cash and Damousi, *Footy Passions*; Matthew Klugman, 'Loves, Suffering and Identification: The Passions of Australian Football League Fans', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no.1 (2009), 21–44; Nesti, 'Sport Psychology and Spirit in Professional Football'.
[52] Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.
[53] E.g., Porat, 'Bounded Identification'.

narrative, and the love for Best is discursively stabilising, the destabilising maintenance of this love remains ineffable.

Beyond the inexpressible effects of John's passion, love situates it as an immediate and sporadic experience.[54] It is only in this situatedness and its countenance in narrative emplotment that one can begin to understand the utility of Man United in the life of John – the motivations that pushed John forward even to the detriment of his family life.

Career *vs*. Calling

> Yeah, you can follow them, you know. And, look at us now, as I said, you know, I can pick my phone [up], and it'll have something from Man United. So, you know, it's like shovelling coal into the fire, it's feeding my devotion, it's giving me the information I want. So, it's keeping me on board, it's keeping me close to the players, close to the team. So, my support for the club, it's stronger now, because they're fuelling that by giving me all of that. The only thing I haven't got [is] actually being there on a match day and watching them play, but I'm watching them on the telly.

John is clear-headed about the ways in which his love for United is sustained as an everyday practice given his physical distance from the club.[55] Indeed, television has a constant role in John's narrative. It was the FA Cup Final broadcast that brought him back in touch with United and the proliferation of the EPL on pay-per-view television across the globe, including Australia, that completely repurposed the Supporters' Club.[56]

> Well, because of the technology side of things, we could not find out about the results unless I rang an uncle in London or something like that. It was very rarely that it was put in papers here in Australia. And, this is only twenty-five or twenty-one years ago. So, we decided to get like-minded

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[54] Harré, 'Social Construction Viewpoint.'
[55] This is a reference to a *topophilic* aspect of sports fandom expressions and its centrality in geographically bound identifications, see Chris Gaffney and John Bale, 'Sensing the Stadium,' in *Sites of Sport: Space, Place and Experience*, ed. John Bale and Patricia Vertinsky (London: Routledge, 2004), 25–38.
[56] FA Cup final – the fixture that John watched in 1994 among other Melbourne-based Manchester United supporters and which, in effect, reunited him with United used to be protected by the Australia's anti-syphoning laws as a culturally significant sporting event that should be aired on free-to-air television. The FA Cup final was, however, delisted. Many underscored the influence of pay television networks on the Broadcast and Content Reform Package, see David Rowe, 'Anti-Syphoning Changes a Blow to Sports Fans Who Want to Watch Sports on Free-to-Air Television,' *The Conversation*, June 5, 2017, https://theconversation.com/anti-siphoning-changes-a-blow-to-sports-fans-who-want-to-watch-on-free-to-air-tv-78666.

> [people together] so that we could all share stories … So, it was a bit of a network about getting more information than we could. It was about being able to swap stories and things like that, but it was also about: well, he can find out from his uncle what happened, and he can find out from somebody else and then we can all gather this information together. Again, in twenty-one years we've had to turn our club completely around the other way, because [now] my phone will go off with the latest score or the latest transfer, you know: we just bought somebody. So, our club isn't necessary for that reason anymore, we're not coming together to get information, we are coming together for the social side of it.

Other mediums, particularly the Internet, also contributed to the increased flow of information and, consequently, to the shift in the Club's priorities, but it was the television that enabled John to cultivate a lateral experience of love.[57] Proximal projection of live images from afar is dressed up with numerous oblique items, including commentary, speculative and repetitive sports chatter and advertisements.[58] Although the television screen is proximally located, many aspects of the televised sports create distance and detachment, particularly, for those who have experienced the overwhelming immediacy of live soccer. John is, however, selective in his consumption of additional content as he knowingly admits the media's role in football and United's corporate turn.[59]

For John, football remains about the Saturday performance, about the moving bodies on the football field. Television is only a brief window to that performance, which unavoidably prompts and promotes certain interpretations of the on-field events.[60] However, the Supporters' Club and its preference for face-to-face interaction continue to provide the space in which these interpretations can be challenged, reimagined or completely ignored in favour of their own brand of sports chatter. Creating and maintaining this space requires commitment.

> Well, commitment for me is, you know, coming home from work on a Wednesday night getting changed, getting all the gear out of the garage, loading up the truck, driving it to the pub, setting up the room with all the banners and the flags, working out days before what I'm going to be doing

[57] The contrast and the relationship between live stadium atmosphere and televised spectacle are noted in Gaffney and Bale, 'Sensing the Stadium.'
[58] Eileen Kennedy and Laura Hills, *Sport, Media and Society* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), 53-72.
[59] Corporate turn came with the establishment of the English Premier League which brought in lucrative broadcasting right deals. See John Williams, 'Football Fandom, Celebrity Cultures and "New" Football in England.'
[60] Kennedy and Hills, *Sport, Media and Society,* 53-72.

> and then running an evening and doing that. That's commitment where I could just go online and buy a shirt down at *Rebel Sport*.[61] Hm, not sure if that's the same. The scales don't weigh the same to me.

I brought the notion of commitment to our conversation in terms of John's consistent behaviour that lasted for over two decades.[62] However, by juxtaposing his commitment to purchasing a team shirt in the preceding remark, John extends the notion of consistent behaviour to a consistent and active effort. The nature of John's commitment and his time investment has throughout the years evolved into an almost secondary career trajectory. The arduous and creative efforts in setting up, running and maintaining the Supporters' Club are akin to the higher echelons of Garry Crawford's career model of sports fans.[63] In John's narrative, however, the notion of career, while is apparent, is not linked with an enhanced fan status or a financial remuneration.[64] In fact, John's president post is entirely voluntary.

Crawford presents the career path of sports fandom as an antidote to restrictive behavioural and attitudinal taxonomies.[65] Its allowances for sociological insight and transitions in a form of promotion and demotion along a career path are, indeed, a novelty in comparison to static reproductions of identity offered by studies grounded in behavioural and attitudinal theories.[66] However, the different stages along the route still carry certain social expectations relating to consumption and production, which contrive fandom to rather limited parameters where value and moral judgements can easily arise.[67] In relation to John's narrative, the career path, while discursively appropriate, fails to actively grapple with the personal utilities of his fandom.

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[61] *Rebel Sport* – Australian sport apparel and equipment retailer.
[62] Howard S. Becker, 'Notes on the Concept of Commitment,' *American Journal of Sociology* 66, no. 1 (1960): 32–40.
[63] Garry Crawford, 'The Career of the Sport Supporter: The Case of the Manchester Storm,' *Sociology* 37, no. 2 (2003): 219–37; Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*.
[64] Financial remuneration is a part of Crawford's career trajectory that was noted in Chapter 2, see in Crawford, 'Career of the Sport Supporter.'
[65] Ibid.
[66] Such studies are referred to in Chapter 2.
[67] Matt Hills, more generally, critiques fandom continuums in their implication of moral judgements on fans, see Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 29; Brian Longhurst, however, argues that by identifying someone as a consumer as opposed to a producer, which are the two ends of the continuum, does not suggest that the former is better than the latter, see Brian Longhurst, *Cultural Change and Ordinary Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2007), 44.

John brings up the notion of career in situating his support for United as an alternative career path – a career of inherently rewarding work.

> And, other people have got other reasons … and look some of them are really heartfelt things. Like, there was a woman ring up and, sort of, say that her son was in the *Make-a-Wish* foundation, and he was dying of cancer. And, when you're hearing that on the phone, and you're also being a bit sceptical: where is this going? 'We'd love to really meet the players, we wanna go back to Old Trafford, and we wanna meet the players, cause my son is a mad Ronaldo fan'. [You hear that] and you go: why am I gonna do that? But, we sent an email back to the charity side of Old Trafford, we tell them about it … You just hope that the people that are telling you that story are truthful. You can't judge them. We facilitated anyway, the person got their airfares back, we arranged the time that they could go and see the players, the club were welcoming, they brought them in. And, he then went and met Ronaldo and was in his wheelchair … And then, three weeks after I went to the kid's funeral. He died. So, it was like: wow, I should never really judge it, I should make sure it happens. If they've lied to me, and the kid was well, and there was nothing wrong with him, well they got to answer that one to themselves. But yeah, this one kid. And, I went to his funeral, and he was only seven, young kid. They had a little montage on a big screen of him going to school – the first day – and all of that, but then they had a montage with him with Ronaldo and I thought: wow, that's what it's all about. And, it was good for me in a way … Sad.

The heartfelt story is powerful and rich in a multiplicity of ways. Its discursive gravitas and immediate impact on the course of our conversation prompts me to utter a somewhat vacuous and yet resonant follow-up question: 'Doesn't this just go beyond football, beyond just being a fan of football?' The Man United supporter is quick to respond:

> Sure, yeah. And, he was a young kid, and all that sort of stuff. You know, if I had a perfect job, that would be it, I'd work for the *Make-a-Wish* [foundation] and fulfil kids' wishes. That'd be good. I've given myself a new job, new career.

John's reference to the perfect career as inherently rewarding in its value-laden narrativity echoes Levinson's notion of the Dream – a child's sense of their adult-self.[68] The Dream, with a capital 'D', denotes a fantasy formed in childhood that is continually enriched and developed until it is the time to live it out.[69] Contrary to this being a child's sense of their adult-self, this is an example of an adult's sense of their child-self, where child-self is less compromised and less socially liable than its

[68] Daniel Jacob Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 91.
[69] Ibid.

adult extension. The child-self here is a certain opening and clarity in which meaning assails immediate utility as understood within the parameters of the given material conditions.

Stripping the preceding small story of its emotional content, it simply communicates how John has been remunerated for his work in the Club. 'And it was good for me in a way' – John states. Indeed, Crawford's career model in its advanced stages depicts fans that earn at least a fraction of their income from their fandom activity.[70] John has never made money from the Supporter's Club. On the contrary, founding and leading the Club sometimes required him to reach into his own pocket. But, as John later clarifies (within the terms that have been previously established in our conversation), the presidency of the Club rewarded him differently. 'It was good for me, because I felt as though I put the two As together, the two Bs together' – the distant Manchester United fan acknowledges that having been afforded the possibility of fulfilling the boy's last wish made him realise the intrinsic reward that the Club provides him with.

> That's what I always do. I seemed to like doing that, putting people together that naturally want to be together. So yeah, I've never really thought this way … when I am talking to you out loud, I'm sort of thinking: why am I doing this?

When John refers to 'putting two As together', he is alluding to a theme that arose earlier in our conversation – *matchmaking* – which was the United faithful's way of describing an ability afforded to him by the club to put together people that had something in common or, more specifically, had stories to share: 'And, I feel as though I'm *matchmaking* … I'm putting two, you know, countries or two people from the same town together.'[71] When asked whether this personal tendency was revealed or introduced by founding and running the Supporters' Club, John does not doubt his response for a second:

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[70] Crawford, 'Career of the Sport Supporter.'

[71] Capacity of sport to generate a community of shared stories is noted in Daniel A. Nathan, 'Introduction: Sport, Community and Identity,' in *Rooting for the Home Team: Sport, Community and Identity*, ed. Daniel A. Nathan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 1–16.

> Yeah, it gave … a new string to my bow. Yeah, I've never really been involved in clubs or anything like that before. So, I don't know how they're meant to run, but all I was trying to do just put As with As and Bs with Bs and if they all work together – terrific!

As the conversation progressed, John's inclination to act as a *matchmaker* extends to his willingness to enable people to get what they desire whether it be tickets to Old Trafford or helping the local school's soccer team to acquire water bottles. In these examples, it emerges that the Club for John has been a secondary job for which remuneration is self-fulfilment.[72] The thread that strings together all of this seemingly selfless work is, of course, Manchester United.

> I think, I like the fact of helping people, helping people to fulfil … Now, if it's something like I look after … So, I have four season tickets … [for some] people it's their trip back to the UK to see a match, I fulfil that by saying to them: 'Look, I've got four tickets available, you can buy them.' So, I'm making their pilgrimage back the best event. So, when I can't give you the four tickets for the game that you want. And, you're more disappointed than I am. You know, you're the one that saved all the money to go back and you've asked just as a request. If I can fulfil that request, then I'm thrilled.

John's involvement with the Manchester United Supporters' Club of Victoria – founding, sustaining and growing the Club – was a search for both coherence and meaning. The Club never consciously occupied such a space, but John's discursive framing sheds light on 'the qualities of experience' in which his love for United is anchored.[73] It is as if John was called to do this: to fulfil wishes of other Manchester United's supporters as it is in this practice that John actualises himself.[74] The structure of the Club gave him the ability to do that: to be a *matchmaker*, to organise and create moments of joy in the lives of others, as a result offering a meaningful extension to his adult life.

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[72] This is an allusion to career continuum models of fandom, e.g., Crawford, 'Career of the Sport Supporter'; and to intrinsic motivation, see Edward L. Deci, *Intrinsic Motivation* (New York: Plenum Press, 1975).
[73] Karen Whalley Hammell, 'Self-Care, Productivity and Leisure, or Dimensions of Occupational Experience? Rethinking Occupational "Categories",' *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 76, no. 2 (2009): 109.
[74] 'Calling' is employed here in secular terms and not in relation to Weber's notion of calling: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism and Other Writings*, *Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics* (London: Penguin Books, 2002); its application relates to eudaimonic well-being as described in Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, 'Hedonia, Eudaimonia and Well-Being: An Introduction,' *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9, no. 1 (2008): 1–11.

There are many things that John and I fail to unpack with any resounding clarity – one of them is his urge to see Manchester United play in the 1994 FA Cup Final, which subsequently reunited John with United and, along with George Best, became the recurrent motif in his narrative.[75] The lack of clarity in his motivation points to an opaqueness of external force – an uncharacterised pull that served as a calling.[76] The ambiguity of this episode that John, on one occasion, referred to as an 'awakening', however, is succeeded by the clarity of purpose – founding the Supporters' Club – and, I assume, was preceded by an under-surface confusion. Perplexity of incoherent identity where past and present were in disharmony and where John's childhood sense of his adult-self and his adult sense of his child-self had no meaningful place in his narrative.[77] The Club, therefore, not only reunited John with United but also reunited him with his past and his childhood reminiscences and imaginings; it integrated the different stages of his life into his biography and allowed him to derive meaning from various acts of kindness – all under the unifying entity of his love for United.[78]

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Love combines passion and madness in the same way that Manchester United brought benefit and detriment to John's life.[79] While the love for Manchester United threaded together the different people's wishes that John was able to fulfil as the Club's President, this thread regretfully did not extend to his family. Although there is no magic that can purify love from its unhealthy side effects, John's secondary career that evolved from this, at times, seemingly obsessive passion has served an

[75] Ricoeur, *Narrative and Time Vol. 1*, 31–50.
[76] Ryan D. Duffy and William E. Sedlacek, 'The Presence of and Search for a Calling: Connections to Career Development', *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 70, no. 3 (2007): 590–601.
[77] This is an allusion to an earlier evoked notion of the Dream, see Levinson, *Seasons of a Man's Life*.
[78] The importance of career transformations to be congruent with a person's self-concept are discussed in Douglas T. Hall, Gourang Zhu and Amin Yan, 'Career Creativity as Protean Identity Transformation,' in *Career Creativity: Explorations in the Remaking of Work*, ed. Maury A. Peiperl, Michael B. Arthur and N. Anand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 159–80.
[79] Margot Waddell, 'Love and Its Vicissitudes,' in *Love and Its Vicissitudes*, ed. André Green and Gregorio Kohon (London: Routledge, 2005), x.

important function in remodelling his narrative identity and integrating the different stages of his life.[80]

Having had an opportunity to actively reflect on his passion and the years he spent running the Supporters' Club, John became acutely aware of the many ways in which his time at the helm of the club had impacted his family. At our second meeting, John expressed a resolve to step down from the presidency of the Club while firmly declaring that this would not affect his relationship with Manchester United.

John instantly acted on his words, and by the time we met in early 2016 he had spoken to his prospective replacement. The contributor was excited about stepping away from his responsibilities at the Club and was looking forward to the next stage of his life. John did not waver in his decision and in an email in late 2018, he confirmed that he had officially stepped down from the Club's presidency in late 2016 and since then, he has only attended a handful of the Club's gatherings.

[80] Some scholars take the view that sports passions can be healthy or unhealthy, establishing this binary through specific behaviours as theorised in Vallerand et al., 'On Obsessive and Harmonious Passion.'

Chapter 4 | Steph – Reality meets Ritual

Contrary to a formal process of John's recruitment, Steph became a part of my PhD research rather organically. I had known Steph fairly well as a department colleague and a fellow doctoral student since my very first days in Melbourne. And, since those initial encounters I had associated Steph with Australian rules football and had joked many times about her being my research 'subject'.

Apart from some pilot interviews that I conducted with friends when working on my Master's thesis, this was the first time I engaged in a research process with a person I knew as a friend. Perhaps, due to the prospect of unfamiliarity, I was initially reluctant to make Steph a part of my research. However, in the end I simply could not decline her enthusiasm and excitement about being written about in this thesis.

Following a lengthy period of making trivial remarks about this possibility, in July 2016 we finally made it a reality and sat down in one of North Melbourne cafes to talk about her passion for the AFL and, in particular, the Geelong Cats.[1] Steph started the research process at the age of twenty-six and was twenty-eight when we met for the last time in November 2018. During this time a couple of teams became unexpected AFL Premiers while the Cats kept up a consistent level of performance, without making it through to the Grand Final.[2] Steph and I covered some of these exciting AFL storylines while continuing to focus on her emotional immersion in the world of football which she was atypically articulate about.

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[1] It is a common vernacular to use AFL synonymously to Australian rules football even though it is an acronym for the Australian Football League. While some vehemently oppose equating Australian Rules to the AFL, Steph is comfortable with this vernacular, which is implicitly felt throughout the chapter. Interestingly, the AFL commission is considered to be the 'keeper of the code', see AFL, *Annual Report* (Melbourne, 2002).

[2] Recorded conversations with Steph, July 13, 2016; October 17, 2016; April 18, 2017; November 30, 2018. In 2016 season the Geelong Cats made the Preliminary Final where the club was defeated by the Sydney Swans. In the 2017 season, the Cats were again knocked out in the Preliminary Final – this time by the Adelaide Crows. In 2018, the club once again made the Final Series, but lost to Melbourne in the Elimination Final.

> It's not like I plan my entire life around what happens on the football field, but, on the other hand, I honestly don't know if I feel the types of emotions like I feel when, you know, particular things happen in football. I don't know if I feel those types of things in other, in you know … my main life. So, it's kind of hard to explain in terms of like significance, because, on the one hand, I'm going like this is not the most significant thing, but, on the other, if you're feeling, I guess, deep emotions about this, maybe it is significant. I am not sure.

Steph suddenly questions the duality of football and everyday life that she herself delineated earlier. This follows her retelling of one of her most emotionally gripping childhood memories of football. As I challenge Steph to describe and sum up those feelings and emotional transitions in the context of her life, perhaps not surprisingly her response provides a sense of interaction between earlier distinct paradigms. This leaves me wondering whether it was my probe that imposed this realignment.[3]

At times, my prior knowledge of the contributor and her passion explicitly framed the questions and consequently the discourse we ended up constructing, which brought epistemological questions to the forefront of this collaboration. Although Steph, unlike John, did not have a particular story to tell, our collaboration uncovered many stories and storylines – sometimes intertwining and other times isolated. The narrative multiplicity, which emerged through our dialogues, formed a rather exploratory research meta-narrative that introduced many tangentially intersecting themes on different modes of community, consumption and, more generally, involvement in sport. These loose thematic connections found their emplotment in Steph's articulate reflections on her emotional world and the place of sport in that realm, unwinding the tensions between community and communion, agency and structure, reality and ritual.

The illuminating utility of situated description revealed in John's narrative re-emerges in Steph's multidimensional storytelling where situatedness of her experiences offers a helpful addition to her articulate paradigmatic expressions on emotions – their types and their meanings. It is through these rich and situated accounts that the central duality between real life and football life, which, in turn,

[3] Mishler, 'The Joint Construction of Meaning.'

facilitates a number of other dichotomies, is diminished and, on occasions, presents itself as irrelevant. The journey from these binaries to a place of congruence and coherence is punctuated by theoretical frameworks, popular among sports scholars, pertaining to carnival, anti-structure and community.[4] The context of Steph's story and her childhood athletic ambitions corroborate earlier introduced notions of the self-aggrandising and self-congratulatory culture of the Australian Football League as well as the League's overinflated cultural standing as the champion of social issues.[5]

Community *vs.* Communion

> I remember crying, but also remember not quite understanding the significance of it. I don't think I understood why is my team not going to be playing anymore and like why is this so devastating for this community.

Steph's first recollection of Australian Rules – the football code that has been a significant part of her and her family's life for as long as she can remember – is one of heartbreak. Steph reflects on a collective sense of sadness captured in a momentary experience, evoking – and evoked by – the elusiveness of community.[6] Notwithstanding the vagueness of 'community' sentiment, Steph conclusively summarises the issue with the brief but nonetheless powerful remark. Here, the contributor remembers the last match Fitzroy Football Club played in Melbourne in August of 1996 before one of the VFL foundation clubs was merged with the Brisbane Bears – a faraway interstate team devoid of history and tradition.[7] The club vanished from the sight of its traditional Melbourne-bound supporter base, and in a few years'

[4] The use of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of carnivalesque and Victor Turner's anti-structure and communitas in the scholarship on sports fans are noted in Chapter 2.
[5] I have expanded on these ideas and their historical and ideographic meanings and transitions in Elena Balcaite, 'Narratives in Dialogue: Remembering, Experiencing and Appropriating Changes in the Culture of Australian Rules Football,' *International Journal of the History of Sport* 35, no. 5 (2019): 468-86.
[6] Bauman, *Community.*
[7] 'Brisbane Bears Chronology,' Brisbane Lions, accessed April 27, 2017, http://www.lions.com.au/club/history/brisbane-bears-history/chronology.

time its AFL presence was completely submerged in the Brisbane franchise and their newly found success.[8]

The six-year-old Steph was at their final AFL game with her father and her brother. While not understanding much of it and what it meant to others there, she intuitively felt tearful and heartbroken. At that age, the contributor did not have a perspective on the merger and the necessity of it; and until this day she cautiously strings her thoughts together when articulating her position on the AFL's conduct and strategy choices surrounding the deal.[9] Then and there as a six-year-old, she was able to gauge just enough to understand the collective sadness the event elicited and comprehend the devastating effect the merger had on the community of Fitzroy supporters.

Steph's evocation of community is elusive and more akin to communitas – a momentary sense of togetherness.[10] Initially, Steph's 'community' seems to be far-reaching and inclusive, but, when probed further, she admits that at the time her understanding of community was limited. To her, the community were the people who wore the same jumpers:

> Like at the time my understanding of the community was like: me and my dad and my brother – all wearing Fitzroy jumpers and seeing a whole lot of other people wearing the same colours. I remember learning the words to the song. And, the song had the colours like the red, gold and blue in the lyrics. And, I remember the feeling of like putting it together: oh, so like everyone wearing those colours that are mentioned in the song, they are our people, like we are all on the same side. That was great … I really like the jumper, I don't know whether cause I actually like it or I just have good memories of it.

[8] Brisbane Lions is considered to be one of the most successful AFL clubs; the club won three consecutive Premierships in 2001, 2002 and 2003. While Fitzroy's AFL presence was submerged by the success of the Brisbane Lions, the original Fitzroy club came out of administration in 1998 and since has safeguarded its tradition in Melbourne by entering various partnerships with amateur and semi-professional clubs. In 2008 the partnership with Fitzroy Reds evolved into a merger agreement. Through this merger, The Fitzroy Football Club returned to its original ground – Brunswick Street Oval. The club also now plays in their red, gold and blue jumper of 1975-1996, see 'About,' Fitzroy Football Club, accessed April 27, 2017, https://www.fitzroyfc.com.au/about.
[9] The decade-long merger talks and the final deal are discussed in Peter Ker, 'The Merger That Never Got Across the Line,' *Sunday Age*, July 13, 2003.
[10] Bauman, *Community*; Turner, *Ritual Process*.

Here, Steph also cleaves onto the totemic symbolism of the team jumper and the immediate social ties which momentarily anchor this 'imagined community' of Fitzroy supporters.[11] Although the origins of the AFL are certainly grounded in communal bonding and localised passions which were clearly delineated in what used to be a competition of Melbourne and its suburbia, the place-people nexus had been eroding since the 1960s and long before the Victorian competition grew into a national monopoly.[12] The initial spur for this continuing erosion was ground rationalisation practices that first affected Steph's childhood team, the Fitzroy Lions, as early as 1966.[13] Before then, the Lions had represented the small inner-city suburb of Fitzroy and the working-class community who resided there; but neither Steph nor her family had any physical ties to this geographic community, which could have facilitated a historical grounding to her communal sentiments.[14] Instead, the contributor's situational belonging to Fitzroy and the crowd of people wearing Fitzroy jumpers was embedded in her dad's haphazard choice of allegiance: 'The thing about my dad – he loves an underdog.' 'He is a pretty weird guy' – Steph added later.

Following Fitzroy's Melbourne farewell Steph soon turned to the Geelong Football Club (the Cats) and her brother invested in the Richmond Football Club (the Tigers) as their dad became forever stuck supporting both the Cats and the Tigers. Neither the old nor the modified family tradition encompasses the entire family unit. While Steph and her brother initially followed their dad in supporting Fitzroy and their dad returned the favour by embracing his children's newly formed allegiances, Steph's mum has always remained on the sidelines in her support for Hawthorn – by far and away the League's most successful club since the 1970s.

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[11] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
[12] Victorian Football League (VFL) – predecessor of the Australian Football League (AFL). The League was a state-wide competition since its foundation in 1896. In the 1990 it was renamed to reflect the League's expansion beyond Victoria.
[13] On Brunswick Street Oval see Adam Muyt, *Maroon and Blue: Recollections and Tales of the Fitzroy Football Club* (North Carlton: Vulgar Press, 2006), 27–36. For a more general commentary on the VFL's ground rationalisation see Stewart and Dickson, 'Crossing the Barassi Line,' 77-78; and Leonie Sandercock and Ian Turner, *Up Where, Cazaly? The Great Australian Game* (Sydney: Granada, 1981), 136–138.
[14] The importance of locality in sustaining sports passion is noted in Bale, *Sports Geography*, 19.

> My mum is a Hawthorn supporter since her youth, it's not a family thing. On her side of the family, they don't have one big team that the whole family supports. They just kind of, I don't know, like they picked their own teams, I guess. She went for Hawthorn, cause her dad used to work in Hawthorn. I am not sure (apart from that) why she picked them. So, she kind of kept that team, but she never tried to make us Hawthorn supporters … thankfully … but my dad and my older brother and I were like Fitzroy fans together, and we had all like Fitzroy jumpers and stuff. And, he [Steph's dad] took us to games and that kind of stuff …

The connection with the Hawthorn Football Club that Steph's mum draws on is another good illustration of the random ways in which sporting allegiances are often forged, but it also opens up a possibility of a different kind of family ritual – formed around the game rather than allying loyalties. In Steph's family, there has always been a diversity of AFL commitments facilitating certain modes of spectating, which, despite divergent loyalties, are evidently communal.[15]

A small window into Steph's family and their spectating practices transforms my understanding of community within contributor's narrative. Having been invited to watch a clash between Steph's beloved Geelong and Richmond – the team adopted by her brother – it appeared as though I was given a first-row ticket to an ongoing family feud, which did not seem to have a foreseeable conclusion. I was let in on her family's football tradition devoid of a common allegiance but entrenched with familiarity. Here, community was not bound by place or tribalism, it was, indeed, the familiarity of the occasion that created a shared experience.[16]

Steph feels at home in this shared experience, and it is this familiarity of 'feeling at home' that engenders communal experiences or at least evokes such terminology.[17]

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[15] The use of 'communal' has no specific theoretical implications here and follows Steph's discursive constructions, which identify a variety of social encounters, both private and public, as 'communal'.

[16] Communities in relation to sport are often seen as communities of place, culture and other shared facets of identity, see Grant Jarvie, 'Sport, Nationalism and Cultural Identity,' in *The Changing Politics of Sport*, ed. Lincoln Allison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 58–83.

[17] Belonging is often conflated with a sense of attachment to a place, see Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging'; Yet, Steph's belonging is an extension of place-belongingness and a sense of belonging that is attached to notions of feeling safe and 'feeling at home', see Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,' *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3 (July 2006): 197–214; Steph's negotiation of belonging, I argue, is situational as described in Kirsten Visser, '"Because We're All Different" - Everyday Experiences of Belonging among Young People from Immigrant Backgrounds in Tottenham,' *Geoforum*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.02.002.

This is not to say that Geelong's inspiring win that night did not evoke a team-oriented sense of common identity. It certainly did. As the match progressed, the divisions amongst Steph's family and friends strengthened, although remained light-hearted.[18] Steph's dad's peculiar swings of support between the Tigers and the Cats provided a necessary relief to the tensions that might have been simmering under the surface. As it all seemed cheerful and inconsequential, I was acutely aware of Steph's edgy demeanour which signalled just how much the outcome of the match mattered to her and provided a helpful insight into her relationship with the Cats.

The importance that Steph placed on the outcome of the match coalesced with otherwise light-hearted family banter revealed a multiplicity of belongings interplaying in her match spectating practices and, in turn, her fandom.[19] Steph's unlikely support for the Geelong Cats – her choice of team after Fitzroy left Melbourne – may appear as a deliberate separation of passion and place-belongingness or, at least, a transformation of this nexus, particularly when considering Billy's connection to a place explored in Chapter 8.[20] That said, different and more fluid belongings emerge in the contributor's recollections:

> I don't remember … I don't have a memory of a gap between Fitzroy, but I've mentioned that I was playing football with my best friend at the time. And, most of her family, apart from one person, were fanatical Geelong supporters. And so, I think, I very much associated football with her and her brother, cause we were playing together. And, that whole family, I think, were very keen to like call me in as a Geelong supporter and would take me to football. And, I think, I willingly consented to becoming a Geelong supporter pretty quickly.

The Geelong Football Club appealed to Steph because of her friendship with these passionate Geelong supporters and despite the club's intermediate location. It was a level of familiarity and a situationally forged connection that made the child-Steph to support Geelong – a club based in a city seventy-five kilometres south-west to her hometown of Melbourne. However, her unfolding life narrative neatly weaved the

[18] In Round 21 of the 2016 AFL season Geelong played Richmond. The Tigers charged in front at the start of the match but were defeated in the end as the Cats clawed their way back into the match in the last quarter.
[19] Again, this builds on situational and fluid negotiations of identity and belonging as represented in Visser, '"Because We're All Different."'
[20] Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging'.

Geelong Cats in; making the AFL club and all its attributes, including the unlikely geography, a much more *logical* addition to her life. Now, in her late twenties Steph appreciates a strong people-place nexus that Geelong has been able to maintain despite the erosion of localised passions elsewhere in the AFL:

> I guess it's just being able to know that I can go down to Geelong and just feel like be[ing] completely among my people like anytime I want to. I still feel like there is a kind of community feeling that's attached to Geelong in a way that's not attached to other Melbourne teams. Especially, emphasised by, you know, when we won our first Premiership in like how many years – decades and decades and decades – the whole town was like painted in blue and white, every shop front had like a billion of stickers outside and like, you know, every single business in Geelong and home in Geelong completely behind their team … whereas … you saw a little bit of that with like Footscray and the western suburbs, but I don't think it's to the same level of like real small community involvement you get in Geelong.

Steph understands the significance of geographical place to the emotional dynamics of her fandom. This does not define her personal connection with her support for Geelong. Rather, it is an essential feature of her team, which makes Geelong different from other Victorian clubs, hence worthy of her support.[21] Owing to Steph's lack of intelligible connections to Geelong, throughout almost two decades of passionate support she has created a plot in which the club reflects her life-story and her life-story reflects the club. The plot positions geography as a formative and, unquestionably, significant aspect of her fandom. Despite the fractured nexus between the team and the place within the space of the AFL, she continues to value her clubs' distinctiveness in the material connection to its traditional geography.

Despite the curious references to community, the origins of Steph's passion for Geelong and its embeddedness in her family's football practices show a more general but also more intimate relational exercise than that of a localised passion. Besides a sense of community, communitas and a formation of collective identity, Steph's

[21] There is a symbiotic relationship between one's team and their identity, see Iouri Bernache-Assollant et al., 'Identity Crossbreeding in Soccer Fan Groups: A Social Approach. the Case of Marseille (France),' *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 35, no. 1 (2011): 72–100.

passion is continually informed by different modes of belonging and her relationships with others – either her family or her best friend.[22] These relationships do not necessarily follow ingrained understandings of sports fandom formation but are ultimately designed and exercised as an integration of the self into a larger cohort or a larger narrative.[23] Similarly to John's relationship with the history of Manchester United, which offers him ways to connect with other United supporters that he otherwise has little in common with, Steph anchors herself in the story of Geelong and through a symbiotic exchange between her own and her supported team's narratives.[24]

Agency *vs*. Structure

Steph may have only been six years old when Fitzroy played their last game in Melbourne; yet she knew full well that the Lions were her team, that blue, red and gold were her colours and that the experience of watching Fitzroy play prompted a feeling of being a part of something larger than herself.[25] At the age of six, she had sufficient agency to plan to see 'the Roys' play again and to continue barracking for this club with her dad and her older brother well into the future.[26] Steph's trajectory as an agent was, however, disturbed by the AFL's backroom deals and the unexpected Fitzroy-Brisbane merger.[27] The separation of agency and structure facilitated an opening in which emotions, normally associated with 'the Roys', intensified and coalesced with the feeling of discontinuity, which, then, warranted the misery and the tears.[28]

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[22] Turner, *Ritual Process*.
[23] Andrea E. Abele and Bogdan Wojciszke, 'Agency and Communion from the Perspective of Self versus Others,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93, no. 5 (2007): 751–63.
[24] Ibid.
[25] The original colours of Fitzroy Football Club were gold, blue and maroon. In 1974, red replaced maroon on the team jumper, but one of the team's nicknames remained 'the Maroons'.
[26] Agency here builds on McAdams's tripartite personality model as outlined in Chapter 2, see McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[27] Ker, 'The Merger.'
[28] Barbalet, 'Why Emotions Are Crucial?'

The Fitzroy-Brisbane merger aligned with the AFL's structural requirements of continuing national expansion but diverged markedly from the collective agency of the Fitzroy fans.[29] Most fans understood that a remedy was necessary for Fitzroy's dire financial situation and dispiriting on-field performances, yet they opposed the type of cure that they were being forced to accept.[30]

Despite remembering the merger as deeply saddening, Steph continues with the relational exercise and immediately positions her views on the Brisbane-Fitzroy deal and the choices made by the AFL in relation to her dad:

> Well, I'm very like influenced by my dad's opinions on it; he has very strong opinions on it … His way of remembering, but I know some people in Fitzroy think this as well: like Fitzroy could have merged with a Melbourne team … I think, they were gonna merge with North Melbourne at some point or Western Bulldogs … and the AFL really wanted football to become more popular up North. And so, his words that he uses: 'they sold Fitzroy.' So, they just gave the team away and, you know, it wasn't gonna have any actual community or supporters won't be able to like go see home games. The really devastating bit (and I definitely remember this at the time) is that it only took one or two years for them to have none of the Fitzroy players playing for them anymore.

Perhaps, due to a lack of rich, sharp and well-informed memory of the events surrounding the Fitzroy-Brisbane merger owing to her young age, Steph seemingly withdraws her agency from the response to my question on what the merger meant for the community of Fitzroy supporters. I feel as though, Steph is reluctant to make any condemnatory claims about the AFL. Even when I insist on her personal opinion, her response, while unfavourable, is articulated prudently:

> I don't really know how bad the financial situation of Fitzroy was at the time, but, I think, they should have tried harder to keep it in Victoria even if they had to merge with another team … keep it somewhere where the fans could still support their team … I think it was pretty … extremely rough on the community to just like basically obliterate the team … and even worse to not only openly close down the club, but like presented like a merger and like: the team will still exist … blah blah blah. Like, it's pretty dishonest. I think, given that the team basically ceased to exist, and they just phased them out. Yeah, that's what I think. So, it's pretty similar to what my dad thinks.

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[29] Bernard East, *Australian Rules Football in a Commercial Era: Catering for Theatregoers and Tribals* (Petersham: Walla Walla Press, 2012).
[30] Fitzroy fans preferred North Melbourne as a merger partner given the club's Melbourne location, see Ker, 'The Merger.'

Steph's relation to this memory informs her present relationship with the AFL as a corporate body and a provider of her beloved game. Steph is undoubtedly well-informed and circumspect about the League's commercial agendas yet this, to her, is a separate matter that does not encroach on her fan experiences. 'To me like all of that stuff about like football being commercialised has not penetrated to my experiences at all' – she states without hesitation. This ability to disentangle the two is later explained through her intimate relationship with the Geelong Cats – the football club she supports:

> When I'm thinking about Geelong, I am thinking about myself as within that club, you know. It's kind of like, I don't know: if the AFL world … is becoming a horrible place and bad things are happening that's kind of like outside of the club for me. I feel like it's quite easy for me to just focus on my club.

The disentanglement is also aided by Steph's selective engagement in the communicative excess of televised footy, which is similar to John's clear-headed understanding of the role technology plays in maintaining his support for United.[31] Since the early 90s and the gradual erosion of localised passions, mediated community have become the AFL's overriding relational capacity and the producer of emotional content.[32] It is through mediation, repetition and *event-isation* that footy is able to transmit, exude and, on occasions, create or perform cultural significance.[33] The wholesale offering of the AFL is, of course, enmeshed in Steph's footy experiences regardless of her intellectually drawn boundaries. Yet, the omnipresence of the AFL does not directly rid fans of agency and their ability to produce their own content and meanings.[34] For Steph, 'the game starts when the

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[31] Kennedy and Hills, *Sport, Media and Society*, 54-72. See Chapter 3 on John's relationship with technology in his fandom.

[32] Ian Andrews, 'The Transformation of "Community:" Redrawing "Community" Boundaries in the Post-War' *Viewpoint* 2, no. 1 (1999): 106–24.

[33] One of the prime examples of this is the AFL's appropriation of the ANZAC Day – the anniversary of the first military action fought by Australian and New Zealand soldiers in WWI – for their own economic ends. See a critical reflection on this in Melissa Walsh, '"Lest We Forget:" The Tradition of ANZAC Day Football,' *Sporting Traditions* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–15.

[34] Some argue that the abundance and diversity of online platforms where sports fandom, including the AFL fandom, can be expressed and constructed point to an increased (and not diminished) fan agency, hence the calls to study fans' online participation and expression, e.g., Tom Gibbons and Kevin Dixon, '"Surf's up!" A Call to Take English Soccer Fan Interactions on the Internet More Seriously,' *Soccer & Society* 11, no. 5 (2010): 599–613. It is,

banners are up, the songs are playing and the players are running out' and not when the broadcasters and their agents, tightly connected with the AFL, decide to commence their pre-game shows.[35] Steph's viewing practices somewhat disturb the underhand intertextuality of televised footy and its inbuilt banal masculinities and femininities by opening up a narrow yet intimate and emotionally potent space to engage in footy and create her own contextual and emotional narratives:

> Well, I mean my dad and I will probably spend like an hour before the game analysing our line-up and talking about who should have been in, who should have been out, you know, who is really gonna lift for us today … who might we need in these conditions, should we have gone with another tall or should we have stuck with the line-up that we had won with last week … We do a lot of micro-analysis before the game. Some of the stuff that the commentators are talking about interest me, but … there is a lot of BS in that …

Throughout our collaboration Steph displays an intuitive sense of the game: strategic choices, player selection and tactics are all relevant to her modes of spectating. Her understanding goes beyond the mediated sound bites; and although Steph attributes that mostly to 'fantasy football', she also agrees with my suggestion that her vast experience in playing sports, including footy, must have contributed to her analytical modes of spectating.[36]

Steph's first recollection of Australian Rules spectatorship is predated by her memories of doing athletics and playing footy:

> Yes, it was my second sport. I did athletics when I was four. And, I remember me and my best friend at the time starting to play AFL. It was called Auskick – that was one of the competitions. We were the only two girls, the first two girls that have ever played at our region. And, I remember we were split up because she was a year older than me, and we were like on different teams. So, I was like the only girl on my whole team of boys. And, I remember that. I remember some of the trainings of that very well. And, I remember the coach quite well. And, we got to play at like

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however, problematic to see these platforms and seemingly new fandom expressions they afford as detached from the political and consumerist economy of sport, because the epistemological economy is unavoidably connected with the consumerist economy, see Amelie Hastie, 'The Epistemological Stakes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Television Criticism and Marketing Demands,' in *Undead TV: Essays on Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, ed. Elana Levine and Lisa Parks (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 74–95.

[35] AFL matches start with players running through a hoisted banner onto the field to the tune of their official club song.

[36] It is beyond the scope of this chapter and this thesis to interrogate the particularities of sports fans' engagement in fantasy sports, which is a growing area of scholarly interest, see Richard G. Lomax, 'Fantasy Sports: History, Game Types and Research,' in *Handbook of Sport and Media*, ed. Arthur A. Raney and J. Bryant (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006), 383–392.

> the half time, not an AFL game but a VFL game. It was Coburg. And, I remember being in the changing rooms, and I remember the game – standing to go on the field …

The storyline of Steph as an athlete rather than a strictly 'fan-subject' informs and contextualises her present spectating practices, in which accruing knowledge and deepening understanding of the game emerge as critical components of a fulfilling footy experience.[37] Besides these epistemic values and qualities in her spectating practices, Steph as an athlete-subject shapes the narrative of her fan-subject. Indeed, for Steph, sport was not simply an extra-curricular activity, it was her life's ambition forming and informing not only her fan-narrative but, most certainly, her self-narrative:

> Well, I always wanted to be an athlete when I was growing up. First, I wanted to be an Olympian when I was doing little athletics. I really wanted to be a runner, and then I really wanted to be a triple jumper and then … And, I was never quite like good enough, and yeah … And then, I remember never feeling … When I was doing Auskick (like the AFL thing), I remember feeling like there was never any way to be a football player, cause there just weren't those pathways for like [females].[38]

Steph is scrupulously self-critical about her own athletic ability mirroring the patterns of capitalist life narratives of individual responsibility and aspiration.[39] Yet, amidst the self-reproach, structures of capitalism and hegemonic masculinity overlay her narrative in the same way they overlaid her athletic ambition.

The AFL as a sports league has one of the highest proportions of female fans.[40] However, Steph's account points out that until recently the limit to a woman's engagement in this women-friendly football league was, indeed, spectatorship. Steph and I spoke at length about her gendered sporting experiences in October 2016

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[37] Li-Shiue Gau and Jeffrey D. James, 'A Ten-Value-Type Framework Associated with Spectator Sports: A Qualitative Inquiry,' *Sage Open* 1, no. 3 (2013). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013485580

[38] Auskick is the AFL-run program for primary-school-aged children; it provides an introduction to Australian rules football through exercises that are modified and child-friendly.

[39] The emerging pattern of isolationist narrativity is discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the popular stories of perseverance and redemption, see Freund, 'Under Storytelling's Spell' and McAdams, *Redemptive Self*.

[40] Peter Mewett and Kim Toffoletti, 'Rogue Men and Predatory Women: Female Fan's Perceptions of Australian Footballers' Sexual Conduct,' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 43, no. 2 (2008): 165–80.

– exactly a month after the AFL Women's was officially launched.[41] Steph was excited about the new developments but also reflective on what it would have been like to be a five-year-old playing Auskick now, knowing that if she wanted to pursue football as a career, she could. While Steph's excitement is contagious, it is also a rather damning indictment of sport as an undeniable construction of hegemonic masculinity.

As a twenty-four-thousand-strong crowd filled Princes Park for the inaugural AFL Women's match contested by Carlton and Collingwood, collective excitement for the new League was deafening.[42] While some raised issues around strikingly unequal pay between women and men's competitions, lack of sponsorship deals and modifications to the rules, there was little concern over the AFL's 'moral' endowment to commission the Australian game for women in the first place. Women have played the game in its original eighteen-a-side form for over a century.[43] The history of women's football is rich and interesting, and yet the AFL is rather uninterested in it.[44]

The new women's league is an auxiliary body to the corporation of the AFL. It allows the AFL to claim social consciousness and a moral high-ground while making a comparatively small and non-committal monetary contribution.[45] Of course, the AFL attributes the scale of the competition and a slim remuneration for its athletes to the processes of free market: lack of lucrative sponsorship and television deals are often

[41] AFL Women's, also known as AFLW, was officially launched on September 15, 2016, and its inaugural season contested by eight teams took place in early 2017. All eight clubs were subsidiaries of the AFL men's clubs.
[42] The inaugural AFLW game contested by Collingwood and Carlton took place at the Princes Park – one of the iconic VFL grounds – and attracted a crowd of 24,500. Media commentators were full of praise for the AFLW and its popularity was continually underscored without much pause or contestation.
[43] Brunette Lenkić and Rob Hess, *Play on! The Hidden History of Women's Australian Rules Football* (Richmond: Echo Publishing, 2016).
[44] Rob Hess, 'Growth of Women's Football Has Been a 100-Year Revolution – It Didn't Happen Overnight,' *The Conversation*, February 3, 2017, https://theconversation.com/growth-of-womens-football-has-been-a-100-year-revolution-it-didnt-happen-overnight-71989.
[45] This non-committal attitude was particularly strongly demonstrated when, in 2018, AFL withdrew AFLW's marketing funding in favour of the AFLX – a new pre-season competition played in a seven-a-side format. Some AFLW games were not broadcasted live on the national television to make place for AFLX games, see Kate O'Halloran, 'Erin Phillips Sets AFLW Alight amidst Shadow of AFLX,' *The Guardian*, February 18, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/feb/19/erin-phillips-sets-aflw-alight-amidst-shadow-of-aflx.

quoted.[46] Yet, that same free market can be easily infringed when it concerns the AFL's ultimate ambition: the League has no problem in financially propping up some of their struggling men's interstate teams to ensure its wide geographical spread and its national status.[47]

The AFL's 'revolutionary' as opposed to evolutionary approach to the creation of the national women's football competition is symptomatic of an insidious persistence of masculine hegemonies within sporting structures.[48] From its foundations, modern sport was designed for a male-subject with its codes and standards favouring what we have come to understand as a male-body; hence an intense push and a liberal outbreak for women's inclusion into neoliberal structures of elite sport ensure the longevity of these same hegemonic structures with minimal reform.[49] Since the co-option is led by masculine-subjects and neoliberal ontologies, what looks like a step towards equity may simply be a deceptive and short-lived image of equality.[50]

The constraints of hegemonic masculinity permeate not only Steph's generally positive outlook on the AFLW but also more personal aspects of her life story. When Steph reminisces on uncontrived physical agency that her child-self enjoyed, she reluctantly describes herself as a 'tomboy'. Steph later adds that her evident reluctance is merely concerned with the outdated terminology as opposed to the idea of 'tomboy', which, to her mind, reflects rather well some of her appearances and behaviours at primary school:

> All through primary school I was kind of like quite a tomboy, I was like playing sport every lunch time … I don't think I wore a dress or a skirt or whatever at any point in primary school and then at some point in high school … like early high school I kind of did a full flip and just like didn't

[46] At the time of writing, the television deal is such that the Channel Seven and Foxtel are not required to pay for broadcasting AFLW matches.
[47] West, 'Back to the Future: Has the AFL Lost Its Community?'
[48] Hess, 'Growth of Women's Football'; English, 'Toward Sport Reform.'
[49] Richard Giulianotti, 'Gender Identities and Sexuality in Sport,' in *Sport: A Critical Sociology*, ed. Richard Giulianotti (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 81–101.
[50] There is evidence to suggest that the increased attention to women in the elite sport is due to the economic imperatives, see Toffoletti, 'Sexy Women Sports Fans.' This aligns with the view that equality is about providing opportunities within existing structures whereas equity is an effort towards restructuring the systems, see M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game: The History of Women's Sport in Canada* (Toronto: Broadview, 2002).

> wanna play sport anymore and just wanted to like, you know, buy dresses and that kind of thing …

Steph's reflections present some common trajectories of gender socialisation, wherein so-called tomboy behaviours are tolerated and deemed normative until puberty, yet at the turn of adolescence they become to be seen as unruly and, hence, not fully accepted.[51] Her reduced enthusiasm for more physically demanding games and a switch to playing netball due to its accredited femininity hint at the restrained physical agency and the adoption of gendered norms. This drastic personal change was prefaced by an internal struggle between structural demands and her agency that are revealed in Steph's candid reminiscences:

> I remember sometimes at school sports the cool thing for girls to do would be to pretend to be sick so that they could sit on the sideline and like watch the boys play … and I remember being like so torn between like: oh, I should go and do what the rest of the girls are doing, because I wanna be friends with them and I want them to think I'm cool. But, also that looks so much more fun, I wanna do that. I just remember being really torn between those two things … also like, just not wanting to be like the one girl out on the field …[52]

Socially and culturally embedded convention is that girls grow out of their 'boyish' behaviours. Steph's account, however, vividly illustrates that the processes undergone by some 'boyish' girls is more akin to suppression rather than progression.

In the course of this suppression, her footy fandom did not emerge as a contested terrain. When I straightforwardly ask Steph whether she continued following the game after, in her own words, a 'full flip' in her self-expression, the contributor pauses to tap into her memories:

> Just trying to think if I followed it [footy] with the same intensity … hmm no, I am pretty sure [I] did sustain that. Yeah, [I] kind of see that outside of [playing sport].

[51] Betsy Levonian Morgan, 'A Three Generational Study of Tomboy Behaviour,' *Sex Roles* 39, no. 9–10 (1998): 787–800.
[52] McAdams, *Personality Development*.

As I follow this up with a brief comment that the AFL seems to have had an historically strong female following, Steph latches onto my remark in aligning this shared contextual knowledge to her own life narrative:

> Yeah, I don't think I ever had like a reaction away from supporting in the same way that I did against playing.

Structural boundaries may have not supressed Steph's fan-agency in the same way they affected her athletic ambitions. This is not to suggest that gendered norms do not exist within the AFL spectatorship experiences. The League has an unparalleled female following, and its historically active women fan-base can be traced back to the League's roots in Victoria and the state's early and radical women's politics.[53] However, this does not illuminate the diversity of spectating practices undertaken within this cohort. It also does not suffice in explaining Steph's epistemic yet passionate engagement in the AFL spectacle and beyond.

Due to an overwhelming historical focus on male rather than female sports fans across fandom scholarship, increased visibility of female supporters is often positioned as an undeniable sign of inclusivity.[54] Yet, as argued by Kim Toffoletti the two should not be equated.[55] A growing body of research into female sports fans and their spectating practices demonstrates that higher female visibility in the stands is economically lucrative for the top-down institutions governing, administering (and profiting from) sport.[56] This visibility may seem inclusive on the surface, but it allows for the old binaries of authentic and inauthentic, global and local to persist.[57] Too often women fans are still presented as strikingly different from their male counterparts: seeking family entertainment with the necessary conveniences and feel-good atmosphere.[58] Overwhelming attention to such cases perpetuates

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[53] Matthew Klugman, 'Female Spectators, Agency and the Politics of Pleasure: An Historical Case Study from Australian Rules Football,' *International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 17 (2016): 2086–2104.
[54] Historical focus on male supporters is exemplified by the popular and academic focus on male spectator subcultures, most notably the ethnographies of English football hooligans, see Hughson, 'Among the Thugs'
[55] Toffoletti, 'Sexy Women Sports Fans.'
[56] Stacey Pope, *The Feminisation of Sports Fandom. A Sociological Study.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Toffoletti, *Women Sports Fans*.
[57] These binary issues associated with an increased visibility of female fans in the English football are discussed in Stacey Pope, 'Women as "New Consumer" Fans.'
[58] Ibid.

patriarchal hegemony and neglects the variety of engagements with sport of both men and women.

People's relationships with their sex are diverse and so are their relationships with sport. Thus, making categorical ascriptions, either gender-specific or not, is untenable and only helpful in so far as these typologies provide useful heuristic devices in understanding how one's agency, wherever it happens to be on a gender continuum, faced – and navigated through – the social, cultural and subcultural structures of spectator sport.[59]

Steph did not feel she had to compromise her newly established femininity to remain a fan of the AFL in the same way she had to compromise her physical agency to enact that femininity. This may have been different if she was a part of a different fan culture or took part in a specific fan subculture.[60] Although Steph's engagement with footy did not only originate within her family, it continued to be a family tradition which allowed a selective engagement with the structural mediation and wholesale production of the AFL. Steph's negotiation of her childhood's athletic ambition may have quelled her expectations for the gender parity in Australian rules football as an opportunity for women to play football at the highest level is seen by her in an overwhelmingly positive light. Steph's athletic ambition and experience in playing sport also informed her modes of spectating which stretched the boundaries of the crowded AFL space and circumscribed her own plot in which to support the Geelong Cats.

Reality *vs*. Ritual

> It's sort of hard for me to judge, because, on one level, I feel like I do see football as just like a pastime or like a leisure thing. You know, so it's sort of opposite side from like, you know, from real life.

[59] This goes back to the argument made in Chapter 1 on gender and sex being continuums as opposed to binary constructs.
[60] Pearson, *Ethnography of English Football Fans*.

While the Geelong Football Club has become Steph's buffer from whatever unappealing practices the AFL may present the fans with, here she goes further in suggesting that football may, also, be a shield from reality. Indeed, Steph sounds conflicted when trying to locate football in her everyday practices. The tension between her deep care for Geelong and the general understanding that football is a pastime results in an untenable duality cordoning football off from her lived practicalities.

In a string of paradigmatic expressions, Steph negotiates the location of her football passion. I listen with a knowing frame of mind. To me, the duality is familiar both empirically and theoretically. Based on my previous research experiences, autobiographical accounts of fandom and scholarly theorisation of sports fans' emotive encounters and their possibly disruptive manner – notions relating to a peripheral existence of sports passions are commonplace.[61] In scholarship, these ideas have two principle inspirations: the Bakhtinian notion of carnival and Victor Turner's roughly systemic collection of principles pertaining to anti-structural moments of social realities.[62] While the former is normally called upon to theorise unruly behaviours of fan groups and understand the effects of structural impositions on – and surveillance of – these groups, the latter emerges in a more underhand engagement with notions of 'communitas', 'liminality' and 'liminoid'.[63] All of them, however, pertain to certain modes of togetherness afforded by either permeable subcultural boundaries or provisional arrangements of sporting events.

Steph's first recollection of football has ostensibly liminal qualities: through the symbols of place, team jumper and colours temporary connections are created and

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[61] This is noted in Chapter 2.
[62] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*; Turner, *Ritual Process*; Mathieu Deflem expressed frustration that Victor Turner's concepts were often not particularly well systematised; hence leaving much for interpretation around the anti-structural moment, see Mathieu Deflem, 'Ritual, Anti-Structure and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis,' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, no. 1 (1991): 1–25.
[63] E.g., Richard Giulianotti, 'Scotland's Tartan Army in Italy: The Case for the Carnivalesque', *The Sociological Review* 39, no. 3 (1991): 503–27; Pearson, *Ethnography of English Football Fans*; on communitas see, e.g., Ian Fillis and Craig Mackay, 'Moving beyond Fan Typologies: The Impact of Social Integration on Team Loyalty in Football', *Journal of Marketing Management* 30, no. 3–4 (2014): 334–63; but it is also used in relation to more general terms of group emotions, e.g., Hyun-Woo Lee et al., 'Group Emotion in Spectator Sport: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Affective Qualia', *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 5, no. 2 (2013): 53–70.

some of the social structures are undermined.[64] In this transitional moment, the lack of fixed structural imprints submits all participants to an unfolding ritual and, in turn, renders everyone equal. The momentary feeling of equality engenders immediate relational aptitude, leading to what Turner defined as 'communitas'.[65] This illuminates Steph's unparalleled emotional exertion as she cried for Fitzroy and its community that was fixed in symbols but fluid in structure.[66] However, seeing this as a liminal break and within its dissipating relation to the social reality does not explain a perpetually transitional relation between Steph's passion and her everyday life.

When, similarly to Steph, Nick Hornby declared that football is 'another version of the world', the statement had a layer of reflexivity and a presumption of continuity.[67] It was as Bakhtin described a 'two-world condition' yet not as short-lived as a medieval carnival; it had a sense of continuity and an unending nature of pursuit.[68] Neither Hornby's nor Steph's pursuits are strictly bound by the anticipation of glory of their respective teams; in both life stories football pursuits are subliminally intertwined with the authors' everyday motivations and life aspirations. Indeed, Steph would have never described her athletic experiences as peripheral to her everyday life; and as she reminds me, following my attempt to move the conversation from her athletic to her fan involvement, the two are 'kind of connected'. 'I was taking an interest in playing AFL that was connected with an interest of going to see games and stuff' – Steph immediately elaborates. In the unfolding discourse, it transpires that her everyday motivations and passion for football are not only connected by proxy of her past athletic involvement but also by ongoing emotional associations.

As Steph reflects on her everyday exercises in football passion, the contributor points to the significance she puts on 'following players' lives':

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[64] Deflem, 'Ritual, Anti-Structure and Religion.'
[65] Turner, *Ritual Process*.
[66] 'Symbols' here refer to the team jumper and the club song that were underscored earlier by Steph.
[67] Hornby, *Fever Pitch*, 156.
[68] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 6.

> There are other things that … summon up deep emotional responses to me, but they just make me, I guess, really engage me: following players' lives and like the ones that have struggled with injury, the ones that like struggled with making it to the first [team] … Those things … I wouldn't say that reading about them always makes feel huge emotions. It's kind of like the same feeling when you like keeping up with your friend's life (that kind of thing) … like you want them to do well, you want success for them, you want meaning for them … I don't know what you call that … Is there a word for that? Wanting something good … for someone else?

This inclination to gather content pertaining to players' lives is particularly well illustrated by Steph's fascination with the story of James Podsiadly – a mature age footballer recruited by Geelong as a fitness coach, who played his first AFL game at the late age of twenty-eight.[69]

> I remember thinking: this is amazing for him [James Podsiadly], he came in to this club (that's like a really good club) at that stage thinking he was gonna like, you know, be like helping … like an assistant coach or whatever … and suddenly he's playing in a winning Grand Final team at like thirty-two, which is like when players are kind of retiring. I just remember thinking: imagine being him and thinking that the opportunity [has] passed you … cause there are so many people who would like to play at that level and just like never got there, and he was probably thinking: that's me, I'm just one of those people who like never got there. And then, suddenly he's just like out on the field with like, you know, all of these elite players. I just remember thinking that must be the most amazing feeling. And then, from our point of view: we've actually found this tall, sturdy, reliable player, who can kick goals and take extraordinary marks and do all these sorts of things that you really want your forward line to be doing. I just remember the commentators being, like, so excited about him and like it was such a great story for them as well.

For the contributor, this was an amazing story that did not only feed her passion for the Cats with the compelling emotional content, but also reassured her that 'unconventional routes' in life may be worth pursuing. While neither of us articulates this, I can sense a mutual understanding how Podsiadly's story is relevant to Steph's own muted and suppressed athletic ambitions, not necessarily as a source of hope but rather as a point of connection with the broader mythology of the team.

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[69] Geelong Football Club recruited James Podsiadly in 2009. The club listed him to play for their VFL side and employed him as a fitness coach. At the end of the year he was listed for the Geelong's AFL side at the age of twenty-eight, for a brief overview of Podsiadly's AFL career see Clare Evans, 'Feature: James Podsiadly,' *Geelongcats.com.au*, October 3, 2013, http://www.geelongcats.com.au/news/2013-10-03/feature-james-podsiadly.

> I guess, the thing that I really like about it [about James Podsiadly's story] is that like the enormous positive can come from a place where it's so unexpected … So, like if we got some young seventeen-year-old in the draft and trained him up and then he turned into a superstar, that would have been in the kind of conventional way finding some great player, but like having not done that almost makes it more special. I don't know it just makes me think that sometimes in life, you can just go the unconventional route and like still achieve success. I really like that story.

A sports fan's high sensitivity to the spectacle is often credited to high emotional investment, meaning that prior investment in the actors present in the on-field drama translates to visceral and cerebral responses in the stands.[70] Thus, emotional investment anchors seemingly immediate emotional responses. It is, however, unclear what this prior investment encapsulates. Undoubtedly, emotions are projected on a diversity of information sources: some immediate and some contextual, including memories and beliefs, which further limit an available degree of spontaneity.[71]

Steph's inclination to separate football from her everyday life emerged in her reflections on football as an emotional reality, where sensitivity is heightened, and emotional excess is anticipated. Intelligibly, football is trivial; it is inconsequential. Yet, on an emotional level, it is paramount. Steph attempts to reconcile these two clashing notions by divorcing them until the discursive inconsistency catches her off guard:

> It's not like I plan my entire life around what happens on the football field, but, on the other hand, I honestly don't know if I feel the types of emotions like I feel when, you know, particular things happen in football. I don't know if I feel those types of things in other, in you know, my main life. So, it's kind of hard to explain in terms of like significance, because, on the one hand, I'm going like: this is not the most significant thing, but, on the other, if you're feeling, you know, I guess, deep emotions about this, maybe it is significant. I am not sure.

[70] This relationship between high sensitivity to the on-field action and a prior investment to the on-field actors is exemplified by the concept of team identification and vicarious participation (i.e., basking in reflected glory), see Jonathan A. Jensen et al., 'Forty Years of BIRGing: New Perspectives on Cialdini's Seminal Studies,' *Journal of Sport Management* 30, no. 2 (March, 2016): 149–61.

[71] Carolyn Price, *Emotion* (Malden: Polity Press, 2015), 141; Ian Burkitt, 'Complex Emotions: Relations, Feelings and Images in Emotional Experience,' in *Emotions and Sociology*, ed. Jack Barbalet (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 151–67.

As Steph implicitly questions the boundaries between her 'main life' and football, the notion of the 'main life' is no longer a theoretical deduction instead, I sense, it is merely a discursive heuristic, employed to evaluate football as a part of her everyday life. She then places emotions at the centre of this improvised assessment, in which a tacit typology of emotions begins to emerge. Steph aligns salience with deep emotions; and as I insist on her to elaborate, she further extends her emotional typology:

> I would call it – shallow emotions. To me, times when I, sort of like, can enjoy something, but I'm also on another level like … you know when you enjoy something, but you are also still thinking about it or thinking about other things like … The emotion is sort of only some of the experience whereas, I think, deep emotions is where you're not thinking about anything else. There's like absolutely nothing else going on … You're completely, I don't know, it feels like your entire self is in that moment. That's what it feels like to me. I don't know, something that takes your entire person and makes the experience … the emotion. That's kind of how it feels *deep* to me.

For Steph, football is a sphere of 'deep emotions', which, unlike shallow ones, immerse her completely into the presence of reality. The distinction between deep and shallow emotions provides a window into Steph's initial framing of football as a reality peripheral to her everyday life. The immersion in football is an almost flow-like experience, thus appears detached from the social entanglements: structural, agentic and performative.[72] The appearances are, however, deceiving as neither a flow state nor Steph's football reality is removed from the past. Indeed, 'humans never act as a blank slate, even when we act impulsively'; and while it is easy to ignore emotions in paradigmatic expressions as articulation of emotions will always diverge from the immediate emotional experience, in practice emotional enactments are an instalment of life that follow its continuing trajectory.[73] Therefore, as Steph introduces the 'immediate' category to her typology, it is clear that this immediacy is expressive and concomitant rather than reticent and autonomous:

> I think, you experience those emotions in such a sharp direct way … because things happen quickly and there's a lot of action … it's like a single event or whatever that causes you feel, you know, really full emotions … I guess, immediacy is what I'm getting at, you know, a sense of immediacy

[72] Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008).
[73] Burkitt, 'Complex Emotions,' 154.

> there … I don't know if I feel that immediacy in my emotional response to other things in life … I'm trying to think what could be comparable … I don't know … I really don't know …

To Steph, immediacy is a distinct attribute of emotions begotten by a sporting spectacle. Although the depth of emotions is not exclusive to her football experiences, she fails to find a comparison to the 'sharp direct' way in which the depth of emotions absorbs her amidst a football match. This emotional immediacy follows the pace and the trajectory of a particular football match-up, but despite its instantaneous and expressive effect, the possibility of its instalment is grounded in something of the past. That something is a preceding instalment of Steph's life trajectory that can be theoretically ciphered into an idiosyncrasy of emotional investment.[74] While this is, of course, an inconspicuous network of relationships, Steph makes it discursively palpable through the notion and practice of trade-offs – relinquishing something in your everyday reality for a preferable outcome of a football game.

> Well, I remember particularly in Year Twelve in 2008 when I really wanted them [Geelong] to win the Grand Final … I had all of these exams and I was like trying to get my end of year score. And, I remember being like: I don't mind if my exams don't go as well as I want if Geelong wins. Like, that's a fair trade off to me: I get a kind of bad end of year score, but we win the Premiership.

The practice of trade-offs, while may be in some ways blithe and trivial, strikingly underscores the unscripted nature of sport, which not only diverges from other forms of cultural pastimes but is also intertwined with hope, faith and sacrifice.[75] The entanglement is not religious, but rather embedded in the situational experience and the continuing life trajectory. It is a sacrifice for the fullness of experience.[76] Here,

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[74] This is grounded in a processual understanding of narrative, see Jenny Rankin, 'What Is Narrative? Ricoeur, Bakhtin and Process Approaches,' *Concrescence* 3, no. 1 (2002): 1–12. It addresses fans' sensitivity to a spectacle as being grounded in prior emotional investment (discussed above).

[75] This vocabulary entwined with the essentialist readings of sports, such as Michael Novak, *The Joy of Sports: Endzones, Bases, Baskets, Balls and the Consecration of the American Spirit* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1994); but also pertains to the calls to investigate sports fans' behaviours in relation to spiritual values and their spiritual worlds which are based on empirical observations of athletic worlds, see Nesti, 'Sport Psychology and Spirit in Professional Football.'

[76] Behaviour-oriented sport management research would define this as a pleasure-driven fulfilment, e.g., Linda van Leeuwen, Shayne Quick and Kerry Daniel, 'The Sport Spectator Satisfaction Model: A Conceptual Framework for

the fullness of experience is the bottom-line.

> Like when there's a game that we probably are expected to have won, and when we win, there's happiness, but there's also like a lot of relief in there, because, I know, it is sort of a social thing still. I know that if we lose a game that we were expected to win, I can just expect this like influx of text messages and calls from people being like you didn't win. So, it's a little bit of a relief there, but like depending on the game, I get joy from like, you know, players who I have been following for years, following their stories and that kind of thing and them having a great game, them finally managing to do something that they never have done before or, you know, new players coming through or for our old players – all those types of things. I get joy from that.
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> Well, like now, I think, it's more about like having success. It's like joy in itself, like I wouldn't care if no one knew that I was a Geelong supporter and we won the Premiership, because like all of the joy would be, you know, within the experience itself rather than within what other people think.

An active effort exercised trough trade-offs to participate in the fullness of experience is also a mark of emotional maturity and maturity of passion, which signposts a distinctive split between hedonistic pleasures and eudaimonic well-being.[77] This may have once been about impression management for Steph, but now it is about the 'joy in itself'.[78] And, what is joy if not a connection or a harmonious state of possibilities? Steph's choice of words is curious: it is joy, not happiness, that she experiences when Geelong plays and succeeds. As Rollo May suggests that while happiness is about 'a fulfilment of old longings', joy 'is an unfolding of life', 'a revelation of what was unknown before', it 'is living on the razor's edge'.[79]

This may seem abstract and detached from the lived experience as an instalment of a continuing life trajectory. However, Steph's childhood reminiscence of an oscillating game contested by Geelong and Carlton illuminates this abstraction by bringing disparate nodes together. Here, the immediacy of joy unravels in the context of life's continuing trajectory with already familiar social actors, material spaces and

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Understanding the Satisfaction of Spectators,' *Sport Management Review* 5, no. 2 (2002): 99–128; but I argue in Chapter 9 that this care for both process and outcome, despite being enveloped in an undoubtedly consumerist economy, produces momentary pleasures that surpass hedonism, see Deci and Ryan, 'Hedonia, Eudaimonia and Well-Being.'

[77] Ibid.

[78] Impression management here refers to perceptions of sports fans grounded in psychology and social psychology, specifically the work of Cialdini, see Robert B. Cialdini and Kenneth D. Richardson, 'Two Indirect Tactics of Image Management: Basking and Blasting,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39, no. 3 (1980): 406–15; these understandings equally find their theoretical underpinnings in Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

[79] Rollo May, *Freedom and Destiny* (New York: A Delta Book, 1981), 242.

relatable feelings. Steph, aged eleven at the time, attended a match at the MCG with her and her best friend's families. (The same friend that introduced her to the Geelong Cats.) By this point, however, Steph's friend had moved overseas, and she remembers that 'football was the only time when we got to see them [her best friend and her family]' on their brief visits to Melbourne.

> I can't remember where they were living at that time, but they had to fly right at the end of the game. And so, we knew that we only just had enough time to get to the airport from the end of the game, but we all really wanted to be at the game. We [Geelong] played Carlton, and we have been winning for the whole day [match]. And then, in about third quarter, Carlton had this amazing quarter. I think, it might have even been down to one player … maybe … or a couple of players. And, they just kicked a string of goals … they just suddenly just kicked in front. I don't know how much time where was to go, but it was a complete shock. We all thought that the game was sawn up and we were celebrating and that kind of thing … Our parents were looking at their watches being like: we need to leave and get this family to the airport. But, this game has turned into this really close thing and like none of us kids wanted to leave at all and I remember where being five minutes on the clock and the parents dragging us out of our chairs: 'We have to go, we have to get to the airport, we can't miss this flight.' And, we were all like glued to the game being like: 'We can't miss this game. Don't matter about your flight. We can't miss this game!' I remember sitting at the MCG at the top, and so I just remember running down all these flights of stairs … and you could run down like a flight of stairs and go back out and check what the score was … And, you could hear the crowd. And so, every time there'd be a roar, we would be like: 'We wanna know what happened.' I just remember all of us just like sprinting down the stairs, and then eventually we came out and there was a big screen and … we were all like standing in silence, just like looking at the big screen. While we were running down, we [Geelong] had managed to just kick back in front. It was a huge come back. You wouldn't have thought that we had enough time to be able to do that. They had already come back at us and we just came back at them … and so we got to see the last twenty minutes of the game on like a big screen and like the whole stadium just erupted and we were just standing outside. I just remember that being the coolest game I've ever been to … it was so great…

Steph stated: 'We really wanted to be at the game' – implicitly referencing emotional continuity embedded in this memory. While the two contesting teams through their totemic meanings and historicity are intelligible indicators of continuity, Steph's intimate relationship with Geelong and her best friend are far more critical to the situational embeddedness of this emotional experience.[80] In this memory, the immediacy of sport and the changing fortunes of the two contestants are simultaneously embedded in the situational and historical realities. The clarity with

[80] On totemic meanings in sports fandom scenarios, see Serazio, 'Elementary Forms of Sports Fandom.'

which the episode points to the juncture of the immediacy of the game and the immediate reality of life instantly sidelines the duality of football and reality.[81]

Sport provides us with a particularly acute sense of time – the sense that can both accelerate and decelerate our experience of the flow of time owning to our loyalties within the sporting contest and the performances of those we are loyal to.[82] The game of Australian Rules lasts approximately two hours – it has a beginning and an end, which constitute a measurable period of time and a finite instalment of action within a linear trajectory.[83] The imposed duration almost literally insulates the sporting competition from the before and the after, creating a present moment that, unlike a spontaneous *here-and-now* episode, has clear boundaries within the lineage of time.[84] This discrete nature of a football match allows the duality and the supposed 'two world condition' to be insisted on discursively and theoretically.[85] The particularities of Steph's retold episode, however, vividly illustrate that the discrete nature of the game is determined by the measurable time, but that same period of time is not merely defined by the game.[86]

In the small story, Steph remembers the two-hour-long match not only in the context of her personal history with her best friend and her family but amidst her immediate reality, unfolding simultaneously to the Carlton-Geelong fixture. Excitement and emotion arise from the multiplicity of intersecting historic and immediate narratives progressing at present or having formerly occurred. Putting aside the illustrative particularities of Steph's account and speaking in general terms, there is no doubt that the passage of time is continually ongoing and so is one's everyday reality. Whatever we think football to be – alternative reality, carnival or anti-structure – the measurable period of time occupied by the game inevitably occurs within the

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[81] This is an intersection of subjective and objective time: time as accounted by history and time as experienced personally, see Cobley, *Narrative*.
[82] Critchley, *What We Think about When We Think about Soccer*.
[83] Richard M. Gale, *The Philosophy of Time: A Collection of Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1968); on narrative time see Cobley, *Narrative*, 15-19.
[84] Gale, *The Philosophy of Time*.
[85] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*.
[86] Gale, *The Philosophy of Time*.

incessant linear time frame of our everyday reality, rendering the dichotomy between affective worlds of sports fans and their everyday realities futile. This fixation on the carnivalesque and anti-structure sidelines more important questions pertaining to the makings of fans' emotional experiences and their enduring footprints.[87]

Steph's descriptive account, of course, markedly differs from the actuality of her immediate experience that night.[88] That said and in spite of the study of emotions being associated with the turn away from language, only discourse can elucidate the interplay of agency and structure in emotive and affective encounters.[89] Situational descriptions, like Steph's, place emotions within the agent's lived realities and at an intersection of multiple of storylines in which agents are concurrently partaking. In such descriptions, emotions can be understood beyond their distinct and insular modalities. There is little in Steph's memory that directly appeals to the feelings that the game stimulated. Yet, the situation as described is relatable both independently and in the context of the contributor's narrative. Here, we recognise Steph, her family and the already familiar dynamics of their football spectatorship, we see the friendship cemented in her allegiance to the Cats, we see the investment in her loyalties mirrored in her eagerness to see the match in its entirety and we see all of that played out in a familiar life situation, in which the immediacy of emotions stimulated by sport is strikingly underscored.

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While the small story may have not fully captured Steph's passion for football and Geelong, the rest of the narrative fills in the gaps. Steph's passion for the Cats is anchored in an ongoing relational exercise conducted by her as an agent amidst the social structures and the structures of the game. At times, Steph's agentic relationship with the AFL is a curious one as she is mostly content with (or reluctant to question and critique) the AFL and their business practices.

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[87] Again, carnivalesque and anti-structure are references to the notions coined by Mikhail Bakhtin and Victor Turner respectively and that have been excessively used in sports fandom scholarship as noted above.
[88] Jack Barbalet notes that description always differs from the experience itself, see Barbalet, 'Why Emotions Are Crucial?'
[89] Harré, 'Social Construction Viewpoint.'

However, as we meet for the last time before drawing the research process to a close, Steph reveals that lately she has been 'uncharacteristically grumpy with [her] club' and more critical of the League in the face of their continuous tinkering with the rules of the AFLW. When I ask her how she maintains her passion in light of these disappointing developments, she suggests that voicing her grievances is helpful.

Regardless of whether Steph's grievances may diminish with time or intensify as the League charges ahead with its economically driven agenda, the intimacy of Steph's passion and her creative engagement with the footy spectacle will remain intact. The typology of emotions offered by the contributor's articulate disposition expressed emotional immediacy and depth that not only removed the duality of football and reality but elevated football to a significant emotional undertaking.

Nevertheless, in accord with John's narrative Steph's situated descriptions of affective experience prove to be useful in elucidating duplicity of what has by now become sacrosanct concepts and theories in sports fans scholarship. As noted by Rom Harré, the focus on social practices in their interactional situatedness and discursive expressions (as opposed to individualised physiological states) points to the reciprocity of emotions.[90] In the case of Steph, this reciprocity goes beyond immediate social interactions. It illuminates emotional experiences and their unfolding beyond the allotted time of a sporting competition, that way revealing distinct chronologies and their interdependencies.

[90] Ibid.

Chapter 5 | Mike – Sanctuary of Tradition

I was very fortunate to be introduced to Mike. A friendly conversation after my Saturday Mandarin language class opened this possibility. As I was telling one of my fellow classmates about my PhD project, she suddenly paused and exclaimed: 'My dad is a cricket tragic!' While her dad did not feel he had the time to commit to the research process, he got me in touch with Mike, whom was also introduced to me as a cricket tragic.

Mike and his passion for cricket are slight geographical outliers in this collection of narratives of sports passions residing in the space of Melbourne. He lives in Geelong and unsurprisingly shares his AFL allegiance with Steph.

Mike – a retired teacher in his late fifties – was incredibly generous with his time. The first time we met in December 2015, we spoke for a good two hours. We continued our collaboration with a follow-up conversation at the MCG in February 2016 while watching a Sheffield Shield match contested by Victoria and Tasmania.[1] We met again in 2016 and in late 2018 to discuss my reflections on – and analysis of – his relationship with cricket.[2]

Perhaps, due to my outsider status in this collaboration – I have never had an interest in cricket – in the final conversations Mike contested my analysis a number of times.[3] The discussions facilitated by these contestations added another narrative layer to the chapter, which illuminates the entanglement of Mike's motivations to follow cricket and the game's cultural tradition.

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[1] Sheffield Shield is Australia's domestic first-class cricket competition, contested by six teams representing six Australian states. The Shield was donated by Lord Sheffield and was first contested in 1892/93.
[2] Recorded conversations with Mike, December 10, 2015; February 4, 2016; April 15, 2016; December 12, 2018.
[3] My obliviousness to cricket is not surprising given my cultural dislocation from the British colonial experience, which, as argued by Grant Farred, is critical to the accessibility of cricket, see Grant Farred, 'The Double Temporality of Lagaan: Cultural Struggle and Postcolonialism,' *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 28, no. 2 (2004): 93–114.

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[cricket] it's kind of my religion, without being a religion.

Although Mike was introduced to me as a cricket tragic, he never once addresses himself in those terms. Indeed, when I specifically ask him what it means to be a cricket tragic, Mike evokes a notion of religion in a tentative and hesitant way, which seeks to simultaneously underscore and understate his passion for cricket. It is this fine line that our conversations continued to tread throughout the process and permeated the research meta-narrative told in this Chapter.

Mike's narrative juxtaposes traditional collectivities of a geographical community and a nation state to Steph's unconventional relational modalities and John's less definitive national and geographical belonging.[4] Besides these traditional collectivities, which are most profound in Mike's paradigmatic expressions, it is the solitude of the contributor's spectatorship practices that is also worth interrogating. It is around this binary of imagined collectivities and solitude that the narrative centres and, in turn, navigates between tradition and personal utility. In this careful treading, big and small stories intersect in shaping Mike as a fan-agent. This negotiation is informed by my own preconceptions about cricket that continued to be challenged throughout the process as well as Mike's fixed notions and feelings on the character and cultural importance of his beloved game, in which his fan identity is rooted.[5] In the end, the big story seemed to have been associated with the self-perceived necessity for 'rationality' whereas the intimately personal story coalesced around immediate experiences of the game.[6]

[4] As discussed in Chapter 4, Steph's relational and football-related communal experiences extend from nominally communal experiences and pertain to situational experiences of relationality. Similarly, Chapter 3 pointed to John's reluctance to engage in traditional collectivities, particularly national identities.
[5] This offered a juxtaposition to the utility of narrative in understanding and managing plurality of self-identity, see Klepper, 'Rethinking Narrative Identity'; equally this is a juxtaposition to viewing identity through the prism of routes as opposed to roots, see David McCrone, *The Sociology of Nationalism: Tomorrow's Ancestors* (London: Routledge, 1998), 34.
[6] Rationality is used here for a lack of the better word, but in quotation marks as a reference to the false dichotomy of passion versus reason, which will be explored in Chapter 6.

Cultural *vs*. Personal

> Right now, I coach cricket at the Geelong Club in November, January and March. I play very little … I play a few games with old guys in the Australian Cricket Society in summer (three or four games). I still go down to watch my old club where I played 340 games … I watch Test cricket live as often as I can. And, I watch overseas Test cricket on the Internet and Australian Test cricket on the television, but I don't have Foxtel.[7] And, collect books … and I did collect DVDs, but, I think, I did get all of them now and there's not much new stuff coming out … And, I do some writing: magazine articles … and I've written three and a half books.

As I started our initial conversation with an unassuming question, simply wondering about Mike's current involvement in the game we sat down to discuss, Mike reveals an unmatched exposure to cricket. Although Mike has an interest in many sports, in some of which he got involved not only as a spectator or a fan but also as an amateur player, his interest and involvement in cricket surpass them all: playing, coaching, writing books and for specialist magazines, watching games, collecting paraphernalia – and so on.

It quickly becomes apparent – if previously only anticipated – that Mike is not simply a regular cricket fan. Having been introduced to cricket in his early childhood by his father and grandfather – who both were keen cricket followers and used to speak about the game all the time – he did not only 'inherit' their passion for the sport but took it further than the family men ever had. That said, being brought up in a close proximity to the game ensured that Mike's interest continued to be stimulated and consequently grew:

> As I said it was a peripheral thing. It was in the house, and I was, sort of, half following and taking an interest in it. Probably, to a level most people would think that I was embracing it, but it hadn't become a passion yet. And, that cricket kit and just hitting the ball in the backyard of my grandparents' place in Bendigo where the bug really bit me. And, I really just wanted to see and watch it and follow it … And then, there were players from Geelong in the Australian test team. So, that was great as well. That was the same period – 1967/68. There was the Ashes tour to England. So, I got reinforced all through that winter as well. So, [I] didn't get to see

[7] Foxtel – an Australian pay television service, which owns broadcasting rights of many sports leagues and sports events.

> Australia play in England then, but I saw Victoria play a few times. I went to the MCG – that was exciting … to see a big stadium.

There is a sense of inevitability pertaining to Mike's interest in – and passion for – the game. While this implicitly intelligible sense runs throughout our conversations, it culminates in Mike's own admission that he believes cricket to be a part of his genealogy:

> Well, it's part of my genealogy, cause my dad liked cricket, too.

This brief remark, however, needs to be understood in relation to the contributor's preceding comment, where the formation of his identity and cricket are positioned dialectically:

> So, my identity is partly formed by them and by the time and the place I lived. How's cricket formed it? It's a chicken and egg thing a bit … So, I don't know whether I was destined to follow this game or the game came to me. That's a really difficult one to assert.[8]

Initially, I take this sense of inevitability and fate to be a mark of socialisation – a process of social learning through which Mike almost unassumingly became indoctrinated in cricket.[9] But, as the conversation progresses, and I continue to insist on Mike to interrogate reasons that anchored his passion, he suddenly proclaims: 'cricket is a way you can channel your nationalism without hurting anybody'. Given my own complicated relationship with nationality and nationalism and my preconceptions about cricket, I find this statement both curious and frustrating.[10]

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[8] The reference to genealogy corresponds to traditional narratives of sports fans as socialised agents, see Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs.'

[9] Socialisation, like team identification, has been a central theoretical device in a large number of studies on sports fandom, spanning a variety of topics, including gender, mediated sport, culturally informed trends and other, e.g., Peter Mewett and Kim Toffoletti, 'Finding Footy: Female Fan Socialisation and Australian Rules Football,' *Sport in Society* 14, no. 5 (2011): 670–84; Adam C. Earnheardt, Paul M. Haridakis and Barbara S. Hugenberg ed., *Sports Fans, Identity and Socialisation: Exploring the Fandemonium* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012); Merrill J. Melnick and Daniel L. Wann, 'An Examination of Sport Fandom in Australia: Socialisation, Team Identification and Fan Behaviour,' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 46, no. 4 (2011): 456–70; Jonathan M. Casper and W. Chadwick Menefee, 'Prior Sport Participation and Spectator Sport Consumption: Socialisation and Soccer,' *European Sport Management Quarterly* 10, no. 5 (2010): 595–611.

[10] This is discussed in the Introduction.

My concern arises from the deterministic nature of this familiar sentiment and its ability to foreclose differing conversational trajectories.[11] Yet, as the dialogue moves on without resolving the under-surface complexities of this seemingly off-the-cuff remark, cultural and national motifs re-emerge in an evidently different context. When explaining his commitment to educating people about cricket, Mike cleaves onto a certain historical interpretation of the Australian nation's founding:

> When anyone talks about it [cricket] being under threat, I say: 'You don't understand, you got to realise that this is part …' I mean, it's even part of the political … Federation of Australia was successful in 1901, partly because in 1897 we thrashed England. And so, the country believed in its own, you know, viability – to a large degree – because it was able to beat England in 1897 and 1899. That's how important it can be to the fabric of things.

Mike's assessment echoes William F. Mandle's thesis, which similarly builds on the Australian cricketing successes over 'the mother country' in the 1870-80s.[12] According to Mandle, cricketing nationalism emerged off the back of these wins and fuelled political nationalism that, in turn, spurred the push for the Federation of Australia.[13] Political accounts of Australian history quote concerns over defence and non-white immigration as the key triggers initiating a political opening for the constitutional unification and emancipation of Australia.[14] It is also, however, true that a degree of public support that the idea gained in the referenda across the colonies 'a growing sense of a shared Australian identity' could have been a factor.[15] In turn, it is conceivable, particularly given Australia's continuing expressions of 'sportive nationalism', that wins on the cricket pitch may have contributed to the emotional mood in which the idea of a united nation seemed to many both sensible and pleasing.[16]

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[11] The concern is merited by the frequent alignment of sport and nationalism, particularly as a way to impose exceptionalism over other nation states, e.g., notions of American exceptionalism are evident in Craig A. Forney, *The Holy Trinity of American Sports: Civil Religion in Football, Baseball and Basketball* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2010).
[12] William F. Mandle, 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 59, no. 4 (1973): 225–46.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Francis G. Clarke, *The History of Australia* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).
[15] Ibid, 94.
[16] On sportive nationalism see John Hoberman, 'Sport and Ideology in the Post-Communist Age' in *The Changing Politics of Sport*, ed. Lincoln Allison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 15–36; some historical

Competing accounts of sports history, however, strongly dispute Mandle's alignment of cricketing and political nationalism, instead arguing that the public's embrace of 'the imperial game' was an emotional extension of the British legacy.[17] The development of the game in this Antipodean space was continually safeguarded by the ongoing British immigration throughout the nineteenth century, questioning the possibility of both the distinctly Australian 'sportive nationalism' and a clear-cut formation of the Australian national identity during the formative years of the Federation. [18]

Despite seemingly firm terminology employed in Mike's historical interpretation – if discursively contextualised – the remark does not amount to much more than an agreement with national mythology and, in its comparison with the English, an alignment with A. A. Phillips's notion of 'cultural cringe'.[19] The potency of 'sportive nationalism' in the Australian national imagination and popular discourse cannot be easily dismissed, not least because even the most structurally ingrained narratives pertain to symbols and tales of collective imagining.[20] As the conversation progresses, Mike underscores that sport is practically the only sphere where nationalistic feelings powerfully resonate with him:

> It's where I'm most nationalistic … is with sport and with cricket, because politically I'm not nationalistic at all.

When asked to elaborate on this, Mike continues by tapping into a memory from the second test of the 2013 Ashes series:

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accounts give credit to sport in relation to the Federation of Australia see Stephen Alomes, *Nation at Last? Changing Character of Australian Nationalism, 1880-1988* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988); Bob Birell, *Federation: The Secret Story* (Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2001).

[17] Ken S. Inglis, 'Imperial Cricket: Test Matches between Australia and England 1877-1900,' in *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History*, ed. Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), 148–79.

[18] van Duinen, 'Bodyline, British World and Australian National Identity.'

[19] The centrality of sport in Australia's national identity is argued in Tony Ward, *Sport in Australian National Identity: Kicking Goals* (London: Routledge, 2010).
The relationship between sport and national identity is often based on mythical archetypes as demonstrated in Richard Holt, J.A. Mangan and Pierre Lanfranchi, *European Heroes: Myth, Identity, Sport* (London: Routledge, 1996); Arthur Angell Phillips, *On the Cultural Cringe*, The MUP Masterworks Series (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006).

[20] Duncan S. A. Bell, 'Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology and National Identity,' *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2003): 63–81.

> Well, I just think it's a way you can channel your nationalism without hurting anybody, basically. It was at Lord's in 2013, and we got thrashed by England. And, I'm walking back to the Baker Street Station, and this English guy comes and puts his hand round my shoulder, and [he] said: 'Hello mate, it's bad luck' – and you know – 'You'll be alright.' And, I'm just like [thinking]: go away – I don't wanna talk to you, because, you know, your team has just humiliated my team. So yeah, it does, it exists, but my understanding of warfare … that it's just awful, and nationalism in the extreme form is just awful. I've really shied away from political nationalism.

On further probing, Mike continues to display the depth in self-reflexivity and self-analysis laden with self-rationalism:

> I think, it's there, in my brain. It's like I've been educated to understand why it's inappropriate politically to be nationalistic whereas it's an outlet. So, part of my brain that is competitive and nationalistic can be channelled into sport and be tribal. And, it's a positive outlet. I think that works for a lot of people. They might not be able to express it that way, but it does work for a lot of people in sport that way. Like, you can get these negative urges out, and you get the same rewards as, I think, you'd get if you were politically aggressive nationally.

As we meet for the last time Mike notes that lately he has been less nationalistic and, in his own words, he has 'mellowed', noting that high emotional involvement of any kind is more applicable to Australian rules football as opposed to his mostly appreciation-driven passion for cricket.

Although rooting for Australian cricketing successes has become less of a priority to Mike since our initial conversation, the notion of cricket as an outlet remained important in his narrative. These expressions of nationalism (among other emotional reflexes) allow Mike to release 'negative urges' in a way that is benign and lacks political currency.[21] The line that Mike draws between sport and politics is, however, tenuous as in his own historical interpretation cricket and politics are inseparable. Of course, it could be that Mike makes an implicit distinction between the past and the present, between cricket as cultural and national heritage and cricket as a game

[21] Similar observations on fans' psychophysical well-being are made in sports marketing research, e.g., Stephen J. Grove, Michael J. Dorsch and Christopher D. Hopkins, 'Assessing the Longitudinal Robustness of Spectators' Perceptions of the Functions of Sport: Implications for Sport Marketers', *The Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 20, no. 1 (2012): 23–38.

that is played and followed in its immediacy. While such a distinction is, at times, obvious, mostly it is arbitrary and only works to separate the immediate moment from the personal history at the peril of analytical depth and historicity of his own passion for the game.[22]

While the situatedness of Australian cricket in today's multicultural vision of the nation is not without its difficulties and mishaps, Mike's ancestral and cultural positionality in relation to 'the English game' and its Anglo-Australian expressions is much more straightforward.[23] It evokes both culturally constructed and sensory belongings.[24] As some sociological accounts see Anglo-Australian cricket embedded in the Ashes mythology, hence exemplifying a lack of dynamism and imagination in both Australian and English national identities in the global present, Mike's sense of his own situatedness within the Anglo-Australian cricket tradition is uncomplicated due to his Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage and continuing identification with that tradition.[25]

Mike is both explicit and candid about Australian cricket being almost exclusively an Anglo-Saxon pastime. As we meet at the MCG to watch Victorian and Tasmanian teams in the Sheffield Shield cricket match, Mike uses the day's crowd to illustrate his point:

> As I said there's two or three hundred [spectators] in here and probably 195 of them are Anglo-Saxon. And, if you look at the names playing, they're mostly Anglo-Saxons. So, the connection is still there … and England is still the Mecca of cricket … If you did a survey around these blokes: what's your dream for following cricket? [They would say]: 'Oh, go to the Ashes tour in England.' It's just a pilgrimage … You have to do it if you're a real cricket fan these days. And, it becomes embedded in the sporting culture that goes back to 1877. So, what you're saying is right in terms of a country's set-up … And, you know, as fans of cricket, we hope that it filters into, you know, people from South East Asia, the Indians are already coming, ex-pat Indians and Sri Lankans are already coming to the cricket here and following the cricket here.

[22] This is discussed above in Chapter 4.
[23] David Utting, 'Multicultural Cricket? National Identity and the Australian Cricket Board's Annual Report,' Journal of Australian Studies 39, no. 3 (2015): 362–80.
[24] On sensory belonging see Vanessa May, *Connecting Self to Society: Belonging in a Changing World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 131.
[25] Joseph A. Maguire, 'Globalisation, Sport and National Identities,' *Sport in Society* 14, no. 7–8 (2011): 978–93. 3

Mike finishes his pondering in agreement with my scepticism on cricket's representation of Australia's multiculturalism, which is coalesced with a hopeful sentiment that cricket crowds in Australia are becoming more ethnically diverse.[26] This appears to be another divergence of the past and present realities as well as a juncture of two distinct storylines running in parallel. In some ways, Mike, as an Anglo-Saxon man himself, is confined between these deviating trajectories: embedded in tradition but seeing that tradition as fluid and able to transform. This is, of course, congruent with the definition of culture as a collection of symbols, reconfigurations and meanings, which are not only changeable but continuously evolving.[27]

As I am reading this part of the chapter out loud, Mike interrupts me to comment on the cricketing divisions emerging in his local town, which somewhat mirror the contrast between Mike story and the story of Zoha presented in the succeeding chapter (Chapter 6). As the Geelong Cricket Club mostly hosts members of Anglo-Saxon heritage and migrants from the Indian subcontinent play the game in the city's public parks, Mike pauses to reflect if the club would ever facilitate the coming together of the two cultural communities of cricket.

The plasticity of culture and community are easily recognisable even in the case of Australian cricket, suggesting that Mike's ponderings do have an historical precedent. Cricket, played in Australia from the early nineteenth century, had competing cultural utilities by being both a cultural stabiliser connecting the faraway colonies with their 'mother country' and a political emancipator providing opportunities to project cooperation, unity and strength across the Australian territories.[28] Australian cricket pitches – demarcated with 'imported trees' and emulating 'village green atmosphere' – were quintessentially English spaces, yet the

[26] On cricket and race in Australia see Gemmell, 'All White Mate?'
[27] Anthony P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1989).
[28] Richard Cashman, 'Australian Sport and Culture before Federation,' in *Sport, History and Australian Culture: Passionate Pursuits*, ed. Richard Cashman and Rob Hess (Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2011), 8–39.

game here had a different character in being more democratic, egalitarian and central to the public life.[29] Some cricket clubs were either distinctly Australian or proudly English – the division that played into the emancipatory ambitions of the colonies.[30]

Of course, these competing paradigms were confined within the imperial boundaries and unavoidably excluded persons, peoples and narratives that the Empire chose to ignore, neglect or subjugate. For example, although the first Australian sports team to tour England was a squad of Aboriginal cricketers, this tour for a long time had been given little historical attention and was not incorporated in the celebrations of the Centenary Test in 1977.[31] Nevertheless, Mike's cultural identity in its immediate expressions does not challenge the confines of the Empire, hence affording his straightforward relationship with the game and a continuing significance of the contemporary contests between the modern-day nations of England and Australia.[32] Mike's rootedness in this dynamic is not always strictly national, ethnic or cultural, it is both intellectual and sensory.[33]

The contributor's description of England as 'a second home', while akin to the cultural archetype of 'the mother country' and the cricketing world's notion of 'the trip home' used in the late nineteenth century, is also grounded in Mike's lived experience of the green tones of the English countryside as complementing to his Australian palette of clear blue skies.[34] It is also in these visual and aural senses that his immediate love for cricket truly transpires, transcending competing narratives and informing his dogmatic commitment to – and defence of – Test cricket. While the immediate affective states are culturally conditioned, Mike himself implicitly asserts culture to be changeable and evolving. It is in this dialectic of cultural and

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[29] Ibid, 11.
[30] Ibid.
[31] This is documented in Greg Ryan, 'Handsome Physiognomy and Blameless Physique:' Indigenous Colonial Sporting Tours and British Racial Consciousness 1868 and 1888,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 14, no. 2 (1997): 67–81; equally, in recent years the belated recognition of the 1868 tour became a site of national mythology, see David Sampson, 'Culture, 'Race' and Discrimination in the 1868 Aboriginal Cricket Tour of England,' *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, no. 2 (2009): 44–60.
[32] Australian cricket achievements were often regarded as achievements of the Empire and the Anglo-Saxon race, James Bradley, 'Inventing Australians and Constructing Englishness: Cricket and the Creation of a National Consciousness, 1860-1914,' *Sporting Traditions* 11, no. 2 (1995): 35–60.
[33] May, *Connecting Self to Society*.
[34] van Duinen, 'Playing to the "Imaginary Grandstand."'

personal experience that Mike's relationship with cricket has continued to evolve since 1967 when, in his own words, 'the bug really got [him]'.

Tradition *vs*. Utility

> It suits my soul, I guess. So, the rhythm and the sound and the noises of it, the appearance of it, maybe the colours of it, white against green, the time of year that it is. Probably, the association with summer … You get more vitamin D, so you feel more upbeat in summer. So yeah, it just suits my soul. There's a lot of depth to it … Okay, you don't have to be an intellectual player, but there's sophistication to it and complexity to it that you don't get in other games.

Looking in from the outside, Mike would seem as a purist in his exclusive appreciation of Test cricket. He does not, however, self-identify as that, instead opting for labels of a connoisseur or a gourmet fan. Regardless of the specific category, Mike's relationship with the game is best described as an appreciation that is marked by a degree of sophistication, knowledge and aesthetic.[35]

Mike is also keen on educating people about Test cricket, its complexities and cultural significance. While Mike's love for Test cricket and his displeasure with the creation and proliferation of other formats may be grounded in history, tradition and culture, the immediate experience seems to be equally significant.[36] The colours, the sounds, the season, the sun and the rhythm of the game are in unison with Mike's innermost self – his soul.[37] It is this wholesome feel, emotional balance and soulful pleasure that Mike does not get to experience at, for example, the Big Bash League fixtures.[38] The recently established Australian domestic league of Twenty20 cricket does not excite Mike. Instead, it frustrates him:

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[35] Fiske, 'Cultural Economy of Fandom.'
[36] Vamplew et al., 'Cricket.'
[37] The innermost self here aligns with the distinction made between the inner self and the true self, see Nina Strohminger, Joshua Knobe and George Newman, 'The True Self: A Psychological Concept Distinct from the Self,' *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12, no. 4 (2017): 551–60.
[38] The Big Bash League (BBL) is Australian domestic Twenty20 cricket competition. The League was established in 2011 and takes place during the months of December and January.

> They're thrashing around looking for ideas, cheap ideas, easily marketable ideas. If you go to a Big Bash game, in the innings they put on motocross and they play loud music … it's dancing. So, if sport's so engaging, why do you need these distractions?[39]

Mike finishes the brief comment with a rhetorical, yet sensible question. The answer to which in some ways could not be clearer. For what other reason, if not a wider appeal, such auxiliary entertainment is necessary. On the other hand, Mike grew up surrounded by cricket, it was everywhere: in his immediate family, his ancestry and his cultural conditioning, hence developing a particular image of the game which is not flexible in its accommodation of novelties. [40]

Mike, however, has also expressed hope about the game's Australian future being more culturally diverse. It may be that the Big Bash cricket is exactly the path through which it can be achieved. In some ways, the Big Bash League is following in the footsteps of the Indian Premier League which has long since become the antithesis of the cricket's cultural and social foundations.[41] Nevertheless, the IPL submits entirely to the market imperialism omnipresent today.[42] While cricket may have been a civilising tool of the British Empire successfully employed in most of its colonies, conglomerates, such as the IPL or the BBL, shackle the game in excess and commodity. It is these shackles that Mike loathes while noting to be a different type of spectator to most:

> I don't think I'm representative of a general fan overall. I mean, the understanding of the Boxing Day [test] where there's fifty and eighty thousand people … So, it's the tradition about going to an event. So, that counts for something … they want to engage by what's in front of them and they'll be passionate to get a point, but they also … they do want to be comfortable. It varies a bit. So, there are people like me, there are guys who are going with lots of other guys, because they just want to get drunk … and they'll turn up at any sporting event where they can have a party with their mates, they tend to be guys who play cricket so they quite happy to have a cricket match going on out there as well. As I said, I don't know if

[39] Twenty20 – a short format of cricket restricted to twenty overs; it was first introduced in 2003 by the England and Wales Cricket Board.
[40] On rule changes see Vamplew et al., 'Cricket.', 119-121.
[41] Nalin Mehta, Jon Gemmell and Dominic Malcolm, 'Bombay Sport Exchange: Cricket, Globalisation and the Future', *Sport in Society* 12, no. 4–5 (2009): 694–707.
[42] Mehta, Gemmell and Malcolm.

> I'm absolutely the same as every other spectator either, cause I'll watch the whole game and I will not leave until the end.

Throughout the process, Mike is reluctant to narrate, opting for paradigmatic expressions instead and, as a result, making his responses intentionally reasoned and self-rationalising.[43] For example, he often introduces a point of distinction between himself and a general fan. Surrounded by the imposing emptiness of the MCG, he suddenly starts to reflect on how this iconic sporting venue would look filled with punters on Boxing Day.[44] In this reflection, Mike focuses on distinct but mostly superficial levels of involvement of different sections of the crowd while returning to the immediate moment to underscore the depth of his own spectating practice:

> Well, come here on Boxing Day and there's somewhere between sixty to eighty thousand people. And, it's a whole mass of young people over there, who are having a party and what's going on here [points to the field] isn't that important whereas here or over here I am watching every ball. Even now I'm still trying to talk to you and turn my head and see what's going on. So, I'm really interested in how this thing is going to pan out: are Victoria gonna get in front, are they gonna set up a lead that's big enough to help them in the match? Is this guy Handscomb gonna go and get fifty? I think, he's a good player, but it's obviously not a big scoring match at the moment. There are all these things going on in my head whereas people over there on Boxing Day are more interested in, you know, drinking their beers or snacking (not more interested but just as interested). So, not everyone's like that. And some other people are like me. But, there's a lot of people who are not as engaged with cricket as I am. I am playing the game almost [while watching].

Mike's absorption in the game is palpable, making me consider how much of his cricket-related practice is entirely solitary: reading, writing, watching and even spectating – Mike enjoys all of them in solitude. Whilst reading and writing are evidently private undertakings, attending any sporting event on your own does not appear to be the most common approach to take. Yet, Mike often makes a trip to Melbourne to watch Sheffield Shield cricket that normally only attracts a crowd of a couple hundred spectators. In their solitude, Mike's fandom expressions significantly

[43] McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[44] This is a reference to the Boxing Day Test which is a cricket match held each year on Boxing Day (December 26) at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. This match is contested by the Australian National Team and an overseas team that is touring Australia.

diverge from the popular imagination of sports fandom: its appearance and people's motivations for getting involved.

Following both implicit and explicit taxonomies of sports fandom behaviours and manifestations, 'solitary fandom' appears to be an oxymoron. Fandom, in its core character, is communicative and communal, hence it stands in opposition to isolation and individualism. Fans share their experiences and exchange their opinions whereas aficionados appreciate in solitude.[45] While this exclusivity may be sustainable among media fans (although that is highly dubious) it is in many ways unhelpful when grappling with the entirety of sports spectatorship experiences, either direct or derivative. The distinction identified between fandom and fanship in Chapter 2 is also only helpful inasmuch as denoting that some experiences of fans are private while others are communal.[46] Even so, are the boundaries between private and communal definite? A notion of community, like culture, is a symbolic construction facilitated by transient and changeable symbols and signifiers; and any seemingly personal engagement is implicated in this edifice.[47] In some ways, just as storytelling is always relational, appreciating in privacy of one's own thoughts is directed outward to the object of appreciation and the culture which surrounds and, in turn, maintains the object.[48]

Mike is not entirely comfortable with my fixation on his solitary appreciation, insisting that his usual preference is to watch cricket in a company of someone else, either his wife – whose easygoingness has facilitated Mike's interest in cricket throughout the years – or a friend. When going alone, Mike does not shy away from striking up conversations with strangers and sharing his knowledge and insights with others in the crowd.

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[45] Matthias Stork and A. Bowdoin Van Riper, 'Undead and Online: Fan Communities and the Undead Western,' in *Undead in the West II: They Just Keep Coming*, ed. J. Miller, Cynthia and A. Bowdoin Van Riper (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 306.
[46] Reysen and Branscombe, 'Fanship and Fandom.'
[47] Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community*.
[48] Ibid.

Equally, his solitary appreciation is still closely connected to the mythology and the game's traditional collectivities: national, regional and historical. So, although immediate camaraderie and group affiliation are not necessarily a part of Mike's private spectating practices, they are still shrouded by social construction.[49] In accordance with the stages of human personality development, the social impetus arises from – and is calibrated by – the inner feeling; which puts private and social, personal and communal, fanship and fandom in an ongoing symbiosis.[50] Therefore, what is different to Mike's passion is its expression: his deep spectating practices, which similarly to Steph's analytical modes of spectating are facilitated by his intimate and active knowledge of the game (perhaps afforded to him by years of playing and coaching cricket).

Mike's immersion in the game does not result from the intense excitement and collective atmosphere, which surpasses societal norms.[51] Instead, it is conditioned by the game's complexities, tactics and players' individual abilities. The contributor defines the peculiarities of his interest in cricket as 'a mild form of autistic behaviour' and focuses on the data of individual performers to illustrate the point:

> You can go to a game and because of the way the game is structured, you can appreciate an individual performance more. So, I was in Sydney when Brian Lara made 277 – he's on the other team but it's just wonderful to see that.[52]

Cricket, as a game, lends itself to an appreciation of individual ability which, unlike in other team sports, is not necessitated by commodity. Although cricket has its own celebrity culture which was noted as early as the late 1800s, the fixation on an individual is facilitated by the format of the game as much as it is excelled by the

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[49] Group affiliation, self-esteem and camaraderie are some of the commonly quoted motives pertaining to sport spectatorship and fandom, e.g., Jeffrey D. James and Stephen D. Ross, 'Comparing Sport Consumer Motivations Across Multiple Sports,' *Sport Marketing Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (2004): 17–25; Mark P. Pritchard, Daniel C. Funk and Kostas Alexandris, 'Barriers to Repeat Patronage: The Impact of Spectator Constraints,' *European Journal of Marketing* 43, no. 1 (2009): 169–87; Fillis and Mackay, 'Moving Beyond Fan Typologies.'

[50] This is, again, a reference to McAdams's tripartite personality model discussed in Chapter 2. McAdams, *Personality Development*.

[51] This is a reference to the analyses of sports fandom practices that are focused on subversion and fixate on notions of anti-structure and carnival as noted in the preceding chapter on Steph (Chapter 4) and has been also addressed in Chapter 2.

[52] Brian Lara – former Trinidadian international cricketer, regarded as one of the best batsmen of all time.

trends of neoliberal capitalism.[53] Celebrity idolisation and crude commodification have not escaped cricket rather they have been the formative aspects of the game's development.[54] Yet, in Mike's spectating practices they have not surpassed the cricket's inherent aesthetic and its epistemic value which centre on a batsman and bowler relationship.[55]

Epistemic values underpin sports fans' curiosity in strategy and technical elements and have a capacity to simultaneously grow one's interest and knowledge in a sport of interest.[56] The practice of learning is significant in Mike's passion for cricket. Learning about the game through playing, writing, reading and spectating led to the game becoming not only a substantial part of his life but also a source of solace and contemplation. While Mike may not be directly evoking moral values of cricket in his daily life, characteristics of 'valour' and 'graceful conduct' reflected in 'the English game' are an apparent part of his persona.[57]

To that end, the educational values Mike attributes to – and derives from – cricket bear semblance to the reverence for the game's morality and ethics by the Victorian educators and religious institutions.[58] In Victorian England, cricket was regarded as the embodiment of the nobility of Anglo-Saxon character, played on the pitches of the public schools and encouraged by the church.[59] Cricket encompassed cultural identity, spiritual values, morality; as a result inserting itself into art, religion and politics while simultaneously sustaining its popularity as a leisure and sporting activity.[60] Its high cultural standing and its wide-ranging application in the Victorian times is reproduced in my and Mike's dialogues where the conversational swings take us from culture to politics, from the game and its sporting attributes to religion.

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[53] Inglis, 'Imperial Cricket,' 164.
[54] Sean Scalmer, 'Cricket, Imperialism and Class Domination,' *The Journal of Labor and Society* 10, no. 4 (2007): 431–42.
[55] Gau and James, 'A Ten-Value-Type Framework.'
[56] Ibid.
[57] Joseph A. Maguire, Sport and National Identities', *Sport in Society* 14, no. 7–8 (2011): 978–93; Gau and James, 'Ten-Value-Type Framework.'
[58] Keith A. P. Sandiford, 'England,' in *The Imperial Game: Cricket, Culture and Society*, ed. Brian Stoddart and Keith A.P. Sandiford (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 9–33.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

Ultimately, the virtuous patterns of cultural roots are remodelled in Mike's personal relationship with the game.

In our last meeting, Mike expressed discomfort with such contextualisation, bringing cricket's rural beginnings into the conversation.[61] Yet, his exhibited nostalgia does not go back as far as the game's rural improvisations of the Middle Ages.[62] Instead, it rests in the contrasting aesthetic of new formats of cricket and the game's ideologically purest form – Test cricket.[63] Mike's dissatisfaction arises from the lengths synergetic powers of media and big business go in finding new ways to sell cricket to the masses. This situates his fan identity – in its gourmet and connoisseur expressions – between the old aesthetic of imperial making and the unappealing novelties imparted by commercial interests.[64]

Besides the cultural and historical undertones, Mike's immediate relationship with cricket is reflective and open to the moral lessons that the game can occasionally offer.[65] Mike, who also refers to himself as an 'amateur philosopher', continues to actively learn about the game while also learning from the game. The practice of learning as well as Mike's cognisant and intuitive motives of his passion can be segmented into two broad categories: general knowledge and self-awareness.[66] Cricket is often Mike's point of entry to a new area of interest as through the history of the game he continues to foster his more general fascination with – and appreciation for – historical knowledge. Yet, it is the knowledge of his own character and personality that comes directly from his immediate involvement in the game. Aside from the moral, aesthetic and epistemic values that Mike derives from his practices and their cultural legacies, he is also aware that his deep understanding of

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[61] Derek Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* (London: Aurum, 1999).
[62] Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket*.
[63] Scalmer, 'Cricket, Imperialism and Class Domination.'
[64] Ibid.
[65] Gau and James, 'Ten-Value-Type Framework.'
[66] This argument continues to build on Gau and James's value typology, but also employs a notion of self-awareness as a spiritual value, see Daniel A. Helminiak, 'A Down-to-Earth Approach to the Psychology of Spirituality a Century After James's Varieties,' *The Humanistic Psychologist* 33, no. 2 (2005): 69–86; similar notions of self-awareness in the context of sports spectatorship have been employed in Elena Balcaite, Stephen D. Edwards and Richard M. Buscombe, 'Spirituality and Basketball Fanship: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis,' *Journal of Sporting Cultures and Identities* 6, no. 3 (2015): 39–52.

the game has shielded and boosted his self-esteem and formed a respected and locally admired public persona.[67]

> As I said, self-esteem I get, positive feedback I get and a very, very, very minor celebrity aspect of it. You know, people recognise me, people know me around the town and know that I'm that sort of person. I like that.

Mike's public cricket identity and the pleasantries of minor celebrity status he enjoys around Geelong are warranted by his writing, past playing and coaching activities. And, while the latter are, in turn, informed by the contributor's immediate and intimate responsiveness to the game, its gentle rhythms and summery colours; the game in its immediacy and intimacy is celebrated and enjoyed behind the curtains and on the backstage of Mike's life.[68] At this palpable interdependence of private and public identities, the soulful and contemplative moments of cricket are enjoyed by Mike for their affordance of heightened self-awareness. Although these moments are inescapably culturally conditioned and, at times, emerge as imitations of the bygone past, they still stand in a stark contrast to the fast-paced and persistently distracting world, symbolised by the novelty, theatre and efficiency continually thrusting their way into the new formats of cricket.[69]

At this intersection of public and private, it was also cricket that highlighted to Mike his eventual despondency to his professional career and offered sporadic occupational opportunities that were more self-fulfilling and more intrinsically rewarding than his teaching job.[70] While Mike never took an exciting yet daunting chance to turn cricket into a full-time career, now as a retired person he can allow himself to put cricket at the forefront of his day-to-day life where cricket always resided in his self-identity. [71]

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[67] This corresponds to the effects of sports fandom that are associated with self-enhancement, see Shaughan A. Keaton, Christopher C. Gearhart and James M. Honeycutt, 'Fandom and Psychological Enhancement: Effects of Sport Team Identification and Imagined Interaction on Self-Esteem and Management of Social Behaviours,' *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 33, no. 3 (2013): 251–69. Similarly, this also speaks to an expression of fan-persona that has been a focus in the scholarship on online fandom but also has implications for other modes of fandom; see Christopher Moore, 'Five Dimensions of Online Fan Persona,' (presentation, *Fan Studies Network Australasia Conference*, Wollongong, November 30, 2017).
[68] Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.
[69] George Ritzer, *The McDonaldisation of Society* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008).
[70] Deci, *Intrinsic Motivation*.
[71] This is an allusion to Goffman and front stage and backstage identity expressions, see Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

Religion *vs*. Sanctuary

> [cricket] it's kind of my religion, without being a religion.

Religious symbolism, imagery and lexicon are often evoked in sporting scenarios to excite, instil meaning and, at times, to explain sport's far-reaching appeal and its ability to convene people on material and emotional levels.[72] Such uses and contexts, however, align with functionalist frameworks.[73] Religion as a social cement and sport as a generator of collective feeling and united citizenry make for a straightforward theoretical code.[74] In the original remark that carried this *loaded* and evocative word, Mike was addressing my question on the significance of cricket in his life. As later clarified, he was focused on conveying the amount of time he spends thinking about the game and doing cricket related activities.

Given Mike's extensively solitary fandom practices, his mention of religion does not tie in with the functionalist framework. As much as nationalism and other traditional collectivities play a part in Mike's passion, it is these solitary practices that have provided sustenance for his passion by occupying his day-to-day life and instilling value in the immediate cricket encounters. It both transcends functionalist understandings of religion and simultaneously diverges from fandom as an identification with others who share one's object of passion.[75] It is also unclear, what exactly the object of his fandom is. While never spelled out, it is intelligible that Mike's identification, unlike Steph's or John's, is not with any particular team but rather with the game itself. It is this relationship that, at times, got reinforced with national pride and self-reverence, but beyond that it simply gained a constant presence in his life.

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[72] Marci D. Cottingham, 'Interaction Ritual Theory and Sports Fans: Emotion, Symbols and Solidarity,' *Sociology of Sport* 29 (2012): 168–85.
[73] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (London: Allen & Unwin, 1915).
[74] Forney, *Holy Trinity of American Sports*.
[75] Reysen and Branscombe, 'Fanship and Fandom.'

In our initial conversation, the word 'reinforcement' kept reappearing. Mike used the word to reference enjoyable and satisfying experiences that his passion for cricket exposed him to, ranging from Australia's on-field successes and finding some footage of an old game online to having opportunities to talk to some eminent retired cricketers and becoming a published cricket writer. I return to these 'reinforcements' in our second encounter and ask Mike to further examine the meaning of this word and the instances it defined.

> The interest was there, you know, from the age of eleven … And then, you know, every time there was a successful aspect of playing or writing, or whatever, I felt good about myself and the game … and enjoying it. So, you know, you look for more, you look for more pleasure, I guess. So, that's what those things did, they sort of pushed me on. And then, when I started traveling, that was great, too. That was great fun, too. So, I really enjoy traveling, and then I incorporate cricket into that.

In his succinct response, Mike describes himself as a pleasure-seeker, who pursues pleasurable experiences through his interest in the game. In due course, cricket grew into an integral part of Mike's other pastimes and, in turn, his everyday life.

> I was watching something on YouTube the other day from that 1989 trip, and it just brought back the whole excitement of that first big overseas trip … and cricket was an integral part of that enjoyment. You know, we're all pleasure seekers as well … It just gives me a lot of pleasure to watch, play, read and, you know, write about it.

As Mike reminisces the excitement of his first trip to England – following which he took a year off teaching and went back to the home of his beloved game for the entire cricket season – he once again attempts to rationalise himself by aligning his actions with a general behavioural trend of seeking pleasure. Although sports fans are often understood as excitement-seekers, pursuing pleasures, sensations and feelings from their exposure to sport; such explanations are restricted to hedonism, which is indicative of the commonplace focus on fandom as primarily a consumption-oriented activity. [76]

[76] Frank Pons and Mehdi Mourali, 'Consumer Orientation Toward Sporting Events Scale Development and Validation', Journal of Service Research, no. 3 (2006): 276–87.

Beneath Mike's self-rationalising tendencies which segment his narrative into disparate units of paradigmatic expression, it is his creative engagement that continually reinforced his passion for the game. In the most literal terms, as a cricket writer Mike has been involved in cricket in a capacity of both producer and consumer.[77] Mike's interest in the game's epistemological economy unavoidably implicated him in its consumerist economy.[78] His positioning in relation to the economic cycles of the game differs to the alternative career path attributed to John and his involvement in the Manchester United Supporters' Club of Victoria.[79] There was a time when Mike saw a real possibility of an alternative professional career in cricket, in the creative activities that imbued him with pleasure and enjoyment. Although financial remunerations were, at times, involved warranting a prospect of a full-time job, these were always secondary. Similar to John's efforts at the helm of the Supporters' Club, intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards motivated Mike to engage in the creative enterprise afforded by his knowledge of the game.

In spite of this and the earlier outlined cultural legacies, Mike is able to situate the value of cricket in a broader context that way downgrading cricket as yet another mental diversion:

> Oh, it's pretty blurry – that line. I mean, I think, sport does so many great positive things: the energy that we all invest in it and the money, the time … I mean, in the society, it's a part of a thing that can reduce tension and conflict a little bit, but, you know, there are parts of the world that can't indulge in it like we can. If someone said to me: 'What's your wish?' My wish would be for the world peace, not to win another Premiership. I mean, as great as it would be if Cats [Geelong Football Club] won another Premiership, really I care more (I know I have to and I should) … and I care more about resolving the social issues of mankind, mankind going forward and, you know, the world becoming a more convivial place for everybody than whether Victoria gets in front against Tasmania. That's the reality of it, doesn't change anything in terms of how I'm gonna react to this. It's more of an escape.[80]

[77] Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*.
[78] Hastie, 'The Epistemological Stakes.'
[79] Crawford, 'Career of the Sport Supporter.'
[80] Lloyd Reynolds Sloan, 'The Motives of Sports Fans,' in Sports, Games and Play: Social and Psychological Viewpoints, ed. Jeffrey H. Goldstein, 2nd Ed. (New York: Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 175–240.

Interestingly enough, in situating sport in his life, Mike illustrates his sentiment by referring to Australian rules football and not cricket. Here, the Geelong Cats, his local football team, winning another AFL Premiership becomes a secondary concern to making the world 'a more convivial place for everybody'. Mike, then, refers to the match unfolding on the field as we speak and conclusively denounces sport as an escape.[81] The latter label has some resonance with the epithets and more extensive descriptions Mike attributed to cricket earlier: 'It's therapeutic, it's relaxing … that sound – it's reassuring … It can absorb me for the whole day'. The pleasing and pleasant surroundings of the game are appealing to Mike and have motivated him throughout the years.[82] These pleasurable experiences in their totality may also offer some release from the stresses of everyday mundanity. [83] Yet, such an application of cricket diverges from Mike's laid-back persona afforded by retirement and financial security.

When listening to my analysis, Mike offers an alternative theorisation of his passion, which fixates on pleasure and control of 'negative urges' and sounds loosely correlated with Elias's theory of *Civilising Process*. Norbert Elias married pleasure and the controlled release of tensions in his study of *sportisation* of leisure in which codification of sport is seen as both reining in violent excesses and prolonging gratification.[84] Although Mike has evoked both elements in our previous conversations, the macro framing of his own brand of *Eliasian* theorising detracts from an intrapersonal dynamic of his connoisseur fandom and its cultural particularities. It is true that discursive attribution to religion and its functionalist connotations perplex the meaning of this sentiment and divorce it from intrinsic self-situatedness so intelligibly observed in Mike's reflections on the immediate cricket experiences.[85] Nevertheless, intrinsic self-situatedness lingers in our

[81] Ibid.
[82] This coincides with the notion of escape in relation to mimicry – the category of pleasure that can be found in games. Mimicry is a way of accessing pleasure through being involved in an imaginary universe, see Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*.
[83] R. Timucin Gencer, Olcay Kiremitci and Hayal Boyacioglu, 'Spectator Motives and Points of Attachment: An Investigation on Professional Basketball', *Journal of Human Kinetics* 30, no. 1 (2011): 189–96.
[84] Elias, 'Genesis of Sport.'
[85] Karen Whalley Hammell, 'Intrinsicality: Reconsidering Spirituality, Meaning(s) and Mandates.', *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 68, no. 3 (2001): 186–94.

conversations in Mike's increased awareness of the surrounds and the self which is routine in his spectating practices. [86]

For Mike, cricket has for years provided a space for complete absorption and private contemplation.[87] It is, however, also the case that this sanctuary of intrapersonal dimension was (if not induced) then facilitated by traditional collectivities, historical narratives and cultural legacies. These grand narratives not only informed Mike's public relationship with the game but also circumscribed his private one. The epistemic spur located in his solitary spectatorship, creative activities and offshoot educational endeavours coincides with the origins of the game and its cultural development as a system of values, morals and ethics attributed to Anglo-Saxon character.[88] Yet, enveloped in this big story there are the everyday pleasures of cricket and the opportunities the game afforded to Mike, his character and his public persona.

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'A man's special sanctuary'– sport writer Lynn Truss described her male dominated working environment as a safe space for unabashed masculinity.[89] Putting the sexist undercurrent aside, 'special sanctuary' appears to be a literary yet helpful shorthand in elucidating the emplotment of Mike's narrative.[90] Extracting the content and context from Truss's original remark reveals a special sanctuary as a space or a state bounded by material yet permeable boundaries, congruent with the relationship of Mike's private identity and his public persona.

The lack of arduously chronological storytelling that dominated our dialogues obscures the multiplicity of layers contained in Mike's passion for cricket and offers

[86] On connection to the self as a spiritual undertaking see Pamela G. Reed, 'An Emerging Paradigm for Investigation of Spirituality in Nursing,' *Research in Nursing and Health* 15 (1992): 349–357; on the definition of spirituality see Corine Hyman and Paul J. Handal, 'Definitions and Evaluation of Religion and Spirituality Items by Religious Professionals: A Pilot Study,' *Journal of Religion and Health* 45, no. 2 (2006): 264–82.
[87] Hammell, 'Intrinsicality.'
[88] Sandiford, 'England.'
[89] Truss, *Get Her off the Pitch*, chap. 7.
[90] Ibid.

a rather straightforward narrative emplotment. Some of the disruptive layers of Mike's questioning are added as they emerged in response to my analysis. While they do complicate the narrative offering some nuance that can be further reinterpreted by the reader, the motif of 'special sanctuary' elucidates an unremitting interdependence of the game's immediacy and its tradition. It is in this sanctuary of tradition where Mike's personality, character, family history and cultural conditioning intersect informing his public identity and world outlook while also granting moments of unapparelled harmony and self-congruence.

Chapter 6 | Zoha – Cricket is a Bond

Zoha was my final recruit. After a few failed attempts to meet up with a couple of other people I had in mind, my partner suggested that I speak to Zoha, whom he had worked with in the past. I was intrigued about this alternative proposition and asked him to put us in touch.

While unconvinced that she would have anything interesting or useful to say, Zoha was more than happy to welcome me into her home in Melbourne's south west. As we talked for close to two hours, I knew that Zoha may have not been the most committed or devoted fan I have ever spoken to. In fact, her uninhibited attitude to cricket and, more generally, sport struck me from the very first minutes. Yet, I was convinced that I wanted to continue talking to her as I felt her haphazard approach was undeniably relatable and offered a distinct insight into spectator sport.

Zoha's openness and honesty led to a thorough genealogy of her fluctuating relationship with 'the imperial game' contextualised in her rich and culturally manifold life trajectory. When I met Zoha in January 2017 for the first time, she was twenty-six years of age and recently married; and when a couple of months later I was trying to organise our second meeting, she joyfully informed me about her pregnancy. Given these circumstances, Zoha and I had to put the continuing research process on hold until the arrival of her child. We met again in the winter of 2018 for a substantive follow-up conversation and spoke again in early 2019 when finalising the chapter.[1]

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> But, I miss my dad sitting next to me and shouting his ass off. That's the best part … and my mum too. She is this quiet person, but when she is in the match, she would be cursing her head off: 'How could you make that out?! Oh my god – you've been sold! You've taken bribes! You're the worst!' I'm like: 'Mum, chi-lax!'

[1] Recorded conversations with Zoha, February 5, 2017; July 14, 2018; February 8, 2019.

Zoha may be living far away from her family, yet her interest in cricket is best contextualised in the vibrancy of her family dynamics. These dynamics do not replicate the multiplicity of Steph's relational modalities, nonetheless it is here that both her interest in – and passion for – cricket come alive.[2] In the close proximity to her family and friends, sport is able to sweep Zoha, as an otherwise uninterested party, into its emotional whirlwinds.

Cricket has always been on the periphery of Zoha's life – it is there in her family, in her cultural and ethnic background, but it was not until a truly personal connection had been drawn that she reimagined cricket, wanted to learn more and suddenly became enthralled in its situated emotional narratives. Zoha's brief and often circumstantial encounters with the game have not only been conditioned by her family dynamics but also enveloped in the contributor's personal search for identity, belonging and finding solace in the permanence of her longing.[3] Although Zoha's commitment to reason and her reasoned appraisals of sports passions as either normal or excessive initially mask these nuanced narrative emplotments, insistent probing reveals the source of her disposition and a meaningful and instrumental place of cricket in her life.[4]

Zoha emerged as a polar opposite to Mike not only in her strong preference to Twenty20 matches, but also in her cultural fluidity which, among other situated experiences, manifests in her cricket spectating practices and beyond. To her, cricket is inherently communal. Living far away from her parents, she misses the revered group dynamics facilitated in times of watching cricket. Zoha's sporadic but consistently communal involvement in 'the English game' and its epistemological undercurrents further underscore the contrast with Mike and his often-solitary fandom expressions.[5]

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[2] Steph's relational modalities are discussed in Chapter 4.
[3] Pattie, 'Longing and Belonging.'
[4] Passions have been categorised as healthy and unhealthy in Vallerand et al., 'On Obsessive and Harmonious Passion'; these categories have been applied to the study of sports fans most notably in Parry, 'Game of Two Passions.'
[5] Mike's interest in cricket, on many occasions, manifests in solitude, see Chapter 5.

Culture *vs*. Mobility

> The first time I watched someone play was maybe in 2004. We were in New York. My brother was in a cricket team in Brooklyn. So, he was in Brooklyn Tech, and he was in their team. So, I was able to go and watch some of his matches even though I didn't understand anything when I went, cause, you know, I am used to baseball and basketball. And, it was like: what is this? That was my first time watching a game [of cricket] … watching him play.

Zoha, born to Bangladeshi parents in Nepal, encountered cricket in unexpected circumstances. Given her ethnical background, the game's history and its ongoing popularity on the Indian subcontinent, causal explanatory narrative for her interest in the game can be easily assumed to reside in her Subcontinental cultural embeddedness. Although Bangladesh does not come close in national team performance to the renowned cricket trinity of the Indian subcontinent – India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – cricket is the country's 'only secular religion'.[6] Despite a lack of notable successes on the pitch, the diverse people of this South Asian nation come together in their passion for 'the imperial game' that still holds a power to at least momentarily override internal tensions and political divisions.[7] The example of 2011 Cricket World Cup co-hosted by Bangladesh asserts that cricket has been reified into a political project of nationhood and belonging.[8]

Although questions of belonging and longing emerge in our conversations, Zoha's relationship with the game is grounded in – and is shaped by – the situated personal experiences, which seem to be both deliberately and intellectually removed from the politics of belonging. Instead of political formations and expressions, belonging arises in the contributor's lived cultural hybridity and first-hand experiences of mobility.

Zoha's first cricket memories are emblematic of this fluid cultural positionality both

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[6] Kausik Bandyopadhyay, 'Cricket as Nationalist Obsession: ICC World Cup 2011 and Bangladesh as a Host Nation,' Sport in Society 16, no. 1 (2013): 19–32.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Yuval-Davis, *Politics of Belonging*.

in their material and emotional emplotments. Soon after the contributor's birth and following her dad's work postings, her family moved to California and later to New York. Growing up in the United States, Zoha had become familiar with – and keen on – the quintessentially North American sports of baseball and basketball.[9] She had not been aware that her own sibling was playing cricket at school.

Although Zoha presents the memory of watching her brother play cricket for the Brooklyn Tech as her first recollection of the game, further probing reveals that this was not an entirely accidental encounter. Zoha's older brother had been playing cricket for some time, but it was not until she had watched *Lagaan*, the Bollywood blockbuster, that she became curious:

> *Lagaan*, yeah … and we watched that, and he [Zoha's brother] was like: 'Oh, I play this game!' And, I was like: 'I wanna see you play!' So, he didn't take me the first few times … but later on, he took me, allowed me to go. It was fun …[10]

The film tells a story of an obscure Indian village and the plight of its people in the years of drought and under the Imperial British rule.[11] It is a fictional narrative set in a historical reality of colonial India, which unfolds in the late nineteenth century but also speaks to the postcolonial present of the divided Subcontinent.[12] In the film, the game of cricket may be only a metaphor for resistance against the colonial rule, however, excelling at 'the imperial game' has encapsulated cultural resistance and shaped national identities of the sovereign states which emerged in the aftermath of the partition of India and the events that followed.[13] While Zoha's narrative is comparably marked by resistance, it is a culturally shaped personal struggle. Questions of Bangladeshi national identity and the boost that cricketing successes give to the sense of nationhood appear to be uninteresting to the contributor. Similarly, the mention of *Lagaan* in our initial conversation does not facilitate a

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[9] Forney, *Holy Trinity of American Sports*.
[10] Ashutosh Gowariker, *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* (Sony Pictures, 2001).
[11] Ibid.
[12] Farred, 'The Double Temporality of Lagaan.'
[13] The Partition of India in 1947 established the independent dominions of India and Pakistan, which later became the independent states. Bangladeshi statehood evolved from the religious and ethnic divisions between East and West Pakistan.

broader cultural discussion, instead it provides a necessary contextual detail in both her narrative and our immediate exchange.

While watching the film, her brother noted: 'I play this game!' Zoha was immediately interested and wanted to see her sibling in action. The film's cricketing motif joined Zoha's preceding and impeding encounters with the game: it did not only encourage the contributor to see her brother fielding and bowling on a cricket pitch but also facilitated a more informed understanding of her dad's constant references to what she at the time thought was an insect:

> My dad did … I don't really know about my mum, cause she didn't talk about it until much later, but my dad would always talk about cricket. When he used to talk about cricket, I thought it was like a bug. I didn't know it was a game. I'm being very honest.

Seeing her brother play cricket did not spark a lasting interest in the game. In fact, Zoha deemed the game to be boring and complicated: she struggled to understand what was happening on the pitch that afternoon. In this instance, it was the game's on-field complexities rather than its cultural intricacies that put the contributor off.[14] Yet, the tables turned later in Zoha's life when the on-field obscurities and her ability to understand them induced pleasure and enjoyment whereas the game's cultural entanglements became increasingly bothersome.

A combination of Zoha's Bangladeshi heritage and her unusual interest in cricket outside of its cultural and national dimensions across the Indian subcontinent speaks to her pluralistic belonging. Zoha self-identifies as a 'multicultural baby' – the label that, to her mind, accurately describes her lack of belonging:

> I don't have a specific place, cause I can't relate to Bangladesh at all. I can't relate to America. All my experiences, my expectations just blew up when Trump became the President, because you see what he is doing with immigration … with the migrants, breaking families apart …[15]

[14] This is again a reference to the idea that cricket is difficult to access for those outside the British colonial experience or its cultural remnants, see Farred, 'The Double Temporality of Lagaan.'
[15] This is a reference to the so-called Trump's child separation policy, which was automatically instated by the Attorney General Jeff Sessions's Zero Tolerance policy in relation to all border crossings. It meant that all border

Cricket does not have a constant place in Zoha's permanent state of longing.[16] Nevertheless, 'the imperial game' offers an interesting intersection of 'feeling at home' and political belonging.[8] While to so many Bangladeshi people both at home – on the Indian subcontinent – and across the world, cricket is a settling political axis informing their national identity in both the Subcontinent's emancipation from colonial rule and in the secession from Pakistan, which was stimulated by the ethnolinguistic premise. Growing up in a part of the world devoid of collective passion for the game, Zoha struggled to relate to her father's obsession-like interest. The lack of historical awareness of her family's homeland and her American conditioning further impaired her ability to understand the game.[17] It was not only the American sports that Zoha was conditioned to follow and enjoy, her brief reference to Trump's presidency and his administration's widely reported and condemned immigration policies indicate that there was a time when she felt at home both politically and personally under the auspice of the American Dream and in its promise of opportunity and embrace of diversity.[18]

The constant presence of Zoha's parents' obsessive relationship with cricket – particularly, on her family's return to their native Bangladesh – afforded cultural authenticity for Zoha's eventual curiosity towards the game.[19] Yet, this curiosity seems to have arisen primarily from boredom and displacement:

> We moved to Bangladesh. That's when it started again, because now it's on every channel, every sports channel available. And, my dad and mum, I mean, they would be glued to the TV. And, you know, after a while you don't have anything to do: okay, let's watch it. So, we started again … they would watch, you know, one-day tournaments. I couldn't sit through those – literally, from the morning until the night.

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crossings are subject to criminal prosecution, the enactment of which leads to children being separated from their parents; for an overview of this policy see Maya Rhodan, 'Here Are the Facts about President Trump's Family Separation Policy,' *Time*, June 20, 2018, http://time.com/5314769/family-separation-policy-donald-trump/.

[16] Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging.'

[17] Sufia M. Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity and Language in an Islamic Nation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[18] The American Dream in its historically conditioned iterations is discussed in John Kenneth White and Sandra L. Hanson, 'The Making and Persistence of the American Dream,' in *The American Dream in the 21st Century*, ed. John Kenneth White and Sandra L. Hanson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 1–16.

[19] Porat, 'Bounded Identification'; Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs.'

After years of living in diaspora, Zoha suddenly found herself back in her family's native Bangladesh at the age of sixteen. Having grown up in the US and arriving to culturally contrasting Bangladesh on the cusp of becoming the author of her own narrative identity, the contributor found herself feeling foreign in what, the logic dictated, was supposed be the closest place to home.[20] Out of the many things that seemed strange and unfamiliar, cricket was, indeed, one of them. The game on the Indian subcontinent remained long, complex and boring in the eyes of the collaborator.

Not belonging in Bangladesh did not, however, mean belonging in America. As alluded to earlier, Zoha feels like she does not belong to any particular place, but there was a reason why by the time the sixteen-year-old Zoha moved to the unfamiliarity of her parents' homeland she had been betrayed by the promise of the American Dream. The shake-up she had experienced as a young person, a school kid and a Muslim girl in an American school in the aftermath of 9/11 informed her views, her personality and her story. Cricket may only be a tiny spec in that continuing trajectory but her ways of following 'the English game' are imbued with anxieties of longing and an immediate and unconditional belonging.[21]

Cricket is a sport that may be widely dispersed, yet the geographical and cultural boundaries of its spread are firmly entrenched.[22] Zoha's position in relation to those boundaries is curious. Born and raised as a Bangladeshi, she had no first-hand experience of the Indian subcontinent until her late adolescence. And, while her fluctuating passion for cricket was ignited there, it was her mobility, transcultural realities and discriminatory experiences that informed it and subsequently shaped it.

[20] On the development of the capacity to author one's narrative identity in the late adolescence/early adulthood see McAdams, *Personality Development*. This is also discussed in Chapter 2.
[21] Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging.'
[22] Guttmann, *Games and Empires*.

Reason *vs*. Passion

> I am not gonna support the team because I am born from the same place from where they are born in. There has to be a reason and that's not the first match that they sucked at. It was like the hundredth. So, I am basing my preferences on the way they play …

Zoha has a rather unconventional relationship with sporting loyalties afforded by her culturally mobile life experiences. Her lack of connection between cricket and nationalism evidently contrasts Mike's belief that cricket allows him to channel his national identity 'without hurting anyone'. That said, Zoha's national, cultural and political identity became her lived and enacted multiculturalism, which pronounced itself in her choice of a cricket team.

> I saw some of the players and they were playing really well and it's such a multicultural … I mean, their group, that particular group, Punjab Kings XI, at the time it was the most multicultural group, cause they had team members from other teams: like West Indies, they had people from Australia, from South Africa. They were all playing, you know. So, it was a multicultural bunch of people and they were just awesome. I mean, I remember sitting with my dad and there was this one part where the team just made a string of sixes and fours and me and my dad were like: what's happening? It was fun and from thereon in: okay, this is the team I am going to support.[23]

Here, I sense that the importance Zoha places on multiculturalism in this seemingly off-the-cuff remark is embedded in something more materially tangible than the buzzwords she uses when asked why the multiculturalism of the Punjab Kings XI made an impression on her. 'Diversity, acceptance' – the contributor commences her rather generic response which once again references Trump's presidency as well as Bangladeshi national cricket squad and their questionable ability to work as a cohesive team unit.

While listening to that response, I sit anxiously and think as to how I can best reformulate the question so that Zoha is more willing to reveal personal experiences, which I sense, shaped her fixation on acceptance, diversity and teamwork, 'Why do

[23] Punjab Kings XI – a cricket team from Mohali in Punjab, playing in the IPL.

you think that resonates so strongly with you?' – I suddenly interject Zoha before she has the time to finish the sentence. 'Oh, oh' – the collaborator exclaims knowingly before continuing – 'I was picked on when I was in America.' Zoha goes on to explain the circumstances and the extent of the intolerance and discrimination that was levelled at her:

> I am relatively light skinned [and] before then people did not pick on me, because of my light skin. They just picked on my older brother who was darker than I was. So, I never faced it until I wore a hijab. I got into school, sixth grade, third day, *September 11* happens, and before that everything was fine. That day onwards: the racism started, the discrimination started. So, I was punched, I was bullied, I was locked up in a room and left there.

Zoha later gives more detail on her most traumatising memory of being locked up in the principal's office with some of the staff helping the bullies:

> Me and two other Muslim girls … We were locked in the principal's office and we were young, six-graders … I was so scared that day. I had never been scared in my life before then. And, my Arts teacher, whom I had a very good connection with, she called my dad and she was like: 'You have to come to the school, they are holding your daughter without any reason'. So, the eighth-grade principle … she came down and she's started going off on him: 'This is freaking illegal, you can't do this, let these girls go right now!'

Zoha empathised with the bullies as she voiced her understanding of the angst and terror in the aftermath of 9/11. She also remembers that the situation improved dramatically after she had transitioned to high school. The new school had a culturally diverse student population and initiatives to complement that and work towards a harmonious cultural exchange, including a multicultural club, which Zoha remembers very pleasingly. Nevertheless, the actuality of 9/11 and the ensuing policies and rhetoric had an enormously adverse effect on her everyday life and her relation to American society.[24] Suddenly, her lived experiences strikingly contrasted with the American mythology and its embrace of diversity.

[24] Discrimination and exclusion experienced by Muslims living in the US are documented in Lori Peek, *Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

For Zoha 9/11 signified a personal watershed moment, following which she had Anglicised her name and removed her hijab. Widely the date is also reflected upon as a watershed moment in the US foreign policy and national security measures.[25] The combination of the personal experiences and both American and global legacies of 9/11 undeniably informed Zoha's focus on multiculturalism and her wariness of nationalism. Unlike Mike, she is contemptuous of nationalistic expressions even in sporting scenarios. While in choosing her team, she fixated on the Punjab Kings XI culturally diverse make-up, the contributor discounted her parents deeply nationally and culturally informed allegiance as 'weirdness'.

> And, the reason I didn't like the team my parents were supporting, it's because they were supporting it, because of patriotism/weirdness. Kolkata Knight Riders, so Kolkata is in India where they speak Bengali. And, my parents – they are from Bangladesh where they speak Bengali. So, they thought: yeah, okay we'll support Kolkata Knight Riders, because they are Bengali and we are Bengali. And, they also bought a few team members from Bangladesh cricket team … that added to their patriotism, but I just thought their team was more show and less play. So, I didn't like their team.[26]

The emergence of the state of Bangladesh following the Bangladesh Liberation War was culturally permitted by the Bengali language shunned by Muslims of West Pakistan.[27] Following the secession of Bangladesh, the language remained the key building block of nationhood and common national identity, with the 21st of February celebrated as Shaheed Dibash (the Matyr's Day) – the day that during the time of united Pakistan was proclaimed by the East Pakistani authorities as the State Language Day.[28]

Zoha's parents' unquestionable and unwavering support for the Kolkata Knight Riders underscores how sports passions are unavoidably entangled in the history, culture and politics. In a region riddled with sectarian tensions, in the past cricket was seen as an opportunity for unity across the Subcontinent's diverse populace by

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[25] Dawn Rothe and Stephen L. Muzzatti, 'Enemies Everywhere: Terrorism, Moral Panic and US Civil Society,' *Critical Criminology* 12, no. 3 (2004): 327–50.
[26] Kolkata Knight Riders – a cricket team playing in the IPL, representing the city of Kolkata.
[27] Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh*.
[28] Ibid, 199.

some.[29] In contrast to these wishes, the love for the game became yet another ingredient of distinctive political projects that underscore already ingrained divisions through cricket rivalries.[30] It is precisely from these entanglements that Zoha wants to distance herself and her interest in cricket. To her, the support for a cricket team should be grounded in reason, and a cultural or national association, for her, does not come close to a reasoned rationale.

Zoha's attribution to reason is questionable. Indeed, her support for the Punjab Kings XI, due to their perceived multiculturalism, seems to be a similarly emotional choice and, therefore, irrational in relation to Zoha's own imposed binary. Zoha's approach not only suggests that what is rational is to support successful teams – as her short-lived support is rarely embedded in totems and instead cleaves onto consistent performance on the pitch – but that emotions are inevitably irrational. While Zoha's seemingly measured and detached approach to sports spectatorship aligns with behavioural explanations of fans' motivations, her distinction between reasons and emotions is both reasonable and arbitrary.[31]

The strict dichotomy between reasons and emotions, for a long time, sustained as a philosophical axiom.[32] Despite new, more fluid and even oppositional ways of thinking about emotions and passions, the longevity of this binary have penetrated into, at least, the everyday use of the English language where bipolarity of being reasoned and being passionate operates as a truism. Following on from this, Zoha's intellectual compartmentalising is far deeper in regard to sports passions as it rests at the centre of the most basic questions of what passions are and what they entail.

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[29] Guttmann, *Games and Empires,* 34.
[30] The notion of the politics of belonging as defined in Yuval-Davis, *Politics of Belonging* and addressed in the preceding chapter (Chapter 5) is applied here to the political use of cricket by different nation states on the Indian subcontinent. For example, Richard Cashman notes that cricket enjoyed government support in a number of nations on the Subcontinent, see Richard Cashman, 'The Subcontinent,' in *The Imperial Game: Cricket, Culture and Society*, ed. Brian Stoddart and Keith A. P. Sandiford (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 129.
[31] Keaton, Gearhart and Honeycutt, 'Fandom and Psychological Enhancement.'
[32] Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1976).

In one of the most prominent alternative accounts on passions, Robert Solomon explicated that unlike popular opposition between passion and reason, passions are, in fact, judgments that inform reasons.[33] Although here the interface replaced the opposition, the interactive condition was afforded by Solomon's alternative binary of objectivity and subjectivity, which continued to insist on a degree of distance between rational and passionate be it on a different ontological plateau.[34]

Given the ontological premise of this thesis, the notions of objectivity and subjectivity are not discernible as the interaction between the two is constant, evolving and vigorous. This indiscriminate existence of value-free and value-laden worlds is at the centre of Zoha's continuous focus on practicalities in her interest in cricket. As the contributor is reciting the chronology of her cricketing encounters, suddenly a very practical issue of availability emerges as a significant barrier to the development of her passion.

> Okay, so from there it stopped, I watched maybe one or two of his [Zoha's brother] games … and then again at that time we didn't have a cable connection … We weren't really able to watch cricket matches as much as we would like to. In America, they would only show like football, soccer matches … It stopped, it died down there …

Coalescing with this practical consideration, cricket is also a time investment. Even after she had moved to Bangladesh, Zoha's first encounters with cricket confirmed her perception that this game was uninteresting and boring, largely owing to the long Test matches that the contributor has since abandoned.

> Yeah, Test matches … I didn't like it at all and then I stopped again, but then the Twenty20 series came. And, I loved this: they're done in one day, both teams get to play … you are interested, [you] can stay focused, you know what's going on. That started in 2010, so I started watching the Twenty20 matches.

While Zoha could not physically stay focused through a Test match, preventing her from finding an emotional connection with cricket, the quicker and more intense Twenty20 format became her point of entry to a more sustained interest in the game.

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

Zoha, however, underscores that this is her personal experience of Test matches, and that others, including her parents, do find them emotionally enthralling.

Aside from being indicative of how a value-free measure of time can easily become value-laden and, therefore, subjective, I find this an interesting juncture between the stories of Mike and Zoha. When I put the question of time to Mike, suggesting that Test matches may not be the best fit for the fast-paced lifestyles of today. Mike contests the premise of my speculative statement, through the supposedly objective measure of time, further infringing the divide between value-free and value-laden:

> Yeah, it's true up to a point, but I think it's over [exaggerated]... I mean there are more people sitting in cafes having coffee. Parents supposedly are rushing. And, I see parents watch games in Eastern Park. And, they stand around, have a coffee, and they chat, and they talk to other parents, and they're there for an hour or two, and they have a nice time on a Saturday morning. I don't see that they have to rush all the time.[35]

I remember listening to Mike and thinking that, perhaps, the picture summoned in his comment is not afforded to everyone and even his ability to observe the slow pace of life of some is down to his own laid-back and time-rich lifestyle. Conversely, while Zoha's own socio-economic status significantly diverges from Mike's, even the memory of her parents' spectating practices before they left the workforce did not involve as much Test cricket as they can afford now in their retirement.

> Now they are retired, they can watch. When we were in New York – hell no. They would be so tired; they could barely get through one of the three-hour matches ... maybe. In Bangladesh, they have much more free time, so what they will do – they would stay up in the middle of the night to watch a match that's happening across the world. Even if I have, say, twelve days off and I don't have anywhere to go, I still can't sit through a ten-hour match. I mean, physically it's exhausting. Mentally – hell yeah, it's exhausting! But, other people – they like it, because maybe they are used to it, they are able to understand it better. I can't stand it.[36]

Zoha paints her parents' life as much more hectic than Mike's, in which Test cricket emerges as time-consuming and emotionally exerting, hence incompatible with life

[35] Eastern park – a recreational park on the edge of Geelong CBD.
[36] Mike's retirement is discussed above in Chapter 5.

of a busy working person. Through the reference to her parents, Zoha intelligibly points to the dimensions of her own relationship with the game, which, to her, has to strictly remain in the space of leisure if it is to have any role in her life at all. In some ways, this is reminiscent to Mike's notion of escape.[37] Yet, a closer inspection of the lives of Mike and Zoha leaves no doubt that cricket plays strikingly different roles in their respective realities. Certainly, their age difference imposes a stark misalignment of their life cycles as revealed in their contrasting references to home-ownership. As Mike ponders on cricket being an escape, he never implies that such escape is in any way necessitated by the everyday stresses. On the other hand, he talks about leading a relatively stress-free life: living in retirement and free from mortgage. Similarly, Zoha, when commenting on the positive stress that the experience of watching cricket overwhelms her with, juxtaposes that with the everyday stressors, such as paying rent:

> Because, you know, it's for the moment, it's gonna end soon. like stress about, say, paying rent, it's something that's in your head always bugging you: you have to save, you have to save. It's prolonged and stretched out. When it is a game, you know, it's gonna end shortly, you know that this stress that you have – it's gonna end. And, it's an enjoyable kind of stress. You can actually watch [the game] as it's unveiling itself, you know. Your team is about to lose, you can tell, maybe ten minutes into it. Sometimes you can't, because sometimes the runs are so close – even that's enjoyable stress.

Mike's notion of cricket being merely an escape and an opportunity for a private space is not necessitated by any stressors of his daily life whereas Zoha's comparable conception of cricket being 'a vacation away from reality' is embedded in a pursuit of positive stress that alleviates the worries and anxieties of her everyday life.[38]

> I call it a vacation away from reality. It's like everyone in their lives, they go through a tremendous amount of shit. There may be good stuff, bad stuff, but it can be exhausting. Sometimes you need to watch … totally … not just watch it [but] to be so engulfed in it that you don't really need to think about what's going on around you. Okay, for that, there are movies, TV shows … there are books and there are games, because you can get so involved with what's going on with the team members, actors, characters that you can forget about what's going on. You can pretend for a certain

[37] 'Escape' and the prominence of similar notions within sports fandom scholarship are addressed in Chapter 5.
[38] On pursuit of positive stress (i.e., eustress) as a motive of sports fans is explained in Daniel L. Wann, 'Preliminary Validation of the Sport Fan Motivation Scale,' *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 19, no. 4 (1995): 377–96.

> amount of time that you are actually in the game or you are actually in the TV show or you are actually in the story that you are reading.

Juxtaposing Mike and Zoha's differing versions of escape exemplifies the constant interaction between the object and the subject which injects value into value-free; hence Zoha's 'vacation away from reality' is only a discursive device and not an evidence of duality of existence.[39] It is yet another way that she introduces shrewdness into her narrative. By knowing the utility of her practices Zoha gives them an aura of rationality outside of the unsustainable duopoly of the real and the unreal; and the objective and the subjective. Indeed, grouping her sporadic interest in cricket with getting lost in fictional narratives of novels and television shows gives cricket a place in her everyday practices and a reason for her engagement.

Zoha's insistence on reason and rationality not only implies contrasting utilities of reason and emotion but also affords a discrepancy between her healthy following of cricket and an unhealthy involvement of others.[40]

> I don't like it in a sense that yes, your team did lose, but you're just a watcher. Think about how they are feeling, don't feel all this anger. This anger is unnecessary. Yes, they lost a match, but they played their hearts out, and you should be happy about that. You know, you should be fine about that. If they played crap, you can be angry for them, but what's the point?

What I earlier labelled as intellectual compartmentalising is discernibly evident here once again. This division between obsession and harmony also compares to John's efforts to compartmentalise his love for Manchester United.[41] The lines between harmony and obsession are, however, blurry in the same way that reason is not a polar opposite of passion as the subject is always in a dialogue with the object.[42] The

[39] Sport as an alternative reality is discussed in Chapter 4.
[40] The duality of reason and emotion is explored in Solomon, *Passions* and discussed above. Passions as either healthy or unhealthy are addressed in Vallerand, 'On Passion for Life Activities: The Dualistic Model of Passion' *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 42 (January 2010): 97–193.
[41] On boundary between obsessive and harmonious passions see Vallerand et al., 'On Obsessive and Harmonious Passion'; Robert J. Vallerand et al., 'On Passion and Sports Fans: A Look at Football,' *Journal of Sports Sciences* 26 (2008): 12–1279; Vallerand, 'On Passion for Life Activities.' This is noted above in Chapter 3.
[42] Solomon, *Passions*; Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

lived uncertainty of these binaries emerges in other fragments of Zoha's storytelling and paradigmatic expressions where the collaborator relates to her own emotional investment in instantaneously unfolding scripts of cricket.[43]

> Okay, you get so invested in … if you are watching a match of your favourite team playing, you get invested in the sense that you are watching it. Not only you are watching it, you are following everything that's going on, you are looking every two seconds at the number of runs. You are looking at who's batting, who's bowling, who's on the field, how many wickets are left. You are in it. Okay and that to me … that erases everything that has happened during the day away from your mind. It's just a great feeling there. So, that's how I relate to it …

At times for Zoha cricket is in line with any other pastime, such as reading a book or watching a television show. It is an emotional outlet and a method to experience positive stress.[44] This desire to stimulate excitement through cricket that is stressful but yet enjoyable is apparent in Zoha's clear-cut distinction between her everyday stresses and a highly emotive immersion in the immediate action of the game. While the contributor insists on intellectual compartmentalising in which she ascribes cricket to an alternative reality that is value-free, the duality between reason and passion cannot be sustained in her own narrative, let alone in the narrative analysis of her discursive constructions. The comparison between cricket and fictional narratives reveals the interactivity between reason and emotion, as it is Zoha's value-laden existence in the world that demands 'a vacation away from reality'. This emotional state, therefore, shapes the reason for Zoha's sporadic encounters with cricket.

Emotion is also most lucidly enmeshed in the allegiances Zoha forges with different cricket teams. As it will be discussed in the following section, her allegiances are fleeting and often one-off due to a particular feeling that Zoha ultimately seeks from the cricket-saturated moments. Nevertheless, as implicitly exemplified by her quickly-felt relatedness to the Punjab Kings XI, it is emotions that inform Zoha's team choices.

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[43] McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[44] Wann, 'Preliminary Validation of the Sport Fan Motivation Scale.'

Zoha felt good about the Punjab Kings XI, because a culturally diverse group of people working together, to her, was a living proof that different cultures do not have to clash, they can coexist and coalesce around a common goal. This was a settling feeling precipitated by the unsettling memories of her post 9/11 experiences. The harrowing experiences of discrimination and their emotional consequences have informed Zoha's judgements, one of which happened to be her support for this multicultural group of players.

Belonging vs. Longing

> When I went to Bangladesh for the first time, it was in 2006, and I was sixteen years old – so past the whole, you know, adolescence period and about to become an adult. So, the stuff I faced in Bangladesh after going there … think about being raised in a first world country and being thrown into a third world country. Everything is different: the language is foreign, everything is foreign. And, the way people behaved with each other … It's just … patriotism is like a show when they're dealing with other people, but inside the internal politics, it was just horrible. I was like: no, I can't be supportive of something that I don't agree with. So, I didn't agree with what was going on inside. Probably, that's why I don't show patriotism, but that is not related to this team [the Bangladeshi national team] … The problem with this team is that it's never fluid, it's always, you know, going up one day, going down the next day. You can never say: okay, this team, these players are actually really good; they played a number of good matches – this is the team to beat!

Zoha's reflection on her first encounter with her native Bangladesh is illuminating. Surroundings that should have been relatable through kinship appeared to be strikingly unfamiliar. Zoha was thrown into a geographical space and a community of people at the age of sixteen, her belonging to which was prescribed by the politics yet her lived experiences could not substantiate this prescription.[45] Despite this lived disjuncture of belonging as an emotional connection and belonging as a political project, Zoha disputes that her lack of support for the Bangladesh national cricket team is grounded in her lived cultural hybridity.[46] To her it is about the team's lack of consistency, positive on-field presence and effort – concerns that are known to be the qualities of an opportunistic 'fair-weather' fandom.[47] Indeed, her reasons for

[45] Yuval-Davis, *Politics of Belonging*.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Wann and Branscombe, 'Die-Hard and Fair-Weather Fans.'

supporting certain teams are embedded in their successes and failures: aside from the emotional relatedness to the diverse make-up of the Punjab Kings XI, it was her beholding of the 'string of sixes and fours' that marked the beginning of her allegiance with this club. Similarly, the lack of on-field consistency swayed her away from the Bangladesh national team.

Some form of opportunism also infuses Zoha's more recent encounters with the game as watching cricket to her presents a possibility for a collective experience. This is not unique to Zoha, but her fixation on accessing these momentary group dynamics – particularly when the rest of her family can partake – is emblematic of her relationship with cricket. After the arrival of her child, Zoha's parents came from Bangladesh to stay with their daughter for a few months. Coincidentally, the timing of their visit facilitated a number of opportunities to watch cricket: ranging from a One Day International Series contested by Bangladesh to the Indian Premier League.

When Zoha and I meet for a follow-up conversation in July 2018, she is keen to tell me about Bangladesh's recent disappointing performances which corroborate her previously expressed low opinion of the national side. More importantly, however, she is keen to relive the memories of reuniting with her family to watch cricket – an experience that she admits to having actively sought.

> Yeah! That's what I meant, cause my husband's working and my younger brother is not into cricket at all. He is not a sports person, my older brother was … so watching it by myself, it is not as fun: you want someone to like scream with you and shout with you. So, when my parents were here, it was different, cause I had my mum and my dad and myself. And, we would just be screaming … And, we would have guests over. And, they are also like cricket addicts, but they didn't get Foxtel.[48] So, on their days off (if there was a match) they'd come over and we would just be divided. So, the group of us would be voting for one group, the other for the other. And, we would just have a good time. Cause they were short matches, so we would be able to enjoy it a lot.

[48] Foxtel – an Australian pay television service, which owns broadcasting rights of many sports leagues and sporting events.

Zoha has previously made the distinction between cricket in Bangladesh and cricket in Australia: the latter is devoid of the group dynamics and relatedness that, to her, make the experience of cricket. Even the vocabulary utilised by the contributor in this instance implies a non-committal and inconsequential engagement with the on-field action. Zoha suggests that in these rare cricket get-togethers of family and friends, the teams are 'voted for' as opposed to being backed, which implies a light-hearted support that is neither reasoned nor emotionally consequential. Zoha later clarifies that this is only done to make it more competitive when televised matches are not contested by teams her parents or friends are invested in. Nevertheless, these light-hearted communal dynamics offer 'a vacation away from reality', but, following Zoha's own binary distinction, they are also rooted in the actual reality. It is in this single reality that the contributor positions herself in the permanence of longing when establishing that there is no place she belongs to. Yet, she belongs in this communal experience of watching cricket which, in turn, offers a momentarily relief from her longing.[49]

This momentary break is not, however, a simple feel-good moment of a family get-together. The moment is embedded in personal memories and belonging to her role as a daughter.[50] While Zoha had been aware of cricket ever since watching *Lagaan*, it was not until an incidental question pertaining to the refereeing of the game and the events that followed immediately after that an emotionally relatable connection with the game was drawn.

> It was me and my dad at the dining table. So, I watched a match with him, and the umpire does this [gesture with her hand] or this [a different hand gesture]. I don't know. And, I am like: 'I think he wants a box' … and my dad is just cracking up and laughing. He was like: 'He doesn't want a box, he wants a third umpire'. And, I'm like: 'That was a third umpire?' And, he is like: 'Sit down my daughter.' Literally. He made my brother put on one of the older matches and he's like: '… there's eleven players of the opposing team on, there's two batsmen from the other team on. We're the

[49] Ann Dorte Christensen, 'Belonging and Unbelonging from an Intersectional Perspective,' *Gender, Technology and Development* 13, no. 1 (2009): 21–41.
[50] Belonging to a particular role builds on the idea of social memory which extends the notion of collective memory and, therefore, highlights the social aspect of all memories, their attachment to social groups and collectively known places while still respecting personal ways of remembering; see James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992). In sport studies, the concept of social memory has been used in relation to belonging to a place and affinity to a place see Euan Hague and John Mercer, 'Geographical Memory and Urban Identity in Scotland: Raith Rovers FC and Kirkcaldy,' *Geography* 83, no. 2 (1998): 105–16; Bale, *Sports Geography*.

> batting team.' And, he was explaining to me how there are different ways to score, like you can actually physically run to make a run. Also, there's different types of shots you can make. If it goes over a boundary you make a six … He was trying to show me, and I couldn't get it. And then, we watched it on a laptop, and it was like: oh, that's what you were trying to do. And, that was something that stuck with me. So, him sitting [down] and explaining all of that to me … his enthusiasm – he was so into it. I was like okay: if he's putting that much effort, I need to focus. And then, after he explained it, I have this thing where I internally think about it for like an hour or two … when I watched a match and I understood it. I was like: 'Dad, this is going on?' And, he was: 'Yes!' And, I was like, I feel so connected to him at that moment. And, I was like okay, I am understanding now why you've been watching …

The contours of this memory are significant: we see Zoha with her dad 'at the dining table' getting stuck into the intricacies of cricket. This memory, to me, shares a pattern with the opening sketch of Doris Kearns Goodwin's memoir where Doris's dad 'on long summer nights' was teaching his six-year-old the ultimate language of baseball – 'the art of scorekeeping'.[51] The sketch does not only set the tone for the memoir but signposts the central relationship of the story. In the memoir, baseball anchored this and other relationships through time and space in the same way that cricket realised a bond between Zoha and her dad.

Zoha grew up having her father around, occupying a paternal role and performing paternal responsibilities. The cultural displacement amidst which her parents were raising their children, on reflection, is obvious to the contributor: she recalls her dad attempting to engage in pastimes that his children had become accustomed to. For example, Zoha remembers her father being up for watching basketball with his children while having only a limited grasp of the rules. Aside from the culturally displaced parenting, being the only daughter in a family of three kids, Zoha felt that the treatment of her significantly differed from that of her male siblings:

> So, he talked with my brothers about cars. He would also watch races. I hate races, I can't sit and watch races. But he would talk to them about that. He would take them to car shows and stuff. And, I felt like we didn't have much in common, because when we would talk, we talked about: how was your day. That's it. But, he wouldn't be like: 'Oh, you know, there's a car show coming up in two weeks – let's go!' He would buy tickets for my brothers. He wouldn't buy any for me, cause I wasn't interested. I wanted to be my brothers then. I wanted him to say: 'Hey, this is coming up – let's go!' So, that's one connection that we built through cricket. Me actually

[51] Goodwin, *Wait till Next Year*, 1.

> saying: 'I'd go with you to a match in Bangladesh.' [It] doesn't happen unless I am actually into it. And, me being into it was majorly because of him.

While Zoha's dad always had a common ground with her brothers, it was not until that accidental conversation at the dining table that Zoha suddenly found a personally tailored connection to her father – an anchor situating and realising their relationship in their lived and shared experiences. Cricket became this unlikely anchor transcending the grievances of the past and allowing them both to forge a father-daughter bond anew.

> It's just that my dad always wanted a girl, and I was his girl. So, when I was born … because I was like his daughter, like his packaged daughter, you know. So, when it came to things about education and things about different … you know, I wanted to play basketball – he was afraid I'd get hurt. He said: 'No, don't play! You gonna get hurt!' I really wanted to play, because with my brother he was like: 'Go out and play! Don't stay at home playing video games all day! Go out, play basketball, play this and that!' But, with me it's like: 'Stay home, read books. I don't want you to get hurt.' So, when it came to cricket – even though I didn't play until much later – it was still something he could connect with, cause I would also, you know, stroke his ego a bit: 'Tell me about cricket back in your day?' And, I would listen to him. And, he would go on and on about the different matches that he had watched, his favourite players whose names I can't remember for the life of me.

Conformist attitudes towards gender roles are a known attribute of a father-daughter dynamic.[52] This also undoubtedly extends to sports where fathers tend to sure up a gendered orientation to physical activity in the eyes of their female offspring.[53] These persistent attitudinal impositions of sex-roles distanced Zoha and her dad. Her dad's shielding behaviour made Zoha feel excluded and strained their relationship. In this silent torment, cricket emerged as a possibility to reconnect, a possibility for Zoha's father to teach his daughter about his beloved game and his culture.

This pivotal episode in Zoha's transition from an uninterested observer to a casual follower also reminds me of *Lagaan* – the film and its fictional narrative that marked the contributor's first encounter with the game. After the poor farmers of Champaner

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[52] Michael E. Lamb, Margaret Tresch Owen and Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, 'The Father-Daughter Relationship: Past, Present and Future', in *Becoming Female* (Boston: Springer, 1979), 89–112.
[53] Mary A. McElroy, 'Parent-Child Relations and Orientations toward Sport,' *Sex Roles* 9, no. 10 (1983): 997–1004.

accept an unfair bet offered to them by Captain Russel – the British officer in charge of the Cantonment – they get some unexpected help from the Captain's sister, Elizabeth, who having observed this injustice decides to help the villagers and teach them the rules of cricket. The scene in which Elizabeth surrounded by the farmers draws the cricket pitch on the drought-stricken Indian soil does not replicate the father-daughter relationship that unfolded in Zoha's memory. Nevertheless, the cultural metaphor conveyed in this scene coincides with a cultural dislodgment of Zoha's interest in the most popular sport in Bangladesh.

'The English game' was a civilising tool of the colonisers throughout the British colonial history used to subjugate the colonised nations. The game's entrenchment in the nationhood of the states across the Indian subcontinent, however, is seen as a recent phenomenon distinct from the colonial past.[54] Nevertheless, *Lagaan* questions this narrative – and some historians agree with the probe – by offering a metaphorical insight into a resistance-driven adoption of the colonisers' favourite pastime.[55] The film very expressively depicts that the Subcontinents' indigenous people played 'the gentlemen's game' with the fervour and physicality uncharacteristic to the playing style of the colonisers, challenging the proposition that the colonised were simply keen to beat the colonisers at their game and tapping into 'the ideas of self-cultivation, manliness and self-worth' that the colonised were projecting in their adoption of the European sports.[56]

Similarly, Bangladeshi-born Zoha learned the game from her proud Bengali father in the moment that strengthened their father-daughter bond, fostered her interest in cricket but yet did not position that interest within the national culture of her homeland. Like the villagers of Champaner who learned the game from Elizabeth, the sister of their British ruler, but played the game with their own character conditioned by their modest village realities, Zoha remained apathetic to the national and

[54] See critique of this in Boria Majumdar, 'Cultural Resistance and Sport: Politics, Leisure and Colonialism – Lagaan – Invoking Lost History,' *Culture, Sport, Society* 5, no. 2 (2002): 29–44; Bale and Cronin, 'Sport and Colonialism.'
[55] Majumdar, 'Cultural Resistance and Sport.'
[56] Majumdar, 'Cultural Resistance and Sport', 40; James, *Beyond a Boundary*.

cultural envelopment of Bangladeshi cricket, instead using the game to access moments of situated belonging in the permanence of her longing.

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Zoha is not an obsessive fanatic or a devoted captive of her favourite sport. She is a person who from time to time chooses to tune in and let the spectacle of cricket to momentarily take over her world. Despite her parents' cultural investment in the game and the father-daughter bond that was strengthened through the game, her relationship with cricket is devoid of a particular cultural or national commitment and is, instead, most lucidly informed by her mobility and personal experiences of being branded as different.[57] The longing to belong transpires in her cricket-related reasoning while her content with longing is marked by her active effort to get her family and friends together to watch cricket.

When Zoha and I were reading the chapter together in early 2019, she nodded extensively throughout, later noting that it made her reflect on how her cricket encounters are intricately connected with her life trajectory. Zoha's interest in cricket is fluctuating and sporadic and, unlike most other contributors in this thesis, is not centred around a committed allegiance. Cricket, however, is not central to her story, either. Instead, Zoha's embodied mobility becomes the anchoring axis of her life narrative, informing Zoha's judgments in cricket and far beyond.

[57] Eugenia Katartzi, 'Young Migrants' Narratives of Collective Identifications and Belonging,' *Childhood* 25, no. 1 (2018): 36.

Chapter 7 | Andrea – Identity meets Politics

Meeting Andrea was another stroke of luck. I was cycling through Melbourne's CBD one Saturday afternoon in late February 2016, when I decided to swing by the Greek Festival that was taking place on Lonsdale Street that weekend.[1] Amidst Greek food and entertainment, there were a few stands dedicated to Greece's domestic football clubs, including Olympiacos Piraeus.[2] Andrea happened to be one of the people attending to Olympiacos stand that day, promoting the team's Melbourne-based supporter club.

As soon as I saw Andrea – the only woman across all the football stands at the festival – I knew I had to speak to her in an attempt to recruit her for my project – and so I did. I remember Andrea was understandably confused by what I wanted from her. But, fortunately for me we continued the conversation, at the end of which I almost forced her to take my mobile phone number with a hope that she would call me.

I was pleasantly surprised to receive a phone call from Andrea the following week. She sounded interested in my PhD topic and keen to help. Her interest in my project and her willingness to talk candidly about her passion for association football was thrilling to me.

I visited Andrea at her workplace three times in 2016 and caught up for the last time before finalising my thesis in late 2018, each time spending close to two hours talking about football, politics and her personal history.[3] In the office decorated with images of her sporting favourites and favourite sporting moments. Andrea greeted me each time wearing a different football jersey. Yet, it was her visceral passion palpable in our conversations that was most impressive to me.

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[1] Lonsdale Street Greek Festival is Melbourne's biggest annual Greek street party held in the historic Greek precinct on Lonsdale Street.
[2] Olympiacos Piraeus – a professional Greek football club. It is Greece's most successful football club.
[3] Recorded conversations with Andrea, April 1, 2016; June 17, 2016; July 15, 2016; December 14, 2018.

> I don't like this plastic rubbish [the A-League]; it has no place here. This is Football! Passion! Football is club before country. That's how it is. You ask anyone who supports football, and they'll tell you that your club it becomes your life, it consumes you.

Andrea's expressive response to my question about her stance on the A-league denounces Australia's top-flight club soccer competition as 'plastic' and strikes a distinction between visceral and simulated passion. To her, the A-League is missing all of the necessary components of football: it is void of tradition and is an affront to the country's football history.

Throughout our collaboration, the A-League became a symbol of Andrea's much deeper historical and political discontent. It is through history and politics that our conversations tapped into Andrea's personality and her love for the world game while also shedding light on lived experiences of Australia's supposed multiculturalism and enacted fixation on identity politics. In the conversational flow, both narrative and paradigmatic modes of expression emerged, presenting two different images of Andrea. While paradigmatic expressions portrayed the contributor heavily invested in boundary work to express her identity in relation to Australia, her Greek heritage, complicit femininity and association football; storytelling blurred the boundaries and unmasked embodied and lived plurality. Football, for Andrea, is most definitely a passion, but it is also a proxy through which her agency evaluates the plurality and, at times, uncertainty of her social and political situatedness.

History *vs.* Today

> When I started football, as in liking football, I was three years old. My dad took me to my first football game at the age of three. He took me to see the team that was called South Melbourne Hellas, that it is now called South Melbourne ... [4] And, I still support South Melbourne. I refuse to watch the A-League, by the way, because I was supporting South Melbourne since I was three years old ... And, my dad put me up on his shoulders, took me to Middle Park, which is near Albert Park Lake, so he took me there. And, it was a ritual for us as a family. Me, my dad and my brother would go to the football every weekend.

[4] South Melbourne Football Club is a soccer club based in the suburb of Albert Park in Melbourne. It currently competes in the National Premier Leagues Victoria. The club was established in 1959 as South Melbourne Hellas FC. The A-League has been the top-flight Australian domestic soccer club competition since 2005.

When we first met, Andrea was fifty years old. Despite having grown up in Melbourne – the stronghold of Australian rules football – she unapologetically refers to her beloved sport as 'football' instead of using its more common Australian name 'soccer'. Andrea was born in Australia to Greek immigrant parents. She undoubtedly identifies with the nation of Australia, but equally respects and treasures her parents' European heritage. Football, a game that has been a part of her life for as long as she can remember, is a part of her European tradition; but aside from being a cultural expression, Andrea's passion for the world game has had a profound effect on her worldview, her character and her personality. Her candid response indicates that she is willing to speak openly about being a soccer fan in Australia and the particularities of this predicament.

When remembering her first football encounter, Andrea does not only traverse her past and her present but also her family tradition, Australian soccer history and the game's contested Australian reality.[5] Her resentment towards the A-League is palpable from the first moments of our initial conversation. It indicates that far from just being a story of passionate support, Andrea's narrative intimately intersects culture, politics and ethnicity and illuminates how institutional policies and personal experiences are synthesised and conveyed in the contributor's reflections.

Andrea's instant reference to the A-League and her friendly fixation on my European identity in our off-the-record conversations hint at an under-surface frustration. Knowing her ethnic heritage and the potency of ethnicity as a determinant characteristic in the history of Australian soccer, I start to wonder at what point in her life Andrea realised that following association football in Melbourne was not without its complexities.[6] Andrea admits that only later in life she got exposed to xenophobic attitudes towards soccer that have dominated the Australian public

[5] Different aspects of Australian soccer predicament, including ethnicity, citizenship, political identity, televised sport, Britishness, commercialisation and management, are addressed in Chris Hallinan and John E. Hughson, *The Containment of Soccer in Australia: Fencing Off the World Game* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).
[6] This is noted and problematised in the introduction to Part Two.

psyche since the post-war influx of migrants from Continental Europe, who took up the world game in large numbers. 'I got exposed to that when David Hill basically … turned around and said that South Melbourne was not allowed to be called South Melbourne Hellas. That's when I got exposed to it' – Andrea explains.[7]

Andrea's comment alludes to the ban of all 'foreign or ethnic' names and emblems from the NSL, which at the time was the nation's top-flight soccer competition. This policy was justified by the findings of the Bradley Report, published in 1990 and commissioned by the Australian Soccer Federation (ASF) to determine strategy for the NSL to widen its reach and popularity.[8] The report suggested that Australian soccer had a so-called image problem, which referred to the public's perception that the game was only played and followed by members and communities of ethnic diasporas. One of its many recommendations was a gradual phase out of all ethnic associations, including foreign names.[9]

Although the ban implemented in 1996 unmistakably announced de-ethnicisation as the official policy of Soccer Australia – the newly renamed governing body of association football – I am still surprised that it was not until the 90s that Andrea was for the first time confronted by attitudes that deemed her favourite sport to be out of sync with the mainstream Australian identity.[10] My bewilderment is informed by John's early discovery that being explicitly interested in soccer would have made him distinctly different from his Australian school friends.[11]

Andrea explains that growing up in Prahran – a Melbourne suburb at the time dominated by European migrants – as well as attending a school, where, in her rough estimation, eighty per cent of all pupils were of Greek heritage, gave her an

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[7] David Hill – the head of Soccer Australia (the national governing body of soccer currently known as the Football Federation Australia) from 1996 to 1998.
[8] Graham Bradley, *Report to the Australian Soccer Federation on the Structure and Organisation of Australian Soccer* (Sydney: Australian Soccer Federation, 1990).
[9] Jessica Carniel, 'Sheilas, Wogs and Metrosexuals: Masculinity, Ethnicity and Australian Soccer,' *Soccer & Society* 10, no. 1 (2009): 73–83.
[10] John Hughson, 'Football, Folk Dancing and Fascism: Diversity and Difference in Multicultural Australia,' *Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 2 (1997): 167–86. ASF was renamed as Soccer Australia in 1996.
[11] John's positionality in relation to Australian soccer is identified and discussed in Chapter 3.

impression that following association football in Melbourne was a normal thing to do.[12] Thus, while as a child Andrea embraced Australian sporting culture by playing cricket and taking interest in the VFL, she hung on to her European roots by following soccer and making it an important part of her life in Melbourne.

Aside from her allegiance to South Melbourne, Andrea also talks about her passion for Manchester United and Olympiacos – the clubs ardently supported by her father. 'I am a daddy's girl!' – she explains. This is a storyline that remains consistent throughout our initial conversation, where the contributor repeatedly paints her support for soccer and the triad of clubs as an almost inherent trait.[13] While, similarly to Zoha, Andrea's relationship with her dad is imperative to her passion for soccer, other factors, also, emerge, including her childhood friends, community and school – all of which safeguarded her love for the world game in an otherwise hostile predicament.

Despite the shared allegiance to Manchester United, close geographical proximity and being only a few years apart; it seems that Andrea and John grew up under two distinctly different sets of circumstances. As John reflects on the need he felt to almost conceal his soccer allegiance, Andrea recalls that 'half of [her] school was Liverpool, the other half was Manchester United and a handful were West Ham and Arsenal'. Andrea was lured by United, simply because glimpses of English football were available to Australian television audiences from the late 60s. Andrea's dad liked United, and she followed in his footsteps. Despite the accidental attraction, the contributor talks proudly about sticking with United through what she recalls as 'a rough patch' in the 80s.

[12] The 1950s and the early 60s saw an increase in Greek immigrants settling in Prahran who were joining their compatriots already residing there from the previous waves of immigration; see Sally Wilde, *The History of Prahran: Volume II 1925-1990* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 72.
[13] This is in line with the theme of a generational tradition and familial socialisation, which Giulianotti describes as a feature of traditional fandom in Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs.'

South Melbourne FC was tied to Andrea's geographical location and Olympiacos with her heritage whereas Manchester United – and the global brand that it is – transcended her geography and cultural identity.[14] Nevertheless, it was not the commodified United's brand appeal that enticed Andrea. The unifying principle of her three allegiances is the contributor's dad. Regardless of whether this conviction has been determined by the father-daughter bond or a combination of other factors, it is certain that her loyalty must have been tested throughout the years of rupturing and contested Australian soccer realities.[15] That said, Andrea did not find these experiences to be dilemmatic.

I assume that she must have faced an impasse in 2005 when the A-League replaced the NSL as the Australia's top-flight soccer competition.[16] The Crawford Inquiry was commissioned by the Federal Government to review the governance and management of Australian soccer in light of the national team's successive failures. The report concluded that the management structures in place were 'ineffective' and, thus, reorganisation was required.[17] Following these findings, businessman Frank Lowy was appointed as a chairman of the Football Federation Australia. The new chairman not only implemented Crawford's recommendations but also commissioned a new inquiry with a specific focus on the state of the NSL.[18] This resulted in the formation of the A-League – a new national league that aimed to broaden the reach of soccer nationally by instituting a 'one-team-per-city model'.[19]

For Andrea, the new model meant that her beloved South Melbourne was excluded from the newly formed league and, in effect, relegated to a second-tier competition.[20] I ask Andrea if she has ever considered getting involved in the A-League at the

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[14] On football brands and their ability to transcend geography see Sue Bridgewater, *Football Brands* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Similarly, Manchester United and its commodified transcendence of geography is noted in Chapter 3.
[15] Father-daughter bond was discussed in the preceding chapter (Chapter 6) in relation to Zoha.
[16] Crawford, 'Report of the Independent Soccer Review Committee.'
[17] Ibid.
[18] The FFA replaced Soccer Australia – the body that governed the game over the course of the Crawford Inquiry; see James Skinner, Dwight H. Zakus and Allan Edwards, 'Coming in from the Margins: Ethnicity, Community Support and the Rebranding of Australian Soccer,' *Soccer & Society* 9, no. 3 (2008): 394–404.
[19] One-team-per-city model meant that the League can sidestep existing intra-city rivalries deemed to be ethnically grounded see Lock, 'Fan Perspectives of Change in Australia's A-League.' The model has slightly shifted since the start of the League with Melbourne and Sydney now having two teams.
[20] Ibid.

expense of her support for South Melbourne. 'No, never – I choose my club above anything else' – Andrea responds audaciously. She then quickly elaborates:

> But, why did I decide to stick with it, why did I decide not to go for the plastic, the franchise? Because I've been a supporter from a young age and for me football started a long time ago. It didn't start in 2006 when Australia made the World Cup in 2005 … Do you know what I mean? Football has been around for a long, long time in this country …

In our first conversation, Andrea consistently described the A-League as 'plastic' and 'rubbish'. It is intuitive that Andrea's antipathy to the Australia's top-flight football is directed to its conspicuous ignorance of soccer's national history and its rampant commercialisation. The latter is, however, not exclusive to the A-League as she observes this trend in other football leagues, particularly the AFL – the competition she liked growing up in Melbourne but has long since falling out of love with:

> I am not a big, big fan of the AFL anymore, cause I don't like what they've done to the game … It's not the game that I grew up with. They are consistently changing the rules … Football [Australian Rules], when I was a child growing up, used to be played on a Saturday afternoon. Okay, now they play it on a Friday night, they play it on a Thursday night, they play it on a Sunday … they've turned it into this ridiculous national competition. I don't like it, you know. Okay, if my team does win, which is Richmond, I'll be happy, but I won't … I don't care … I've lost interest in that sport, you know, from now March, April all the way through to September – it's all about the bloody AFL and nothing else, as you know …

This unprompted reference to the AFL offers an intersection between the two codes that has an historic dimension. Indeed, the antipathy between association football and Australian Rules is well documented.[21] Association football is seen as a reflection of cultural homogenisation and as a derivative of globalisation.[22] Despite the indigeneity of Australian Rules, the AFL has been unambiguous about its expansionist ambition.[23] In fact, strictly within Australian context it has been the AFL that behaved with imperialistic tendencies in its persistent attempts to turn the

[21] Roy Hay and Heath McDonald, 'A Victory for the Fans? Melbourne's New Football Club in Recent Historical Perspective,' *Soccer & Society* 8, no. 2–3 (2007): 298–315.
[22] Ibid.
[23] On the VFL/AFL transition see Stewart and Dickson, 'Crossing the Barassi Line.'

competition of Victoria into a nation-wide sport.[24] Soccer was the first football code in the country to have a national competition.[25] The NSL, established in 1977, had its own structure and traditions, but the top-down reorganising of Australian soccer replaced these customs with the A-League, which, in many ways, mirrored the slick presentation and clinical management of the AFL – these are, indeed, global trends.[26] Andrea accepts these wide-spread tendencies but also recognises that demeaning attitudes towards soccer still persist in Australian society and are instrumental in keeping the world game on the fringes:

> Yes, unfortunately, they have, they tried it with basketball, and it doesn't work. They're basing the A-League on the model of the AFL and the National Rugby League to try and attract people to follow soccer (as they call football). That is not gonna happen, cause there are people out there that you could throw it in their face, they will still call it 'wogball'.

While for John 'wogball' maybe the past, for Andrea it is the present reality of soccer in Australia.[27] Although in today's political economy most sports, including football codes, are organised along very similar lines, where commodity, celebrity and management engulf fluid movement of bodies, visceral passions and a clear consequentiality of on-field action, Andrea argues that association football in Australia continues to be discursively displaced as 'foreign' and 'un-Australian'.[28] For Andrea, however, association football is a part of who she is, and so is being an Australian. This makes soccer central to the contributor's ongoing identity negotiation.

Andrea is proud of her parents' heritage and her own Greek identity, but at the same time she is firmly rooted in her Australian experience, both in its personal and

[24] The antipathy between Australian Rules and association football fans is explored in Rosenberg, 'Australian Football Wars.'
[25] The National Soccer League (NSL) was established in 1977 and was the first national league of any football code in Australia. The competition was played in Australian winter (the traditional season of soccer in Europe) until 1989 and had a promotion and relegation system unlike its successor – the A-League.
[26] On global trends see Cronin, *Sport*.
[27] See Chapter 3 on John's relationship with the word 'wogball' and its connotations.
[28] On soccer as an Un-Australian game and the political entanglements of such sentiments see Hallinan and Hughson, 'Football, Ethnicity and Citizenship in Australia.'

political expressions.[29] She undoubtedly belongs to the political project of Australia as well as the everyday lived reality of being an Australian.[30] The political and personal realities of her Greek and Australian identities are most evident in her spontaneous storytelling, where Andrea prioritises personal identifications over broad categorisations.[31] However, throughout our collaboration small stories of this sort are enveloped in self-rationalising paradigmatic expressions where Andrea's tendency to draw inferences is often embedded in categorical ascriptions consistent with Australia's mainstream political and social discourses.[32] It is in this juxtaposition that an implicit tension in her identity construction is most palpable.[33]

Theory *vs.* Practice

> I think, I was ten or eleven, one of my teachers said: 'Oh, who do you support?' – or – 'Who you barrack for?' Oh, Collingwood? Yeah, they're hopeless! You should be a Richmond fan!' And, he was a cute teacher and, you know, you're ten, eleven, you're starting to mature: maybe, I need to be a Richmond fan. And, that's the only time, but no, with football – no.

Andrea prides on her loyalty, at times attributing her lifelong commitment to the triad of soccer clubs to an almost integral sense of devotion.[34] In spite of this, she admits to having once switched her allegiances on the Australian rules football scene. The contributor recalls at the age of ten being easily persuaded by one of her teachers that Collingwood – the club Andrea followed at the time – was 'hopeless'. For Andrea, this is an age-specific incident. Throughout our collaboration, she has been consistent in her opinion that up to a certain age, children are more easily influenced and, therefore, more likely to change their favourites.

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[29] Yuval-Davis, *Politics of Belonging*.
[30] Ibid.
[31] This interplay between self-identification and categorisation based on predetermined categories is observed in Katartzi, 'Young Migrants' Narratives.'
[32] Andrea's identity construction as a second-generation migrant is entangled with the inward and outward quest for assimilation, but it is not unidimensional; see Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters, 'Introduction,' in *The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 1–30.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs.'

Andrea delivers these arguments to justify her actions and defend her brother's swings in soccer allegiances, for which she persistently teases him. Having played and followed football from a young age, her sibling initially aligned with his sister by supporting Manchester United, later switching to West Ham United and in the end choosing one of United's fiercest rivals – Liverpool FC.[35] Despite calling him disloyal, on reflection Andrea ascribes his indecisiveness to his young age and consequent susceptibility to outside influences. But, despite contrasting trajectories both siblings were susceptible to their social environment. This illustrates the possibility of divergent outcomes in the face of homogenous social circumstances.[36]

Andrea's brother switched allegiances as part of social integration while the contributor learnt loyalty to be synonymous with passion. Yet, when it comes to football codes, passion in and of itself is culturally contingent to Andrea.

> When you're in Europe, they have segregation. In Greece, there is no away fans allowed at a certain gate, because, you know, the fans might clash. So, that's a difference. Here, they let people sit [together]. And the AFL – they let them sit together, which I don't like, personally. I'm sorry, because I wanna be there with my fans. If I've gone to see the AFL (my team is Richmond Tigers), I wanna be sitting with my Richmond fans. I don't wanna be sitting with a Collingwood fan next to me or whoever else is there or whoever has decided just to go there just for the hell of it. Because for me I will not go and see a sporting event unless it's something that I'm supporting. I'm not gonna go and see Collingwood play. I'm not a Collingwood fan. I'll go to see Richmond, my team, if I ever go to the AFL, which I haven't for a few years.

Andrea is consistent in distinguishing between football cultures. When elaborating on this distinction, she fixates on contrasting seating arrangements in the AFL and European soccer.[37] The non-segregationist approach of the former for the contributor illustrates its indifferent culture.

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[35] Manchester United FC and Liverpool FC contest the North West derby, which is considered to be one of the biggest rivalries in the English Premier League and association football.
[36] Tierney, 'Danny's Fight for Life.'
[37] In European soccer home and away fans are sectioned off. Fan segregation has recently surfaced as a possibility in the AFL, following some violent incidents between rival team fans, but was instantly dismissed by the League; see SBS News, 'Fan Segregation Ruled out for AFL Games,' *Sbs.com.au*, July 23, 2018, https://www.sbs.com.au/news/fan-segregation-ruled-out-for-afl-games.

> They don't have the passion in that sport. They don't have it. How can you have passion when you can just walk in with another fan and sit next to him? That's not passion.

As our conversation progresses, Andrea imprints another set of boundaries. This time, the boundary work is conducted exclusively within the culture of association football.[38] Despite previously condemning Australian media for amplifying and misrepresenting expressions of domestic soccer passions, Andrea in an attempt to explain her own unwavering passion for soccer unexpectedly detours to generalise and catalogue. Suddenly, European heritage becomes inculcated in the excessively and detrimentally passionate behaviours.

> When I commit to something, I do it a hundred per cent. And, for me, when you commit to something, when you like something, regardless of whether it's sport or dancing, you commit to it, you talk about it, you live it, it's part of your life. It becomes part of your life. Not to the point where it consumes you, cause you don't want it to consume you … And, that's what I find that some people, being Europeans, it consumes them to the point where they get into this fan violence and stuff like that, which I don't agree with.

This sudden shift, to me, redresses Andrea's earlier demonstrated conviction, in which passion seemed to be the only line of distinction.

> Football! Passion! Football is club before country, that's how it is. You ask anyone who support football, and they'll tell you that your club it becomes your life, it consumes you.

The two preceding quotes diverge in their use of the verb 'consume'. Initially, Andrea employs the word with a sense of thrill and excitement, referring to the effect that football has on her and maintaining her passion as benign. Yet, when describing the passions of others, being 'consumed' by football becomes excessive. Similarly to Zoha, Andrea applies the distinction between healthy and unhealthy passions

[38] The notion of boundary work signals application of linguistic and discursive devices to denote one's identity category as distinct, such practices are observed in relation to various types of fandom, e.g., Ksenia A. Korobkova and Rebecca W. Black, 'Contrasting Visions: Identity, Literacy and Boundary Work in a Fan Community,' *E-Learning and Digital Media* 11, no. 6 (2014): 619–32; Neta Yodovich, '"A Little Girl with a Costume and Ears:" Stigma and De-Stigmatisation Strategies among Harry Potter and Twilight Fans,' (presentation, *Fan Communities and Fandom. 2nd Global Conference*, Prague, November 8, 2014).

exclusively to others.[39] The others in Andrea's comment are, however, a distinct group – the Europeans. Although Andrea consistently and proudly referenced her European heritage throughout our conversations, in this instance 'Europeans' are presented as 'others', both in the choice of pronouns and in the semantics. The changing vocabulary indicates the difference between self-identification and categorisation as it juxtaposes two different applications of the same label.[40]

Similarly, as Andrea continues to navigate her identity through familiar stereotypes, she shifts from strongly identifying with a collective identity of a female football fan to dismissing some women spectators as subservient to their male partners. The collaborator understands that her favoured pent-up atmosphere diverges from a family-oriented spectator sport, reportedly more conducive to female fandom; at times she chooses to tread this line in her self-presentation.[41] Specifically, Andrea juxtaposes the depth of her football knowledge to a lack of genuine interest of other women:

> But, a lot of women are dumb when it comes to football. They have no idea. They pretend that they know just to keep the husband happy or whatever. But no, I know. And, I'm not gonna open my mouth up about football if I don't know. I'd rather shut up.

Andrea's critique of women's limited football knowledge followed a description of a prank YouTube clip she had recently watched. The clip depicted a woman in a conversation with her male partner about the upcoming European Championship. As the female character made a number of glaring factual errors, she was told to go to the kitchen and make dinner. Although Andrea completed her description agreeably denouncing some women as 'dumb when it comes to football', I sensed that the viral video had resonated with her for strikingly different reasons.

Andrea and I had previously spoken about the different phases of her passion for football and the circumstances affecting the shifts in the emotional and time

[39] Vallerand et al., 'On Obsessive and Harmonious Passion.'
[40] On identity as both belonging and categorisation see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond Identity,' *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47.
[41] Wann, Ensor and Bilyeu, 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motives.'

investments. Then, it was apparent that having children placed some restrictions on her passion. This, however, was not the case for her husband whose interest and involvement in football continued along a barely adjusted trajectory. The distinct effects of parenthood prompt to a gendered ordering of priorities.[42] A brief probe from me suffice in getting Andrea to talk about her other gendered experiences lived as a female football fan.

> I think, we are branded, I think, we are branded as females … I don't know if we touched on it last time. Before or even when George [her husband] and I were engaged, but prior to meeting George, I'd go, you know, stay up late, watch games, trying to get streams, be on football forums. And, you make comments and they think you're a guy in disguise, because you use pseudonym in your forum, and they don't know who you are. Yeah, there were a few things, you know: 'You're not real!' You know: 'Who's this person' – you know – 'it's so and so masquerading as a female.'

Authenticity in football passions has been historically aligned with working-class male cultures.[43] The increased visibility of a female sports fan over the recent years does not, however, mean that the cultural goalposts are dramatically shifting.[44] Instead, it is, as discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to Steph's narrative, obvious that certain modes of femininity have been co-opted by the sports business overlords to create a face of inclusion for the economic ends.[45] In many ways, certain communities of practice within sports spectatorship landscapes have become yet another expression of feminised popular culture, which in and of itself operates under – and in tandem with – the structures of hegemonic masculinity.[46] Yet, taking up a role within a male-dominated community of football fans remains an exercise in which the participating female is likely to be either complicit or submissive in ensuring her own continuing involvement.[47]

As Andrea's experience on a male-dominated online forum demonstrates, women are often not expected to have an opinion in these spaces. That is, also, how Andrea

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[42] Children as a restrictive factor to female sports fandom and its expressions also emerge in Stacey Pope and John Williams, 'Beyond Irrationality and the Ultras: Some Notes on Female English Rugby Union Fans and the "Feminised" Sports Crowd,' *Leisure Studies* 30, no. 3 (2011): 301.
[43] Redhead, *Post-Fandom*.
[44] Toffoletti, 'Sexy Women Sports Fans.'
[45] E.g., Thorpe, Toffoletti and Bruce, 'Sportswomen and Social Media.'
[46] Ibid.
[47] Pearson, *Ethnography of English Football Fans*, 151–69.

saw the incident; the description of which she concluded with the following assessment:

> Women are supposed to be lady-like and make tea, and cook, and be in the kitchen and raise kids, you know. They're not supposed to have an opinion … that's society and some women follow those rules, but I don't.

The boundaries of femininity drawn in Andrea's closing remark echo modes of feminine and hence acceptable female engagements in sport. Andrea is not an accomplice of men although her paradigmatic expressions reveal a gender identity complicit in masculine hegemonies of football spectatorship.[48] Despite her visceral experience of passion finding its expression in these domains, it is clear that her exposure and engagement in them have been affected by either gendered circumstances or gendered priorities. Andrea's motherhood continues to crop up in our conversations, indicating a prospective pursuit of a specifically family-oriented spectating experience, in which Andrea both rejects certain forms of motherhood and accepts the dominance of hegemonic and complicit masculinities in football spaces.[49]

> Look, if you like something, you enjoy it, it's okay and that's how it is. In my perspective, there's only a certain amount of hours in a day: there's work, there's raising kids, there are all these things that need to be done. So, that'll get put on a backburner until the kids are at a better age, where they communicate a bit more and where we can sit down as a family and go to a game ourselves and start talking more about it, cause, yeah, they know what soccer is, my girls, because they've been to soccer matches, they've seen it on TV.

Aside from Andrea's conviction to make football her family's ritual in the same way that her father, her brother and her created a ritual around their Sunday football outings to the Middle Park Oval, her negotiation of gender identity within the male-dominated spaces emerges as continually shifting. She is tenacious in her own gendered agency but wavering in her gender solidarity. Similarly, in the previous example Andrea was also selective when affiliating with the common European-

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[48] Complicit masculinity benefits from patriarchal order by not opposing it, see Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd Ed. (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 79-80.
[49] Beth Dietz-Uhler et al., 'Sex Differences in Sport Fan Behaviour and Reasons for Being a Sports Fan,' *Journal of Sport Behaviour* 23, no. 3 (2000) 219–31; Connell, *Masculinities*; Osborne and Coombs, 'Performative Sport Fandom.'

Australian experience, presenting herself as an agent, who participates in this common experience but, at times, denying individual agency of other partakers.[50] It is important to underscore, that all such contradictions or self-flattering discernment arose amidst Andrea's attempts to theorise her own experiences. Her self-theorising appears to be guided by the rules and logics of popular and rather restrictive conversations on gender and ethnicity, some of which she had previously criticised.[51]

As our collaboration progresses, the paradigmatic expressions are mixed with small stories in Andrea's narration of the past. These brief acts of storytelling move the discourse away from the logics of popular mainstream conversations and locate Andrea in action and amidst spontaneously emerging discourse devoid of self-defence and self-flatter. It is in these small stories that she effortlessly intersects a number of moving parts in the negotiation of her football fan identity. For example, in the following story of a three-decade old incident, she connects her past, present and future while also mapping out her principles and altering personal circumstances. The memory also implicitly demonstrates an immediate enactment of her gender and ethnic identities.

> I would have been about twenty. It was about a year later. I think, it was in '87. South Melbourne was playing Brunswick Juventus, and someone was going: 'We're gonna do a Brussels!'[52] And, I went up to these people and I said: 'Shut the fuck up!' I mean, we're here to watch a soccer game. It was the only time that I was furious; and I said to my cousin: 'I want us to lose to this team now.' And, I would never feel like that. It was because of the behaviour of a few juveniles. I was very, very angry. And then after, I don't know, I'd go, but I wouldn't go regularly, cause I was sort of angry for little bit; and then obviously work commitments. And then, started going up again, but generally I've always supported them – my teams. If I can go, I go. Now, I don't, obviously – a bit hard when you have the little ones and you not gonna take them out in the middle of winter. I'll start going up again when they get a bit older, maybe, next year, when we can start going more regularly as a family. I think, it's circumstantial, but I don't think it would have made a difference, in my case, because my dad had that strong bond with me, especially about football. And, he took me to my first game when I was three years old. So, I don't think it would have made a difference.

[50] Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond Identity.'
[51] Ibid.
[52] 'Brussels' is a reference to the Heysel Stadium Disaster, which occurred prior to the 1985 European Cup Final contested by Liverpool FC and Turin Juventus. Thirty-nine people – mostly Juventus fans – were killed in a confrontation with the opposition fans, pressed by a collapsing wall.

The story emerges after I repeatedly invite Andrea to speculate if her passion for soccer may have developed along a different trajectory had she not been raised in Prahran, surrounded by a close-knit Greek community. Andrea interrogates my assumptions by focusing on the importance of football in her second-generation Greek-Australian experience. She suggests that this would not have been different regardless of her Melbourne geography before pausing to address the one incident that put her off football for a considerable amount of time.

At the game, contested by the Italian backed Brunswick Juventus and Andrea's beloved South Melbourne, the chant referencing the Heysel Stadium Disaster, in which many Italian fans of the original Juventus club from Turin were injured or killed, confronted Andrea and made her confront the fellow South Melbourne supporters who were doing the chanting.

In the story, Andrea does not attach inappropriate behaviour of fans to any specific aspect of their identity other than their young age. Yet, 'juvenile' may simply be an adjective describing the behaviour of those fans as lacking sensibility and being immature regardless of their actual age. It is interesting how the normative roles and imposed categories potent in Andrea's paradigmatic expressions completely evaporate in this episode of storytelling.[53]

In the void of cataloguing, we see Andrea as an agent deeply upset by the cultural appropriation of a tragic event used in an attempt to rile the opposition fans. As her distress morphs into anger and she confronts the inappropriate conduct of fellow spectators; her visceral sense of the boundary between the benign and the malignant evidently transpires. In this moment, Andrea's conviction to stand up for her beliefs illuminated her uncompromising character and a gender identity that did not bend toward the anticipated norm in a male-dominated space.[54] This act and its

[53] On paradigmatic expressions see McAdams, *Personality Development*. This has been discussed in the preceding chapters (Chapter 2, in particular).
[54] Pearson, Ethnography of English Football Fans.

recollection unfolding in the small story is a testament to Andrea not being a male accomplice despite, at times, discursively implying complicity to masculine hegemonies of football.[55]

This small story also shows an adjustment in Andrea's loyalty – a personal trait that the contributor is unequivocally proud of. In this emotional opening presented by resentment, disappointment and disgrace, Andrea allowed the changing personal circumstances to temporarily trump her football loyalties. It is almost as if the spins of Andrea's life cycle were either prompted or punctuated by the incident. The contours of life cycle are replicated in this small story when Andrea's temporal despondency to the world game in her twenties becomes a segue to her active motherhood presently muting her football passion. In its reference to her childhood family ritual, the story presents the current enactment of Andrea's passion as transitional. The transition is not, however, a detour from the life cycle, which is revealed in Andrea's commitment to replicate the generational family ritual by getting her own daughters involved in football spectatorship.

Politics *vs.* Identity

> I have lost my voice, I'm getting phone calls; I'm calling my cousin in Greece: 'We're going to the final, we're going to the final!' You know, I'm losing it. Now, I come to work. Here, my office, I've had it for over ten years. I come to work, and one of the boys that was leasing upstairs came down. And, you know, he'd seen me and that I had pretty much lost my voice, he goes: 'What's wrong?' And I: 'I'm going alright! Can you believe this – Greece is gonna be in the final!' He goes, instead of saying congratulations, this fucking dickhead, excuse my language … that fucking racist pig from upstairs … instead of saying: 'Great, Andrea! Congratulations!' [He said:] 'You know, I don't understand this game, you get excited, cause you score one goal.' I was so angry, and I thought: 'What about your cricket?', cause I used to play cricket when I was young. You know, you get excited about a Test match, I'm getting excited about the sport that is one of the hardest sports to play in the world.

The enactment of identity emerges in yet another small story, where a seemingly unassuming comment disturbs Andrea's political and national belongings. Andrea does not feel threatened by her acquaintance's lack of knowledge of (or interest in)

[55] Connell, *Masculinities*.

association football. Instead, she feels offended. She describes being angry when a particularly joyous morning after the Greece national football team had made the final of the 2004 European Championship was complicated by the unnecessary comment that sensitised historical connections between soccer and foreignness.[56] As Andrea's memory is unforgiving to her office neighbour, in the follow-up conversation I directly address her immediate resentment, wondering if on reflection it still seems balanced to her. 'I felt that he was being racist' – Andrea responds, before briefly pausing and adding – 'I just thought he was being racist, but maybe I was just angry that day.' The small story does not indicate that Andrea was angry, instead it shows her excitement and a heightened emotional sensitivity, which could have contributed to the reception of the casual remark – the comment that otherwise might have seemed less threatening.[57]

However, this seemingly unremarkable incident can only be appreciated within the dynamics of Australian multiculturalism, which are very familiar to Andrea. Indeed, she willingly takes our conversation to a political sphere on many occasions, discussing historical and current clustering of ethnic identities in the multicultural nation of Australia and its political associations and implications. These ponderings contextualise Andrea's reaction to her office neighbour's comment and demonstrate why amidst heightened emotional sensitivity, the remark pertaining to the dynamics of a football code was received as a racist insult. Given Andrea's heightened emotional state, cultural, political, historical and discursive context engulfing soccer in Australia was, perhaps, unintentionally yet inconsiderately evoked with the brief remark. Via his arrogant sense of unfamiliarity to soccer, Andrea's office neighbour positioned her as 'the other', 'the foreign' and 'un-Australian'. All of this may have been unintentional in the immediate moment, but it was a position of a cultural entitlement that subliminally found its way into an off-the-cuff remark.

It was this sense of privilege that Andrea intuited, concluding the small story by juxtaposing her favourite sport with cricket – the game regarded as the national sport

[56] The Euros – informal title of the UEFA European Football Championship.
[57] David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

of Australia. Andrea's relationship with cricket contrasts with both Mike's culturally laden appreciation and Zoha's culturally indifferent sporadic interest. The contributor accepts the materiality of the game's national and cultural currency yet sees it as conflicting to her own identity.[58] Andrea played cricket as a kid at school but, paraphrasing her own words, lost interest when she started realising what was going on. The realisation was such that despite cricket's ties with the former Empire and Englishness, it remained the national game at times used as a measure of national identity in multicultural Australia.[59] By the same token, supporting the world game for a long time was seen as directly indicative of a person's ethnic heritage.[60] While such attitudes towards soccer have somewhat shifted, an understanding of cultural identity as multiple and intersecting is an idea that most culturally and ethnically heterogeneous nations around the globe either finding it challenging or overlooking it at the advantage of political point scoring.[61]

Sport is an arena in which these challenges play out in a particularly expressive way. Indeed, throughout our collaboration one such intersection of sport, identity and politics presented itself for our discussion. In early June 2016, the Greece national football team played the Socceroos in Melbourne as part of their Australian tour, the game and Greece's victory were celebrated by Greek-Australians on the streets of Melbourne; and as Andrea recalled a week after the event, some media outlets took issue with the tone of these celebrations.

> Apparently, the next day on the front page of the *Herald Sun*, they made an issue of a few Greek fans walking to the Etihad Stadium, who lit a few flares.[62] It was on the front page of a newspaper. And, like it's been blasted all over social media, because that's what tends to happen nowadays – something happens, it's all over Facebook. To me, having a European background, I don't see an issue with flares. I think, they made a big issue

[58]As identified in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, cricket is a predominantly Anglo-Saxon tradition in Australia, and yet it is regarded as the national sport.
[59] Utting, 'Multicultural Cricket?'
[60] Hay, '"Our Wicked Foreign Game."'
[61] The challenges of multiculturalism are discussed in Andrew C. Theophanous, *Understanding Multiculturalism and Australian Identity* (Melbourne: Elikia Books, 1995). See also Nancy Fraser, 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, Participation,' in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political–Philosophical Exchange* ed. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, trans. Joel Golb, James Ingram and Christiane Wilkie (London: Verso, 2003), 7–109.
[62] The *Herald Sun* – a tabloid newspaper, based in Melbourne and available across Victoria and in some other parts of Australia. The newspaper is a subsidiary of News Corp – a media conglomerate owned by the Murdoch family. Briana Travers and David Hurley, 'Flare Fury,' *Herald Sun*, 8 June 2016. Etihad Stadium is a stadium in Melbourne's Docklands, which is currently known as Marvel Stadium due to the change in the naming rights sponsorship.

> about it. They should be out trying to stop murderers, drug dealers and not put on a front page of the paper about a few flares that were lit on the way to the ground … or if someone lit one inside the ground. Do you know what I'm saying? I was very angry when I was reading all of this. My friend told me about it, and then I *googled* it. I saw the news. I went on Facebook and read about it. I was very upset. And then, you get people commenting: 'Go back to your own country, why are you not supporting Australia?' Hang on, Australia is a multicultural country – I can support whoever I want. If I want to support the Greece national team or Italy or France, it's none of your business.

Recounting opinions expressed on social media in the aftermath of this article featured in the *Herald Sun* makes Andrea visually and audibly upset: 'Australia is a multicultural country – I can support whoever I want'.[63] While passing an infamous Tebbit's test was an informal citizenship requirement in Britain, similar undertones can be detected in Australian context.[64] From the Baggy Green as an enduring symbol of Australian national identity to a common command to 'go back to where their parents came from' directed at disgraced or disappointing Australian athletes of non-Anglo backgrounds – Australia's mainstream conversations clearly delineate the boundaries of Australian identity.[65] It seems that Andrea's ethnic identity requires her to be politically quiet or, at least, muted if she wants to be fully accepted as an Australian. And, it was exactly this fine line between being and not being Australian that was exposed by the discourse following the controversial *Herald Sun* article.[66]

Andrea could not be clearer about her nation-based loyalties. 'I love Australia; I was born here!' – she exclaimed while explaining her allegiance to the Greece national football team in the following words – 'because my blood is Greek'. In some ways, Andrea is an embodiment of Australia's multiculturalism, and yet as our

[63] Travers and Hurly, 'Flare Fury.'
[64] Lord Norman Tebbit, a British politician, who suggested that a good way to assess the loyalty of members of ethnic minorities in Britain is to ask them which national cricket team they support. For a more detailed discussion see Daniel Burdsey, 'That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore: Racial Microaggressions, Colour-Blind Ideology and the Mitigation of Racism in English Men's First-Class Cricket,' *Sociology of Sport Journal* 28, no. 3 (2011): 261–83; Utting, 'Multicultural Cricket?'
[65] On Baggy Green see Utting, 'Multicultural Cricket?', 'Go back to where their parents came from' – the words uttered by Dawn Fraser, retired Australian Olympic swimmer when discussing the Australian tennis star, Nick Kyrgios; see Alex Hinds, 'Dawn Fraser Tells Kyrgios and Tomic to "Go Back Where Their Parents Came From,"' *The Guardian*, July 7, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/jul/07/dawn-fraser-tells-kyrgios-tomic-go-back-where-parents-came-from.
[66] The article was controversial due to conflicting witness accounts, see 'A Disgraceful Write-Up,' Dimonsthenis Manasis, accessed July 15, 2016, https://neoskosmos.com/en/36555/manasis-responds-to-herald-sun-flare-furry-cover/.

conversation detours from sport to politics Australian multiculturalism emerges as a façade that does not penetrate to Andrea's everyday experiences. As I probed Andrea on her views on cricket and the nature of her realisation of 'what's going on' leading to a refusal to watch – and engage in – 'the English game', she suddenly changes the topic:

> Unfortunately, if we've still got the Queen as the head of state … It's gonna take a long time to rip [cricket] off as the national sport of Australia as long as we have those ties to 'the mother England'. You want me to go further? I do think Australia should be a republic, but it won't happen. And, it's never going to happen. Especially, when the Queen abdicates and puts Prince William up there, because people now got this persona: Oh, Prince William, he's modern, he's this – so we never gonna get rid of the monarchy.

This remark, in its allusion to 'the British World' and its continuing resonance in the modern-day nation of Australia, further confirms that for Andrea sport is a proxy through which Australian mainstream cultural character can be gauged.[67] This is fitting, given that sport in the country's public discourse often assumes a nation-making role.[68] My collaboration with Andrea is, however, a testimony that such image, while may appear uncomplicated, hides troubled lingering of the troubled past and a reluctance to look to the future. It appears as though, for Andrea, these political and cultural discourses strengthened a sense of who she is – a sense that is reflected by the three football clubs she supports.

As Andrea and I continue to speculate why she retained her football allegiances despite changing life circumstances and the shifting Australian football landscape, she suddenly refers to an incident in her childhood that changed her as a person and made her politically aware.

> The 20th of July 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus. I was in Greece when this was happening and it affected me, because my father … being scared that they'll draft him back into the Greek Army even though we were there only on holiday. And, it changed me as a person, it changed me even though I was eight years old. I was alert from that day on. Things changed for me,

[67] On the legacies of British, English and Anglo-Celtic ethnic identities in the contemporary construction of the Australian political project see Carol Johnson, 'The Dilemmas of Ethnic Privilege: A Comparison of Constructions of 'British', 'English' and 'Anglo-Celtic' Identity in Contemporary British and Australian Political Discourse,' *Ethnicities* 2, no. 2 (2002): 163–88.
[68] Cashman, *Sport in the National Imagination.*

> because I was old enough to understand. My brother is a year and a half younger, so he was seven – never affected him.

This candid storyline refers to the European summer of 1974 when Andrea and her family were caught in the middle of a political disturbance while on holiday in their native Greece. Being eight years old at the time, Andrea understood the terrifying prospect of losing her dad, which made her 'alert'. When I ask Andrea to elaborate on the change she is referring to, she connects the summer of 1974, her political awareness, football loyalties and the daughter-father bond.

> Just as a person. It changed me as a person, you know. I got scared for my family. I thought I'm gonna lose my dad. He's gonna go to war. It changes you, it makes you politically aware … from that day, as an eight-year-old I became interested in politics. It's just unheard of. And, that could be another reason why I was so obsessed about not changing my teams, because of my dad.

Andrea's interrogation of Australian identity politics broadens the conversation and illustrates a central place of sport not only in Australian national identity but in Andrea's political engagement. This coupled with her first political memory enriches Andrea's portrayal beyond the earlier negotiation of catalogue-identities and opens yet another layer through which to relate to Andrea's story and understand her motivations.

Although the final small story is presented as reasoning for her unwavering football loyalties, it is a connecting core of her fan narrative which centres the father-daughter bond and provides an insight into the contributor's resolute demeanour. The centrality of this event in Andrea's memory sheds some light on her negotiation of male-dominated spaces and her belligerent yet understandable politicisation of identity in everyday social spaces. Her oscillations between individual and collective, Greek and Australian, in-group and out-group are not mere shifts between politicised categories of oppressed and dominant, rather they are everyday experiences and lived personal memories.

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For Andrea, association football is a certain mode of truth – it is her passion and an indispensable part of her life. In football, the contributor's personal experiences and their interpretations are in a continuing interaction with the lingering historical context of Australian soccer and beyond. This interactivity is at times clouded in theoretically arranged and politically informed discourse yet effortlessly emerges in the episodes of storytelling. The motivation behind Andrea's fan practices and their underlying personal convictions are observed in her identity negotiation which is again enriched by small stories and their seamless connection among the past, present and future.

Through a focus on association football, Andrea's life narrative illuminates the game's Australian past and present predicament and its implications to the contributor's positionality in the contemporary nation of Australia. These implications are communicated in both paradigmatic expressions and small stories; the former engages in nominal categories and binary distinctions while the later allows for the narrative to flow freely, revealing plurality, multiplicity and the everyday negotiation of embodied intersecting identities. While this proves the ability of narrative to manage plurality, Andrea's paradigmatic expressions exemplify how easy it is to succumb to simplistic categorisations and disqualify others from that same embodied heterogeneity.

Chapter 8 | Billy – Realising the Dream

Like Steph, Billy is also a friend and, perhaps, the most reflective and thoughtful sports fan I have ever come across. Billy and I initially met at a conference on fans and fan communities in Prague in 2014. At the time we both lived in Europe. I knew that Billy was originally from Melbourne, and I was not shocked but rather amused at a would-be coincidence when one afternoon taking a short walk from the library back to my PhD office, I saw someone who looked a lot like Billy. I did not approach the look-a-like there and then, but later emailed Billy to check if by any chance he had returned to Melbourne. Billy responded promptly confirming that it had been, indeed, him leaving the Arts West building in Parkville. We decided to catch up in person.

When we met in August 2016, Billy immediately showed his fondness to be a part of my research. While living overseas both in Indonesia and the Netherlands, Billy actively engaged in the local soccer cultures there. Nevertheless, Australian Rules kept him in touch with his home country's mainstream discourses. This ongoing and active association became particularly critical when him and his family started seriously considering returning to live in Melbourne. For the last fifteen years, Billy had supported Richmond Football Club – the team based in (and named after) the suburb to which he returned at the age of thirty-eight after years of living overseas.

Billy and I had the first formal research conversation in October 2016 only a couple of weeks after the Western Bulldogs had unexpectedly triumphed over the Sydney Swans in the AFL Grand Final.[1] Billy, at the time in his late thirties, was excited about the success of the underdog which had given him some cheerfulness in light of yet another disappointing season for the Tigers.[2] As we continued our collaboration throughout the next couple of years formally meeting again in late 2016, Billy was almost dejected and pessimistic about his team's prospects to lift their performance,

[1] Recorded conversations with Billy, October 10, 2016; December 14, 2016; December 19, 2016. February 2, 2018. Phone conversation with Billy, February 6, 2019.
[2] Richmond Tigers finished their campaign for the 2016 AFL Premiership in the thirteenth place.

let alone win the Premiership in the near future. Reflecting on his then mood, in early 2019 Billy pondered that by that point he 'had started to let go of the idea of ever seeing Richmond win the [Premiership] flag'. But, the AFL 'miracles' continued, and in 2017 yet another underdog lifted the trophy, and this time it was Billy's team – it was the Tigers.

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> I guess, apart from feeling bad, it also gives you an elation … So, if you are not willing to risk your self-esteem or risk your happiness on your team, then you don't get the joy. And, the joy [is] what we saw … what I saw … the greatest footballing moment I had ever seen was the Bulldogs winning [the AFL Premiership].

In late 2016, Billy and I discuss how football has affected his self-esteem. Suddenly, my collaborator illustrates his point by evoking the Bulldog's recent and unexpected AFL triumph. These reflections define his fandom in ways that would be intuitive to most who have ever supported a sports team, but they also align with a number of psychological theories.[3] Beneath the straightforward definition of passion as risking one's happiness, there is a wealth of personal experiences amidst which this seemingly transactional exchange is negotiated.

Far from being a straightforward transaction, Billy's relationship with footy is complex and intertwined with the most poignant moments of his life, thus, relevant to his social and moral well-being. Australian rules football, for Billy, is a separate yet socially and culturally situated cosmos in which his identity, geography, integrity and introspection are continually challenged and negotiated, and the political, economic and historical entanglements are more accessible. Football, therefore, gives Billy a space to confront injustices and engage in cultural and political conversations.

As stated earlier, Billy's relationship with his supported team, the game of Australian Rules and the game's surrounding culture and economy is peculiar. Nevertheless, the

[3] Keaton, Gearhart and Honeycutt, 'Fandom and Psychological Enhancement.'

political and social expression that he, on occasions, finds in this football code is akin to Andrea's politically flavoured relationship with soccer. Equally, themes of belonging, aesthetic indulgence, social bonding evident in the stories of John, Steph, Mike and Zoha also resurface in Billy's discursive constructions.

Loyalty *vs.* Morality

> The first memory I have of hearing football being talked about emotionally or enthusiastically was the game, in which Kevin Bartlett of Richmond played [his] four-hundredth game and the Richmond cheer squad made a banner for him. And, they didn't tell him that they placed an extra plank of wood at the bottom of the banner to keep the banner sturdy. And so, he was running through the banner, and he tripped over. And, maybe he was the first player in the history of the VFL to play four hundredth game. So, he went through the banner looking like a bit of a clown, cause he tripped over.[4]

The memory as well as Billy's impending remarks misleadingly suggest that the game is (or has been) a trivial matter to him, a light-hearted leisure activity, that one engages in casually and without much deeper consideration. Indeed, for Billy, following the sport was initially just a way to fit in. Billy's parents were not ardent fans of footy; but they instructed their five-year-old to pick a VFL team to follow and support, because they understood the cultural reach of the game in Melbourne – the reach that left no one behind, except those who chose to be socially excluded.[5] 'Okay, it's time for you to choose teams now' – instructively suggested Billy's parents in 1983. When remembering this episode, Billy bursts with laughter at the trivial beginnings of his passion. The gaiety of these memories is, however, deceptive as the contours of community surface on their margins.

This trivial recollection recognises the capacity of sport to provide shared stories and, in turn, an elusive sense of community.[6] The incident stuck in Billy's memory because it was a point of reference in passionate footy exchanges. Remembering how others connected over the incident emphasises the social dimension early on in the

[4] Kevin Bartlett played in the VFL from 1965 to 1983. His record of 403 VFL games has only been surpassed by two other VFL/AFL players.
[5] The idea that one can live in Melbourne without supporting an AFL/VFL team is anathema to Melbourne's folklore.
[6] Nathan, 'Sport, Community and Identity'; Bauman, *Community*.

contributor's relationship with the game. It is as if the social utility assigned to Billy's fandom by his parents truly penetrated through his experience and became a lens through which to reflect on and interpret encounters with football. Yet, Billy's choice of team was not dictated by socialisation and emerged through a more haphazard association.[7]

> Maybe, it was just like what you do in the afternoon to entertain your children … And so, it was the Star Wars era, the original Star Wars. And, I think, I was still somehow interested in Star Wars. And, my grandfather was making some objects for us out of wood. He was making some toys for us (maybe that also doesn't happen these days). Anyway, he was a craftsman, and he had made a plane for me, which I coloured red and blue. But anyway, I said: 'Oh, well, I like planes, I am gonna choose Essendon – the Bombers.'[8]

Billy explains that he liked planes more than he respected his brother's decision to barrack for Carlton – the team that at the time was on top of the League – hence he chose Essendon.[9] Billy grew up supporting the Bombers and only in his early adulthood came around to following Richmond. Although Billy by his own admission, made prior to the initial conversation, was keen to speak about the Tigers; for the best part of our first conversation he is committed to recounting his story in a strict chronology. At times, he finds it important to indicate a particular year only to state that nothing significant occurred in his football practices in that period. In this slow linear unfolding, the Bombers and not the Tigers, his current team, becomes the axis of the narrative. Yet, Billy remains the protagonist as in these unpremeditated small stories grounded in his past support for Essendon, the formation of his spectating and barracking practices is intertwined with the formation of his character.

> But, even like domestically or at school the next day, cause we always would be talking about footy at school. And so, I'd probably be thinking on the way home from a game: oh, the Hawthorn fans are gonna be happy. I've got to take a bit of, you know, I've got to defend and take responsibility of my team the following day. And maybe, that is a kind of guilt or whatever, you know … I underperformed, not only the team, but I also underperformed on the weekend.

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[7] Toffoletti, *Women Sports Fans*.
[8] Bombers is a nickname of the Essendon Football Club.
[9] Murrell and Dietz, 'Fan Support of Sport Teams.'

Being committed in an exchange for a possibility of happiness re-emerges as a sense of responsibility. As Essendon's fortunes became Billy's own, his already fragile self-esteem was continually compromised by football.[10] 'I think, I've got self-esteem issues …' – Billy quickly and without much hesitation responds to my inquiry about Essendon-related effects on his self-esteem. In hindsight, Billy understands that supporting a football team did not aid his already insecure disposition, but for the six-year-old this was a matter of loyalty – the active practice of standing up for what is right and wrong.

> Well, I felt horrible; I think I was quite an insecure child. Yeah. A bit of a cry baby, probably. But, I don't know why, but, I think, I had some idea about loyalty. I also remember at the time in primary school when I was five or six (probably, five) also standing up to my friends who were bullying another boy … well, I remember it today. I can remember seeing this happening and thinking this is unjust. So, I guess, maybe I had that feeling before, maybe one came after the other. No doubt. But, I don't know which one. But, in my mind, I can remember feeling: No, this is wrong! You don't abandon your team if they lose; and you don't bully another kid … I knew this was racist; this was a Yugoslav kid and was exactly being bullied because he was different. So, I mean, at the time, I must have had some kind of will to stand by my whatever I believed in at that age.

Loyalty is often discussed in relation to sports fans and spectators. Frequently, it is relegated to the consumerist ethics of repeat patronage.[11] Despite the separation of behavioural and attitudinal loyalty, the quality of being loyal is understood as a commitment to a brand regardless of situational changes, including exposure to competitor marketing.[12] Removing the market-orientation, loyalty pertains to a 'deeply held commitment' to sustain consistent attitudes and behaviours in relation to the object of concern. This and comparable definitions of loyalty have been applied in sports fandom scholarship with little attempt to elaborate this conceptualisation beyond the known frameworks of team identification, vicarious achievement and self-esteem.[13]

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[10] A relationship between self-esteem and sports fandom has been noted by many in cognitive and behavioural psychology, e.g., Trail et al., 'The Effects of Vicarious Achievement on BIRGing and CORFing.'
[11] Pritchard, Funk and Alexandris, 'Barriers to Repeat Patronage'; Funk et al., 'Measuring the Motives of Sport Event Attendance.
[12] Richard L. Oliver, 'Whence Consumer Loyalty?,' *Journal of Marketing* 63 (1999): 33–44.
[13] Wu, Daphne Tsai and Hung, 'Toward Team or Player?'

Billy's countenance of loyalty exhibits the indicated behaviours. Yet, the discursive richness of his reflection reveals a much deeper understanding that stretches beyond the repeat patronage and is, instead, intricately related to morality.[14] Yet, the equivalence observed between Billy's loyalty to Essendon and his preparedness to stand up for what is right goes beyond tribal loyalty, whereby an in-group is always defended at the expense of an out-group.[15] Rather, Billy's football loyalty is a sensibility to maintain the support through adversity, which is exemplified in his analogy drawn between sticking by his team in defeat and standing up to the bullies at school.[16]

Throughout Billy's childhood and adolescence, football was not just a game that he enjoyed watching and playing, on many occasions football occupied a role of an emotional mentor. For example, it was at – and because of – football that Billy for the first time 'cried with happiness' and experienced a sense of an absolute apathy. Equally, it was through football that he understood what it meant to stand by his convictions. This was key to an emotional scope Billy was able to access through football. Indeed, if Billy did not feel loyal to Essendon, he may have not been triggered by their 1984 Grand Final win to 'cry with happiness':

> I cried with happiness. So, when I was seven years old, and I didn't actually know that you could cry with happiness. It was the first time I've cried with happiness. And, if you look at the highlights of the '84 Grand Final, there's a moment like [when] Tim Watson runs into an open goal and basically kicks a ceiling goal … and it's sort of the moment where it became absolutely certain that the team will win the Grand Final … it's like the best moment you can have in footy when the game is still on, the final quarter or the third quarter at the Grand Final, and it's certain you've got the game won. And, I think, that was probably the moment of the tears …[17]

A year later as Essendon triumphed once again, Billy, already familiar with the thrill of Premiership, did not find it as inspiring. Perhaps, the frequency and familiarity of the taste of victory contributed to his impeding respite from football – the

[14] Bernard Gert, 'Loyalty and Morality,' in *Loyalty: Nomos Liv*, ed. Sanford V. Levinson, Joel Parker and Paul Woodruff (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 3–21.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Piers Benn, 'Forgiveness and Loyalty,' *Philosophy* 71, no. 277 (1996): 369–83.
[17] Timothy Michael 'Tim' Watson played for Essendon from 1977 to 1991 and then again from 1993 to 1994.

contributor remembers feeling disconnected rather than frustrated at his inability to follow the game while spending a year overseas with his family.

Similarly to the concept of CORF (cutting off reflected failure), a possibility of reflected success not being a desirable outcome (CORS) for some fans is also noted.[18] Such deviations from the norm are attributed to changes in the supported team, including but not limited to the team's squad, management, playing style and strategy or more general abandonment of tradition.[19] These factors did not, however, determine the lapse in Billy's unwavering loyalty to Essendon. Instead, the episode needs to be understood in relation to the moods surrounding the game and the contributor's own life cycle.

Billy's mild apathy to the game was extended by what he calls an 'anticlimactic' Grand Final loss to Collingwood. He describes the 1990 Collingwood squad as 'a complete bogan team' – the definition that pertains to the team's frequent violent and racist on-field behaviour.[20] Although the turn of the 1990s also formalised the VFL's continuing national expansion and the League's progression from the parochial competition of Melbourne and its suburbia to the national league – the AFL, Billy labels this period: 'racism as normal'.[21] The changes in the League coincided with the contributor's first year in high school, which, in turn, guaranteed new hobbies and interests: Billy turned to hip-hop, skateboarding and buying records, 'not because they were retro' – he ascertains.

Billy was, however, quick to transcend the perplexing state of the AFL, the League's violence and racism. (Perhaps, the slow emergence of public conversations on racism in football in 1991 was also helpful in that regard.[22]) In 1993 footy re-entered Billy's life in a form and style that distinctly diverged from his childhood fascination with

[18] Richard M. Campbell, Jr., Damon Aiken and Aubrey Kent, 'Beyond BIRGing and CORFing: Continuing the Exploration of Fan Behaviour,' *Sport Marketing Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1992): 151–57.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Bogan – derogatory term used in Australia and New Zealand to describe someone as crude, unsophisticated or low class. On racism and violence in the AFL in the 90s see Klugman and Osmond, *Black and Proud*.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 101–4.

Essendon and marked a single-minded commitment and loyalty.[23] This time, Billy's interest in football aligned with his personal development: he became a leader of a small group of friends who regularly organised their weekend footy outings, described as 'adult excursions' by Billy.

> Because Essendon were doing well that year … the momentum was just building, yeah. And so, we were going, and we were enjoying the games more and more. And, it was like an adult excursion. We were going out by ourselves. And, maybe we were not going much by ourselves at that time. I don't know. How old was I? Fourteen, fifteen. No, I was probably fifteen. But, it was just one of … the first things doing without supervision … Yeah, I think, I've mentioned to you that I started becoming like the person who was organising these footy outings. Yeah, like saying, 'are we going to the game?' And, I'd say: 'Let's meet, let's meet at one o'clock at such and such location.' And, I remember always wanting to be there at least an hour before so that we could get good seats.

Billy had never sought to be a leader or an organiser. And yet, his fondness for footy made him regularly exercise both of these skills and open his personality to such unfamiliar undertakings. The realisation that his accomplices in the 'adult excursions' were following no one else's but his leadership astounded Billy.

> Out of character … being the leader – yeah. Totally out of character … like I was quite shy and then … I didn't mention that suddenly I realised that they were deferring to me. And, I thought: why me? I'm just a normal supporter. But then, I realised: oh yeah, I do go off a bit more than these guys when watching games. I do, sort of, react a bit more uncontrollably than them or [I am] more expressive.

Although in this period Billy's fandom was instrumental in developing his personality and giving him opportunities to exercise new skills, its single-minded fixation on 'adult excursions' foreseen its own end. Moving to the next stage of his life – the Bachelor's degree – Billy was pushed to a new social environment, found new friends and new interests.[24] 'I was totally preoccupied with other matters and football was not that important' – Billy remembers his time as an undergraduate student. The interest in football resurfaced in a few instances throughout his prolonged tertiary education, yet it was episodic, devoid of passion and, at times

[23] McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[24] Ibid.

simply used as a light entertainment.[25] The calm, however, signalled an impending storm and a significant shift in his football loyalties and modes of spectating.

Essendon *vs.* Richmond

> Anyway, it was the start of the footy season … And, Essendon were playing Sydney on a Saturday night … So, Essendon were playing Sydney in Sydney and I was in … the London Tavern in Richmond on the corner of Richmond Terrace and Lennox [street]. And, I'd never seen Melburnian [crowd] supporting an interstate team as much as people [were] barracking against Essendon that night. And, I just thought: wow, Essendon are really hated. And, I was already detached from Essendon. And, I thought: okay, this is like a new moment in my life – moving to Richmond. I had that good experience of Richmond in the previous year … I had that sort of good experience ten years earlier … My mum was a Richmond fan. I was living in Richmond … Essendon's over on the other side of the city … Basically I was like: I didn't like them in 2000 when they won, I'm willing to give them up. Richmond it is!

At the age of twenty-five Billy found himself back in Melbourne and living in the suburb of Richmond.[26] It was Billy's geography that became central to the revival of his football passion. Watching the game contested by his then team Essendon and the Sydney Swans surrounded by Richmond crowd, Billy, at the time recovering from an emotionally taxing episode in his personal life, suddenly realised that there was something about the Bombers that was unappealing, something that no longer was defensible for him, something that did not align with his convictions.[27] This feeling of detachment was quickly replaced by the realisation that Richmond was not only more geographically convenient, but a more emotionally settling choice.

Billy presents his switch to the Tigers as a moment's decision. It is as if his gut that night in London Tavern told him that Essendon was no longer right for him. Yet, even in Billy's description, the building blocks that constructed the seemingly knee-jerk reaction start to emerge.

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[25] Billy continued his studies through to a PhD degree.
[26] Richmond is an inner suburb of Melbourne located in the city's south-east. It is the traditional locale of the Richmond Football Club.
[27] The Sydney Swans – a football club that competes in the AFL. Originally, the club was based in South Melbourne but was relocated to Sydney 1984 becoming the first VFL club to relocate interstate. On violence in the VFL/AFL see East, *Australian Rules Football in a Commercial Era*, 85-89.

> It was a moment's decision. It wasn't like: I'm not supporting Essendon, I don't know who I'll support, I'll look around for a team … Richmond supplanted Essendon as being the team to choose, big team to support. I like the idea of being in the suburb of the team I supported.

In this brief remark, Billy's gut feeling is supported by his geographical location. The geography was imperative in this decisive episode, yet the new location itself was a repercussion of something else.

Following Billy's hiatus from football during the university years, his relationship with the game was rebuilt along very different lines. The reunion was not accidental, but instead generated by a set of favourable circumstances. Having completed his undergraduate degree, in 2000 Billy spent a year teaching English in Indonesia. In Medan, North Sumatra access to Australian television networks was a luxury; hence much welcomed, especially because it allowed Billy to keep on top of the footy scores.[28] The Bombers were doing well that season, which gave Billy yet another reason to tune in and follow the game. To me, this is the first instance of Billy's yearning for familiarity which was successfully satisfied by following Essendon's victorious run to the Premiership.[29] Footy was, indeed, serving a different function that year, which is made intelligible in Billy's admission of a lack of emotional investment in his team's success.[30]

The Bombers' violent playing style did not allow Billy to wholeheartedly support their AFL campaign. He remembers feeling in 2000 that he would have rather seen his team play beautiful football than winning the Premiership. Indeed, in his eyes Essendon was winning the Premiership while simultaneously falling from grace. It was as if his club had become 'a complete bogan team' – the description that Billy earlier associated with the 1990 Collingwood squad. Billy's memories of the footy season spent overseas were mostly vague but the contempt for Essendon's 'violent and underhand tactics' stayed with him. When reflecting on a near-complete chapter, Billy underscores that seeing Michael Long – a player he liked – knock out

[28] Medan is the capital of Indonesia's province of North Sumatra.
[29] The Essendon Football Club won the AFL Premiership in 2000 by defeating Melbourne in the Grand Final.
[30] Wann and James, *Sport Fans,* chap. 5.

the opposition's Troy Simmonds was not only the most vivid memory from that year's Grand Final but also, in his own assessment, 'the closest moment to seeing someone being killed on the field'.[31] The episode further affirmed Billy's growing discomfort with his team's deliberately violent game style.

This confusion in his football passion – supporting the team that he no longer believed in – coincided with a looming turmoil in his love life. Feeling 'totally discombobulated emotionally, totally depressed, totally withdrawn' after an abrupt break-up with a serious girlfriend, Billy returned to Melbourne but continued to feel displaced.

> I guess, I was a bit overweight and smoking and not healthy … I basically ruined myself emotionally, because I sort of invested a lot in this girl, and then I basically withdrew really quickly. The period of breaking up took a couple of months, but it still was … I went from being really into her to being: nah, I'm out of here … I guess, I lost a bit of trust in myself, a bit of self-esteem – was really smashed. And then, I went back to Melbourne … I stayed at my parents' house in Glen Iris for maybe a month. I don't know what I did [then]. This was 2002. Then, I moved to Richmond and my first weekend there was probably the beginning of March …

In his active quest for community, football emerged as a reasonable path forward. As Billy still felt detached from the Bombers, seeing visceral hatred towards them among the pub's crowd in Richmond made him suddenly realise that his time with Essendon was up – there was no way this team was able to situate him in one of his most troubled life's episodes. Billy was once again in search for morally grounded loyalty that had been central to his childhood footy allegiance. However, the alignment of his convictions had to be complemented by the belonging to a geographical and social place. To that end, place-belongingness emerged as an important attribute of the contributor's revived AFL fandom.[32] Sticking with the violent Bombers not only meant disavowing his beliefs but also would have further intensified the displacement he felt in relation to his support for the team, historically based in Essendon – a suburb in Melbourne's inner north west.

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[31] The footage of the incident is available here: 'Essendon vs Melbourne Brawl 2000 Grand Final,' accessed February 7, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D772QjpqD7o.
[32] Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging.'

> When I went to Windy Hill, I felt it was exciting, but also felt it was somewhere totally foreign. I never went there, we never went there (to that part of Melbourne) otherwise. I cannot locate it on the map, I have no idea where Windy Hill is. Windy Hill is like totally somewhere only in my imagination; I cannot actually … For Windy Hill to be geographically and concretely real it's like something I can't understand, something I can't grapple with, it's like my total belonging to my childhood and the past is another country (or whatever they say) … It's just like not there … When I came to Melbourne last year (yeah, when I spent a month in 2015), I did like ground hopping, like visiting old grounds, VFL grounds, but I didn't go to Windy Hill even though that's one of the iconic grounds. But, I think, it was like I didn't wanna go there – this reluctance to visit that really sort of poignant place of my childhood, where I really had this young Essendon moment.

The lack of meaningful connection to Windy Hill also contrasts with Billy's reflections on the Prospect Oval. The small ground located in the Northern suburbs of Adelaide is a home of North Adelaide FC. This Club, also known as the Roosters, plays in the South Australian National Football League. Billy's grandfather and dad, who both grew up in the South Australian capital, supported the Roosters and Billy always felt connected to the SANFL's 2018 Premiers and their boutique ground. To him, this footy field with its modest pavilion located more than four hundred miles away from his Melbourne home is one of the few personally meaningful geographical places where footy is still played and enjoyed.

At the time of writing, Adelaide's Prospect Oval, is also meaningfully connected with Billy's support for the Richmond Tigers. The connection is granted by Shane Edwards – Richmond's attacking midfielder and a descendent of Arunta peoples, who started his footy career in Adelaide's northern suburb of Prospect.[33] Edwards's personal story and his family history were one of the starting points in Billy's deliberate efforts to learn more about Indigenous Australia, thus, making the place of Edwards's junior successes ever more poignant.

As the latter reflections emerged late in our collaboration, I initially contextualised Billy's remarks on Windy Hilly exclusively in relation to his early adulthood switch to supporting the Tigers. In this contextual space, I reflected on the origins of the

[33] Arunta People, also known as Arrerente or Aranda people, are Indigenous people from Arrernte lands in Australia's Northern Territory.

contributor's passion and how following football was intended to help him fit in, which defined Billy's switch to Richmond as a changing utility of his passion. Billy's support for the Tigers separated him from his Melbourne-scale belonging as at this juncture a quest to fit in became a longing for an 'emotionally charged social location'.[34] This search grounded the contributor in Richmond, its place and its club.

Given Billy's emotional state and his pursuit for stability, the Tigers made perfect sense – one of a few AFL clubs that to some degree maintained the integrity of its place-people nexus following the League's ground rationalisation practices that had displaced most Melbourne-based teams.[35] These practices culminated in all Melbourne-based AFL clubs playing most of their home games at either one of the two large city stadiums – Docklands Stadium and the MCG.[36] The accident of the MCG sharing Yarra Park with the Punt Road Oval – Richmond's original home – allowed the Tigers to maintain their material connection with the suburb, the club had traditionally represented. [37]

Billy also could relate to the Tigers in his vivid memory of 1993 and his disappointment of not being a Richmond supporter then.

> I can remember [thinking]: this Richmond team is something special, these fans are something special, this experience is something special. And, funny enough, I also had that experience, I think it was '93 – before Essendon started winning all of those games … My girlfriend at the time, she supported Richmond. And, I think, Richmond beat Essendon early in '93. I could actually, sort of, remember then thinking: I wish I supported Richmond.

Harbouring this memory and finding himself in Richmond amidst the emotional

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[34] Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, 'From "Identity" to "Belonging" in Social Research: Plurality, Social Boundaries and the Politics of the Self,' *Working Papers in Development Sociology and Social Anthropology* (Bielefeld, 2011), https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-431029.
[35] On ground rationalisation practices in the VFL and, later, the AFL see Dave Nadel, 'What Is a Football Community?' *Occasional Papers in Football Studies* 1, no.1 (1998): 59–68; Sandercock and Turner, *Up Where, Cazaly?*, 136-8.
[36] Docklands Stadium is a purpose-built AFL venue, also currently known as the Marvel Stadium due to the naming rights sponsorship; see Stewart and Dickson, 'Crossing the Barassi Line,' 86-7.
[37] The Tigers first moved to the MCG in 1964, sharply increasing their game attendance; see Elliot Cartledge, *Footy's Glory Days: The Greatest Era of the Greatest Game* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books, 2013), 13.

turmoil, it is as if supporting the Tigers was his destiny waiting to be fulfilled. With the benefit of hindsight and through the devices of narrative, Billy sees Essendon as his childhood and Richmond as a new beginning, settling in his adulthood and becoming content with himself.[38] The glimpse to this narrative emplotment is offered in Billy's childhood recollections, which authenticate my implied symbolism.[39]

> Mark Harvey, who was one of my favourite players, who is from the Essendon team of mid 80s – seven years down the track, he'd become a senior player, but was still in the team in '93.[40] I could remember him finishing the game holding the ball … often times, when the siren goes off and it's a great game, they often show the player who's got the ball. And so, to see him [Mark Harvey] with the ball, it was like this great moment of continuation from the mid 80s and that moment. And, I sort of identified my Essendon fandom with him. And so, it marked a ten-year time in my own life. Anyway, that's why that moment was significant – seeing that defeat of West Coast.

It is evident that complex personal circumstances and life cycle transitions are implicated in Billy's switch of allegiances; but beyond these circumstantial and recurrent trends, there are moments in time that signify impending transitions in his life and his footy fandom.[41] Mark Harvey holding the ball at the end of the game against the West Coast Eagles that took Bombers into the top six in the 1993 AFL season, on reflection, became the symbol of Billy's childhood support for Essendon. The moment was both significant and meaning-making – imbued with narrative currency and employed by Billy to make sense of his fandom trajectory.

Beyond the narrative emplotment, the moment had an essential value, too. As our collaboration progressed, Billy referred to 'moments that sustain you' – moments which in their potency and resonance are able to outlast their temporality by infusing one's passion with substance to carry on supporting the team for the seasons to come. As Billy found his new passion for the Tigers, these moments continue to feature and delineate transitions and meanings within his belonging to Richmond. Despite the blinding passion instilled in these fragments of linear time, Billy

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[38] McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Mark Harvey played for Essendon as a forward from 1984 to 1997. The game Billy is referring to was significant because Essendon defeated the reigning AFL Premiers – West Coast Eagles – to get into the Finals.
[41] Levinson, *Seasons of a Man's Life*.

developed a critical gaze to sport, its structures and, in particular, the AFL. Billy's scrutiny turned his support for the Tigers into an unending emotional and intellectual negotiation.

Dreams *vs.* Moments

> Just went out to Swan Street, and it was just like a total mess – the total squash of people that like sort of dissipated so you could actually walk, but there were just drunken celebrations filling up Swan Street. And, it was just you could walk in the slow crowd. So, that might have been about seven o'clock by then. And then, I was just trying to work out whether I could get in into a pub or whatever. I just found a spot like just started queuing to get into this place called *Benny's Burgers*. I ordered, it was full, basically, and then there was an empty seat, I just said: 'Do you mind if I sit here?' And then, got talking to the people, because, you know, people just were footy fans out: digesting [the game], celebrating. And, the reason [why] I went in [Benny's Burgers] – there were two big screens showing the replay [of the final]. And I, sort of, got in about the second quarter and just sat down, ate and ordered enough food to actually see out the game and stay for a little bit after, chatting with whoever I was talking with and then went home, probably around midnight. Very, very sensible, but it was just the food I ate was very nice, and the beer I drunk was very nice and the conversation … I wrote about the Grand Final celebration, and I wrote about the conversation I had in *Benny's Burgers*. And, when I put a link to it online and … one of the guys, who I was talking to [that night], read it and contacted me. And so, we became friends on Facebook. So, that was nice.

The orderly nature of the AFL and its spectator culture created the space where organic expressions and spontaneous flow of emotions are somewhat restricted, where fans are told what to do, what to feel and when to do it. The mediation and proliferation of the footy spectacle undoubtedly expose the game to a diversity of personalised emotional responses, but equally it removes an otherwise urgent necessity for fans to produce their own readings, opinions and immediate social interactions on (and surrounding) the game.[42] Of course, the surge in fan produced online content cannot be ignored although caution should be exercised when describing blogging and social media platforms as essentially democratising, not

[42] Leigh Boucher, 'Sport Public Emotions and their Personal Consequences: The Nationalising Affects of the Australian Football League since 1990,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 13 (2015): 1–21.

least because these are usually produced in response to the traditional mediums and their footy chatter.[43]

Billy's passion for football is sustained not only by emotionally relatable on-field moments or third-party footy content but also by everyday casual conversations and unexpected friendships afforded to him by his thorough enjoinment of the game, his passion for the Tigers and his geographical location.[44]

The epigraph opening up this section narrates Billy's adventures on the afternoon Richmond beat the Adelaide Crows to become the AFL Premiers.[45] After having watched the game on the big screen in the Punt Road Oval just a stone's throw away from the live action at the MCG, Billy went home to have dinner. The contributor remembers that on his way home he was struggling to comprehend that something he had been dreaming about for the entirety of his journey with Richmond had just become a reality. At the start of the season, Billy postulated that he would have been satisfied seeing his team play a single 'beautiful game' of footy; he could not have imagined that the Tigers would end up winning the Premiership. Indeed, the dream in its moment of realisation – and beyond – still seemed to be a dream. After a quick dinner, Billy left the serenity of his family and his Richmond home for the havoc of the suburb's main street, which was swinging in a full party mode. In this chaos, Billy found a moment of intellectual camaraderie that sewed up his celebrations. It is as if his longing for localised community was realised that night.

Meeting Billy in early 2018 after he had enough time to digest Richmond's incredible season, I was interested to know how the Premiership win had shifted his normally critical gaze towards the club and the League. When Billy and I spoke at the end of 2016, he was laying out a plan to treat his passion more as a project. Then, he

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[43] Little critical insight exists in relation to the AFL fan-generated content, but Hutchins and Rowe point to the NRL's appropriation of fan content in Brett Hutchins and David Rowe, 'From Broadcast Scarcity to Digital Plenitude Sport Content Economy,' *Television & Media* 10, no. 4 (2009): 354–70; the industry's preparedness for these changes is also evidenced in scholarly discussions, e.g., Daniel Threlfall, 'Social Media and Professional Sport: The Balance between the Protection of Copyright on YouTube and the Benefits of User-Generated Content,' *Australian and New Zealand Sports Law Journal* 6, no. 1 (2011): 135–46.

[44] Billy often runs into Richmond players and executives while going about his daily business in Richmond.

[45] 2017 AFL Grand Final was contested by the Adelaide Crows and the Richmond Tigers, Richmond won the game by twenty-eight points.

struggled to justify investing time and emotional energy in the undeserving and uncaring AFL. The team's mediocre performance on the field and the club management's lack of interest in the fans' voices was also making Billy frustrated.

For example, one of the things Billy was upset about in late 2016 was Richmond's board election. Like most AFL clubs, Richmond, according to Billy, is a member-owned club in name only.[46] Billy frequently notes that there is little that members are trusted with in relation to the club's management and administration.[47] To that end, he reflected on the recent board election, frustrated at a low voter turnout which paved a way to an easy re-election of the two incumbents. Unlike most fans, Billy not only took part in the election but also reached out to his favoured candidate.[48] Although Billy had been hopeful, the outcome, in the end, was not surprising. The episode, unlike the inspiring on-field moments that sustained Billy's passion throughout the years, reopened a wound and allowed for old grudges to resurface. The moment warranted an extensive questioning of the place of fans within the AFL structures.

> I wrote an email to him [the candidate for the Richmond board that Billy supported] saying: 'Well, you know, it's a bit disappointing' – I said – 'I'm disappointed that you didn't win, the election, it is so favoured to the incumbents. It must absolutely be impossible to get on the board. I'm not sure I'm happy with corporatisation of the AFL and the Richmond club. It's yet another moment to be reconsidering what the hell I am doing.' And then, I started writing saying: 'Well, you know, I'll give them one more year, and then that's it. I'll see what happens after one year.' Because I've been a way for the last how many years, I might as well (now that I'm here actually) go to a season's worth of games, but it's time away from my family, cause I like to go alone – that's not negotiable … and it's time away from my other hobbies, which actually might be more fulfilling: why don't I start knitting? I can actually make a scarf and keep myself warm during the following winter, you know. There's some things, which actually provide a clearer [outcome] instead of me trying to work out like: what am I getting from this? Spending this inordinate amount of time writing letters, emotional investment to get this snub from the club, knowing full well that they can't even treat someone like Simon [the candidate for the

[46] In Australia, football club membership has become equivalent to holding a season ticket. However, in their set-up, most AFL clubs are public entities; hence, they have an element of being a shareholder as well. Richmond FC, therefore, has elected board members.
[47] Most AFL clubs advertise different membership offerings in terms of access to games, additional comfort and merchandise as opposed to a stake in the club, e.g., RFC membership offerings: 'Premium Memberships,' Richmond Football Club, 2019, https://membership.richmondfc.com.au/premium-memberships.ap
[48] The discussed candidate is Simon Wallace who wrote an extensive prospectus, which outlined his election platform and his plans if elected.

> Richmond board that Billy supported] seriously, they ain't gonna treat me seriously.

These reflections expressed Billy's immediate disappointment but also acknowledged the inconsequentiality of sport. At the start of our collaboration, Billy articulated the need to put his happiness on the line in a pursuit of pleasure that the vicarious sporting success can bring.[49] The disappointing results of the board election, however, triggered Billy to verbalise his inability to 'risk his happiness' for the Tigers. In the same conversation, it later transpired that Billy wanted to treat his support for Richmond as a project where he would be able to get satisfaction from occurrences other than winning.

> I'm trying to regard it as a project so that I can … safeguard what I can get out of it and then sort of gamble in terms of, yeah, my happiness thing. So, like okay, make it seventy per cent satisfying, thirty per cent – gamble.

When reading through my draft in early 2019, Billy reflects that often moments other than winning are most meaningful in his footy-related endeavours. His agreement with the passage in the chapter, brings a memory from the 2018 AFL Finals to the fore:

> After the Preliminary final loss last year, a man, who I know to be suffering in all sorts of ways (chronic illness and basically feeling unloved) cried, while resting his head on my shoulder. I provided him with momentary comfort. The situation was sad, but I was pleased to be 'there' for that person at that moment.

On the one hand, the pursuit of such moments is divergent from Billy's loyalty to the Tigers. Yet, besides the lack of on-field success, he, at the time, was equally (if not more) upset with the club's decision-making process in which fans – members of the club – were consistently not listened to. Billy's loyalty here once again extended its reach to a moral pursuit by prioritising the need for accountable running of the club over the on-field success.[50] Billy's attitudes not only demonstrate a larger-scale

[49] Kwon, Trail and Lee, 'Effects of Vicarious Achievement on BIRGing and CORFing.'
[50] Gert, 'Loyalty and Morality.'

loyalty that extends beyond one's in-group, but equally complicates the decades-old truism of 'fan-equity' whereby sports fans' loyalty is interminable.[51] The exploitative trajectories of the sports economy often hinge on these anomalous consumer behaviours.[52] Yet, it is precisely these trajectories that transform fan practices, and while some fans are content to go along, others, like Billy, are actively opposed.[53]

Billy vehemently critiques the model of the AFL clubs' ownership. To him, membership is a symbolic token to supporters, which in reality serves the needs and whims of the AFL itself.[54] This and similar grievances have led to his minor yet heartfelt acts of protest. For example, in his letter to the President of Richmond Football Club, Peggy O'Neal, Billy wrote:

> The Richmond Football Club, is a 'supporter-owned' club. But, regrettably, I am beginning to feel that this fact of being supporter-owned is in name only. I saw recently that there has been an effort to change the laws so that if fans want to mount a challenge to the board, approximately 2,500 signatures will be needed – a significant increase on the current 1,000 signatures. This was justified by the RFC as it was bringing the club into line with 'corporation's law'. Do we need reminding that the 'C' in RFC stands for 'Club' not 'Corporation'? I ask, what is the Club doing to directly engage with and listen to its members?

Besides the voiceless membership, Billy was also deeply saddened by Richmond's treatment of Chris Yarran – an Indigenous player suffering from mental health issues. The club (as it had become customary) used a professionally slick and abrupt approach in both ceasing the player's contract and communicating that to the public.[55] Billy was once again dissatisfied with the club's lack of transparency, which, to his mind, exacerbated the vitriol coped by the outgoing player and by the club's management for a supposedly poor recruitment choice from the fans on social media. The sense of injustice and a wish to stand against the mainstream footy culture's

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[51] Walter C. Neal, 'The Peculiar Economic of Professional Sport,' *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 78, no. 1 (1964): 1–14.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Dino Numerato, 'Who Says "No to Modern Football?" Italian Supporters, Reflexivity and Neo-Liberalism,' *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 39, no. 2 (2015): 120–38.
[54] Ross Booth, 'The Economic Development of the Australian Football League,' in *Handbook of the Economics of Sport*, ed. Wladimir Andreff and Stefan Szymanski (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006), 552–64.
[55] See the announcement made by Richmond FC regarding Chris Yarran 'Club Statement: Chris Yarran,' Richmond Football Club, accessed April 22, 2017, http://www.richmondfc.com.au/news/2016-11-22/club-statement-chris-yarran.

quiet comfort with wide-spread mental health issues among the players resulted in another letter to the President of Richmond Football Club:

> The departure of Chris Yarran is extremely disappointing: not only because we didn't have the joy of seeing him play for our team, but because it means that his mental health issues weren't suitably resolved. I regard this not as a failure on Chris's behalf, but a failure of the Club's to listen to him and to provide the appropriate level of care. The Club's record with Indigenous players is terrible: there have been so many Indigenous players who have left the Club before reaching and playing to their potential. Why so?

Billy's concern for Chris Yarran and the earlier mentioned interest in Shane Edwards correspond to Steph's close following of the players' lives.[56] Both instances are comparable in the care that Billy and Steph show towards the players, which challenges the prevailing narrative that spectators do not take responsibility for the physical and mental suffering that is implicated in the spectacle they revere.[57]

Following Yarran's sacking it emerged that the player had a serious methamphetamine addiction.[58] This revelation somewhat pushed his mental health issues into the background instead of being considered as an underlying component of his substance misuse.[59] Billy, in his own words, reflected that his 'following of Chris Yarran's trials and tribulations was a kind of failure'. He regretted to have not had sufficient insight into the situation when writing the letter to the Club's President. Yet, to him the letter remained relevant in its overall message, which Billy communicated in the following words:

> But, in general, footy clubs have a dismal record with Indigenous players – including Richmond, despite their posturing.

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[56] Steph's interest in players' lives is discussed above in Chapter 4.
[57] There is some quantitative evidence on social pressure that is applied to student-athletes to continue playing despite injury worries, see Emily Kroshus et al., 'Concussion Under-Reporting and Pressure from Coaches, Teammates, Fans and Parents Emily,' *Social Science & Medicine*, no. 134 (June 2015): 66–75; on elite sports men and mental health see Gary Souter, Robin Lewis and Laura Serrant, 'Men, Mental Health and Elite Sport: A Narrative Review,' *Sports Medicine* 4, no. 57 (2018): 1–8; and on specific pressures among the AFL players see Andrew J. Noblet and Sandra Gifford, 'The Sources of Stress Experienced by Professional Australian Footballers,' *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 14 (2002): 1–13.
[58] Travis King, 'Former AFL Star Chris Yarran Opens up on Drug Battle,' *Afl.com.au*, August 17, 2017, http://www.afl.com.au/news/2017-08-17/former-afl-star-chris-yarran-opens-up-on-drug-battle.
[59] Daniel J. Carragher, 'Working with the Methamphetamine-Addicted Client in Mental Health Settings,' in *Methamphetamine Addiction: Biological Foundations, Psychological Factors and Social Consequences*, ed. Perry N. Halkitis (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2009), 159–72.

Being of Anglo-German heritage, the contributor sees himself as a part of the problem within the historically unjust space of Australia. Billy's efforts to decolonise his reading of the country rest on, in his own words, 'listening to Aboriginal people talk'. For many white Australians, footy offers one of the very few opportunities to encounter First Nations people.[60] This was also the case for Billy, as apart from the brief presence of an Aboriginal pupil in his primary school, his childhood encounters with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were confined to footy. As a child-spectator, Billy observed anger towards Aboriginal players that he could not comprehend. In hindsight, he also reflects that the media positioned Indigenous players 'as having a great skill but also having many "problems": even if the problems they faced were no different from the average player' or if those 'problems' were an outcome of their on-field treatment.

The frequent episodes of racism were perplexing to the young Billy; he could not comprehend why the players' origin was such a source of anger for so many spectators. His childhood memories strikingly re-emerged in 2015 when Adam Goodes, a veteran player and a proud man of Adnyamathanha and Narrunga peoples, took a stand against a booing crowd.[61]

> So [in] 2015, I was in the Netherlands and watching a fair amount and reading a fair amount. And, knowing that he [Adam Goodes] was getting booed. But, I was watching the game between Sydney and Carlton. And, that was when Adam Goodes did his dance towards the Carlton fans, who were booing him.[62] And, I immediately thought: wow, this is something special.

[60] The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the AFL have been discussed in Chapter 1 and the introduction to Part 2.
[61] Andy Fuller, 'Racism and the AFL: Listening to the Stories of Adam Goodes and Shane Edwards,' in *Sport and Discrimination*, ed. Daniel Kilvington and John Price (London: Routledge, 2017), 32–43. Adnyamathanha and Narrunga are Indigenous people groups in South Australia. Adnyamathanha is a contemporary grouping encompassing a number of distinct peoples. A good introduction to intellectual decolonising is offered in Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, 'Introduction: Decolonising the University?' in *Decolonising the University*, ed. Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial and Kerem Nişancıoğlu (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 1–15.
[62] In 2015 during the AFL's Indigenous Round, Adam Goodes, a veteran Sydney Swans player, performed a war cry dance to celebrate a goal. This incident culminated a two-year period in which Goodes was being intermittently booed by opposition fans.

The perplexity that complemented similar episodes in his childhood returned; as Billy once again could not understand the commentariat's inability to respond to the incident sensibly. Media outlets became quickly saturated with opinions that were either highly critical of Goodes or cautious in their seemingly positive stance.[63] In this exposé of 'white fragility', Billy saw an empowered Indigenous man directly confronting the trespass of white Australia, in which Billy felt implicated.[64] This was, thus, a formative event for Billy, comparable to those on-field moments that he referred to earlier as having the capacity to sustain his passion. Contrary to just doing that, the Goodes's war cry dance and the discourses surrounding the episode sewed up Billy's commitment to take active steps towards freeing himself from his colonially informed habits and ways of thinking on his return to Australia.[65]

The contributor has now been back living in Melbourne for three years and footy continues to be one of the main platforms through which he further develops cultural awareness. Reading Aboriginal players' life stories, namely the stories of Shane Edwards, Adam Goodes, Jim and Phil Krakouer, writing about footy, visiting an Indigenous football club located in regional Victoria and confidently expressing his viewpoint as evidenced by his letters to Peggy O'Neal – are some of the ways in which footy has become interwoven with new modalities of Billy's belonging.[66] Belonging that similarly to his morally grounded football loyalty extends beyond the club he supports and the game itself.

Perhaps, this is precisely the reason why Richmond's Premiership win (although pleasurable) in the contributor's own words remained a dream. It offered a moment that would sustain Billy's passion for years to come but did not resolve the reservations the contributor held about the game neither did it settle his unsettled belonging in Australia. It is, therefore, not surprising that even after the glorious

[63] Commentary from Channel 7, Triple M, Leigh Matthews and others are cited in Gerard Whateley and Mark Robinson, 'AFL 360' (Fox Footy, July 27, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ii7OMETavU.
[64] Robin Di'Angelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).
[65] Clare Land, *Decolonising Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles* (London: Zed Books, 2015).
[66] Jim and Phillip Krakouer – retired Australian rules football players, who both played for Claremont and North Melbourne; see Gorman, *Brotherboys*.

2017 season, Billy, in his own words, 'continued [his] letter writing impulse'.

It seems that Richmond's on-field success had little impact on Billy's feelings regarding the club's day-to-day practices. This, however, aligns with his football loyalty that goes far beyond the in-group and out-group binary and, instead, follows the contributor's continuously evolving moral framework. This morally grounded loyalty drives Billy's concern for the game and the League that has sharpened the contributor's overall political outlook.

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The chapter started with Billy's reference to the Bulldogs' 2016 Premiership win and his introduction to the straightforward trade-off between loyalty and happiness which later unfolded amidst the complicated personal narrative.

> I guess, apart from feeling bad, it also gives you an elation … So, if you are not willing to risk your self-esteem or risk your happiness on your team, then you don't get the joy. And the joy [is] what we saw … what I saw … the greatest footballing moment I had ever seen was the Bulldogs winning [the AFL Premiership].

The comment delivered in late 2016 might have lost its significance, not least because Billy's beloved Richmond became the AFL Premiers a year later. I assume that the 2017 Tigers' Premiership trumped the Bulldogs' moment of success in Billy's chart of 'the greatest football moments.' Billy, in his committed search for nuance, persistent throughout our collaboration, is reluctant to affirm my conjecture, and instead suggests that while the stories of Richmond and the Bulldogs are somewhat comparable, their trajectories are contrasting.

In some ways, Billy's reluctance to align the two recent Premiers are relevant to both the Bulldogs' highly competitive Grand Final, which diverged from the Richmond's rather easy win over the Adelaide Crows, and the admiration he has for the Footscray Fightback campaign. The Bulldogs' run to the AFL glory, perhaps, was more resonant with Billy's mantra 'to risk your happiness' and provided context within the scope of

his lived memory to his small steps of resistance toward relentlessly corporate structures of the AFL.[67] It is in these practices that Billy's footy dreams are most vivid.

[67] Footscray Fightback campaign to save the Footscray Football Club, currently known as the Western Bulldogs, is described in Matthew Nicholson and Bob Stewart, 'The Role of Sport Journalists During Crisis Events in Sport,' *Sporting Traditions* 22, no. 2 (2006): 31–47.

PART THREE | Sports Passions in the World: Freedom, Constraint and the Everyday

The six fans, their fandom trajectories and their changing and steady relationships with their respective sports had both shared and distinct characteristics. They aligned and conflicted among themselves and with existent body of knowledge. Beyond the shared cultural location of Melbourne and Australia, the narratives evoked and situated familiar themes of socialisation, identification, participation and consumption within the vagaries and idiosyncrasies of lived experiences. Such biographical situatedness complicated the known conceptual codes and offered new lenses through which to understand ordinary people's extraordinary passions for sport.

To that end, the final part in its single chapter (Chapter 9) weaves the stories of John, Steph, Mike, Zoha, Andrea and Billy into a narrative that speaks to both situational and underlying utilities of sports fandom. The joined narrative extends the personality development stages of actor, agent and author in juxtaposing the utilities of fandom to the orthodoxies of the day. It proposes new directions for research and theoretical analysis of sports fandom that combine everyday immediacy, biographical nuance and structural concerns.

Chapter 9 | Sports Passions in Dialogue: Curiosity, Creativity and Communion

> In our business-like, matter-of-fact world – an instant-profit seeking, crisis-managing and damage-limiting world – anything which cannot prove its instrumental proficiency is 'a bit dodgy'.
>
> – Zygmunt Bauman [1]

In a world where freedom is restricted to on-shelf offerings in supermarket aisles and creativity is merely an entrepreneurial asset, biography can easily become just another way to promote the cult of the individual.[2] However, overlooking biographical narratives also gives free reign for statistically verified orthodoxies. Nuance and detail of lived reality are necessary for rupturing the matter-of-fact stalemate, but how is it possible to move past individualised reflexivity and postmodern fragmentation?

Curiosity: Following and Caring

In the mid-seventeenth century, Descartes in his treatise on passions noted that curiosity 'is nothing other than the desire to know'.[3] What lingers in this simple proposition is the link between the self and the world.[4] Curiosity as a spur to know affords the ability and a further desire to question and transform what is known. In today's world, it is this impetus that continues to afford resistances to the grand narratives via decoding of mass media messaging.[5]

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[1] Zygmunt Bauman, 'Identity for Identity's Sake Is a Bit Dodgy,' in *Soundings On: Race, Identity and Belonging*, ed. Sally Davison and Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2008), 92.
[2] These ideas have been interrogated in Chapter 2.
[3] René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul and Other Late Philosophical Writings*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 230.
[4] Ilhan Inan, *The Philosophy of Curiosity* (London: Routledge, 2012), 2-3.
[5] Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*.

In a world where freedom is restricted to consumer choice and entrepreneurial innovation and the practice of political economy promises to secure human well-being, resistance to this orthodoxy claiming common-sense status demands questioning beyond its own economy of knowledge.[6] This suggests a distinction between curiosity within and curiosity beyond, which, in turn, indicates that some pursuits of knowledge can be satisfied with the surface wonderment whereas others unleash desires to know beyond the immediate and the comfortable.

'Blind curiosity', defined by Descartes as a 'lifelong disease' where the search for (and a short-lived excitement at) novelty supersedes the desire to understand what has become familiar and commonplace.[7] The centuries' old appraisal holds true in today's consumerist economy which proliferates material goods for ephemeral gratification to sustain itself and, in turn, the present design of society. Predictably, when contemplated within the orthodoxy of consumerist logic, sport is a mere entertainment which affords an escape from the routine and a feel-good quality on behalf of someone else's successes.[8] It stimulates curiosities that easily translate to quantifiable indicators of attendance, merchandise sales and consumption of sports media. [9]

Some narrative episodes described and analysed in the preceding chapters align with social enactment of passion and its expression through observable cues of consumption.[10] But, beyond these straightforward explications, undertone storylines emerge. For example, Steph's close following of the footy players' lives requires consumption of sports media, yet the narratives she decodes from the mediated *rise-and-fall* representations of athletic lives build on her own social context and athletic path.[11] In this familiar dialectic of incorporation and resistance, Steph's care for the

[6] Harvey, 'Neo-Liberalism as Creative Destruction.'
[7] Descartes, *Passions of the Soul,* 227.
[8] Wann and James, *Sport Fans*.
[9] Seong Hee Park, Daniel F. Mahony and T. Christopher Greenwell, 'The Measurement of Sport Fan Exploratory Curiosity,' *Journal of Sport Management* 24, no. 4 (2010): 434–55.
[10] Social enactment dynamic and how it applies to sports fandom scenarios are discussed at length in Chapter 2.
[11] Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*, 15-28; on the *rise-and-fall* representation of athletic lives see Whannel, *Media Sport Stars*.

players' health and their upward career trajectories supplant team loyalty and capitalist logic of sound financial management.[12]

Steph's excitement over non-traditional paths to athletic glory, as observed in her interpretation of James Podsiadly's career, aligns with her own storyline and its sense-making, but it does not disturb the encoding of capitalist aspiration and sporting rivalries. However, when I meet Steph in the late 2018 for the final check-in before the thesis submission, she shares her disappointments with the Geelong Cats – the club that a couple of years back stood on an unwavering moral footing with their socially progressive initiatives in the eyes of the collaborator. Steph says she is 'uncharacteristically grumpy with [her] club' as she goes on to express her deep frustration with the way the Cats' management acted towards Daniel Menzel – a player that had gone through four knee reconstructions. The club did not offer to extend his contract after the forward was finally able to play the entirety of the AFL season and avoid serious injuries.[13] In this instance, Steph's story not only diverges from its usual alignment with the story of the club, as she celebrates Menzel's new contract with the rival Sydney Swans, but also tacitly questions the monetary priorities of footy storytelling.

Besides fluctuations in loyalty that redefine self-interest or go beyond it, this episode embodies the incorporation/resistance paradigm as fans' interpretative creativity either peripheral or deliberately dissenting to the consumerist economy continue to participate and sustain that same economy.[14] Yet, this only reiterates the necessity to interrogate this relationship beyond such obvious *cul-de-sac* arguments, which reasonably highlight the omnipresence of market logic in people's everyday lives.[15]

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Daniel Menzel – an Australian Rules player, who had played for Geelong Cats since 2009, but following his injuries and four knee reconstructions, the club let him go. Daniel Menzel is now signed with the Sydney Swan.
[14] Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*; Hastie, 'The Epistemological Stakes.' Hills, *Fan Cultures*;
[15] Monika A. Bauer et al., 'Cuing Consumerism: Situational Materialism Undermines Personal and Social Well-Being,' *Psychological Science* 23, no. 5 (2012): 517–23.

The psychology underpinning the consumerist logic in enhancing sports fans' curiosity rests on its perceptual and epistemic expressions. (The latter is entwined with pursuit of knowledge surrounding the object of interest whereas sensory stimuli instigate the former.[16]) Contextualising psychological events within social realities, curious expressions of curiosity are subsumed by the category of socialisation. As noted previously, socialisation encompasses a variety of prefigured storylines either cultural or familial. Yet, its everyday expressions are far more diverse and personally tailored.[17]

Zoha's narrative illuminated the plasticity of both curiosity and its social and cultural conditioning. Zoha, a daughter of Bangladeshi migrants, found cultural references to cricket in her parents' identity less relatable than the expressions of the game she observed in her most immediate environment. Indeed, in many ways Zoha was socially embedded in the practices of cricket spectatorship, but instead of yielding to these roots, she resisted them until a moment of epistemic curiosity facilitated an episode of learning and a submission to her social and cultural environment.

> It was me and my dad at the dining table. So, I watched a match with him, and the umpire does this [gesture with her hand] or this [a different hand gesture]. I don't know. And, I am like: 'I think he wants a box' …. and my dad is just cracking up and laughing. He was like: 'He doesn't want a box, he wants a third umpire'. And, I'm like: 'That was a third umpire?' And, he is like: 'Sit down my daughter.' Literally. He made my brother put on one of the older matches and he's like: '… there's eleven players of the opposing team on, there's two batsmen from the other team on. We're the batting team.' And, he was explaining to me how there are different ways to score, like you can actually physically run to make a run.

The eventual surrender, however, happened on Zoha's terms where her modes of spectating and following cricket markedly diverged from her parents' cultural and political belongings. While Zoha's narrative facilitated a dislike of partisanship and, as a result, exemplified how people's lives and prior experiences shape their fandom practices; her cricket-related curiosity remained sporadic and situational.

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[16] Jordan A. Litman and Charles D. Spielberger, 'Measuring Epistemic Curiosity and Its Diversive and Specific Components,' *Journal of Personality Assessment* 80, no. 1 (2003): 75–86.
[17] Crawford, *Consuming Sport*.

The sporting interests of Andrea, Mike and Steph were all sparked by their different family traditions. Yet, those traditions not only encapsulated divergent practices of spectating and personally meaningful cues but had particular narrative emplotments that either accelerated or diluted further development of their passions. For example, when referring to Australia's successful Ashes campaign of 1967/68, Mike talks about being positively reinforced for following cricket.[18] Equally, Andrea's passion for association football was shielded by the culturally favourable school environment and then later endured in the face of adverse top-down exertion of power.[19]

The surrounding culture and its economy impacted John and Billy's passions more than their immediate families did.[20] John spent the early years of his life surrounded by the working-class culture of English football.[21] As that culture was capitalising on the celebrity appeal of George Best, the six-year-old John was captivated by the player's skills and his star-quality, soon developing an enduring connection with the club Best played for. The lack of stability in John's surroundings, owing to his family's move to Australia, implicated him in a different cultural economy where association football was neither preferable nor an acceptable choice of sport. Under these circumstances John's agency and his semiotic productivity was submerged in a task of cultural assimilation and a performative social identity construction.[22] John remembers simply wanting to fit in, hence taking after his school friends in surfing and supporting St Kilda FC in the VFL:

> So, somebody liked surfing, I went surfing. Somebody liked St Kilda, I went to St Kilda. Just so I could be friends, you know. And so, nobody at that school, at that time, liked soccer, they all said: 'Oh, wogball, we don't like wogball!' So, I just thought: right, I'll keep that quiet.

Following a long period of enacted assimilation, John finally got reunited with United when he was caught by an immediate spur of curiosity to watch Manchester United

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[18] Mandle, 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism.'
[19] This is a reference to the top-down restructuring of Australian soccer, discussed in Chapter 7.
[20] On cultural community see Fiske, 'Cultural Economy of Fandom.'
[21] On working class culture of English football see Charles Critcher, *Football since the War: Study in Social Change and Popular* (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1975).
[22] Fiske, 'Cultural Economy of Fandom.' Osborne and Coombs, 'Performative Sport Fandom.'

play among other Melbourne-based fans. This experience completely reshaped John's soccer allegiance and had inadvertent effects on his day-to-day life by not only fulfilling the old longing and fostering a cultural enclave in which his passion could belong, but also by giving him a platform to do fulfilling charity work.

As evidenced by John's narrative, sporting allegiances are able to endow fans with new curiosities, which encourage them to explore previously unheard histories, unknown places or unexercised skills. This motif of fandom as a platform for new learning experiences was relevant to most narratives. Mike suggested the notion of reinforcements in referring to episodes that gave impetus to learn more about cricket and follow the game more and more ardently, but it is equally notable that cricket became a reinforcement in its own right. It was through cricket that Mike developed a skill of writing and an interest in history.[23] Similarly, the opportunities to travel provided by the game shaped the interdependence between the two.

> I felt good about myself and the game … and enjoying it. So, you know, you look for more, you look for more pleasure, I guess. So, that's what those things did, they sort of pushed me on. And then, when I started traveling, that was great, too. That was great fun, too. So, I really enjoy traveling, and then I incorporate cricket into that.

In some narratives such epistemic curiosities put forth by sport extended beyond self-interest, including John's charity work and the awareness of the broader social and cultural issues apparent in the narratives of Andrea and Billy. While Andrea's political awareness was not instilled by association football, her active involvement in the Australian expressions of the world game certainly strengthened that alertness as well as offered opportunities for it to be channelled. Besides being a political outlet, association football also presented critical moments in shining the light on political and cultural narratives that she defied.

Similar questioning is exhibited through an amalgam of perceptual and epistemic curiosity in Billy's childhood memories of racism that Aboriginal VFL players were so often subjected to:

[23] Mike's interest in history might have been more symbiotic in its development, see Chapter 5.

> I don't really remember seeing too much of it, but from memory: we were standing on the Southern Wing of Victoria Park, which was a terrace … I could remember hearing all these people getting really, really angry and, I guess, abusive towards North Melbourne players … Basically the crowd was being abusive towards Jim Krakouer and Phil Krakouer, who were probably at their best moments those couple of seasons in the late 80s (mid to the late 80s).

The self-interest of Billy's parents, entwined in the beginnings of the contributor's enduring relationship with footy, did not inform its lasting utility. As Billy remained surrounded by the cultural economy of the AFL throughout his childhood and adolescence, his curiosity grew and subsided due to reasons mostly attributable to his life course and unsavoury developments within the footy culture. But, the bewilderment that the nine-year-old felt at the anger he observed towards Aboriginal footballers stayed with him throughout his fluctuating commitment to footy.

Feeling uncomfortable in his country of birth but equally displaced while living overseas, Billy's pre-set political belonging to the nation of colonial past and present has propelled him to question – and actively dialogue with – his geographical, social and emotional situatedness. On his return to Melbourne in 2016, the collaborator decided to tackle this discomfort and perplexity head on. In the efforts to decolonise his reading of Australia, footy has been a starting point, not only because the racist abuse he observed as a puzzled nine-year-old was formative but also due to the cultural significance of the game in the Indigenous communities.[24]

Andrea, John and Mike shared an intent to pass on their love of their respective sports to their children either by way of family tradition or specific club loyalty. In contrast, Billy never expressed similar desire for his daughter, instead he wanted her to develop an honest understanding of what Australia is, an understanding which would not divorce the present reality from the nation's history. The symbiosis of past and present is intense in Billy's narrative and in his enacted social responsibility.[25] The

[24] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*; Greg Gardiner, '"Black" Bodies – "White" Codes: Indigenous Footballers, Racism and the Australian Football League's Racial and Religious Vilification Code,' in *Sport and Postcolonialism*, ed. John Bale and Mike Cronin (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 29–44.
[25] On autobiographical 'I' and its positionality in relation to history and narrative see Gilmore, *Autobiographics*, 86.

beginnings of this pursuit are embedded in the childhood memories of the observed injustices at the footy, which demonstrate the ability of sport to offer critical openings to the broader social ills.[26]

The idiosyncratic value of Billy's socially responsible enactment transcends widely celebrated and geopolitically co-opted social utilities of sport that only work to reproduce historical and emerging empires.[27] Billy's lived reality of footy is not a platitude of equality, but an everyday effort to problematise his Whiteness on the colonised land.[28] More broadly, such meaningful access to sport is afforded by the preceding and succeeding curiosities. From that initial spur to tune in (trapped in self-interest and social utility) to a commitment which prompted further epistemic probing and, at times, transcended consumerist logic even if it remained resident in the consumerist economy.

In some cases, epistemic probing, which facilitates dissenting interpretations of mediated sports, is neither extensive nor far-flung and assembles closely around one's sporting allegiance or an interest in a particular sport.[29] Nevertheless, they all engender a certain amount of care, either momentary or prolonged, beyond hedonistic self-interest. For example, Steph's support for the players' ascendant career trajectories may not be oriented toward structural change, yet it exhibits personal sensitivity and care towards others that are not bound with celebrity idolatry or a reflex to socially enact a passion for sport, nor are they informed by the logic of consumer choice which should be at work in fandom as a paradigm of consumption.[30]

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[26] Daniel Burdsey and Sean Gorman, 'When Adam Met Rio: Conversations on Racism, Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism in the Australian Football League and English Premier League,' *Sport in Society* 18, no. 5 (2015): 577–87.
[27] These utilities have been identified in Chapter 1 in relation to Sport for Development programs.
[28] 'Platitude of equality' is an allusion to the issues surrounding Sport for Development programs discussed in Chapter 1.
[29] Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*, 15-9.
[30] Barry Smart, *Consumer Society: Critical Issues and Environmental Consequences* (London: Sage, 2010), 30-59.

Nick Hornby pointed to the immateriality of spectator sport as a consumer product, which, to him, arose from the unquestionable and, by any measure of consumer society, unfounded loyalty toward his failing football team.[31] Similar – both prolonged and episodic – streaks of loyalty were exhibited by Andrea, Billy, John and Steph, but, more notably, the orthodoxies of consumer society were questioned in other ways. Billy and Steph's transfigurations of their curiosities are a case in point.

Consumer choice is the cornerstone of the neoliberal project, which redefined human freedom through availability of wide-ranging choices in a marketplace.[32] The appeal to seemingly higher values of humanity afforded sustenance to the project and its resultant 'political economy of insecurity'.[33] In this space, self-interest and lifestyle aspirations replaced collective concerns and freedom to aspire beyond deliberately obscured constraints of the free market and consumer choice. I started this section by identifying curiosity as a critical relational aptitude to reality – the link between the self and the world. In that vein and given the rising – although continually obscured – debates around the sustainability of the current political economy, an interest should be taken in how intellectual and emotional curiosities of sports fans operate outside of this logic while still being contrived by its materially erected systems of commercialised and commodified sports.[34]

The dialectical positionality corresponds to the incorporation/resistance paradigm, which is commonly applied to understanding the sense-making of media fans.[35] But, beyond the sense-making and among the stories of the six sports fans, episodes of the lived dialectic traversed both mediated and immediate experiences of sport. The readings of these experiences and the dominant narratives underpinning them were not only reinterpreted but also evoked concern and care for others, uncharacteristic to the freedom and self-interest espoused by today's political economy. The

[31] Hornby, *Fever Pitch*, 142.
[32] Smart, *Consumer Society*, 56–9.
[33] Ibid., 44.
[34] The fracturing of economic and political consensus in the US and the UK are discussed in Jan Rehmann, 'Bernie Sanders and the Hegemonic Crisis of Neoliberal Capitalism: What Next?,' *Socialism and Democracy* 30, no. 3 (2016): 1–11; Will Jennings and Martin Lodge, 'Brexit, the Tides and Canute: The Fracturing Politics of the British State,' *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2018.1478876.
[35] Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*.

polysemy of sport afforded the ability to splinter the stalemate of neoliberal freedom. But, fulfilling this affordance, still, required creativity.

Creativity: Freeing and Limiting

Lev Vygotsky, a twentieth century psychological theorist, noted that despite the popular notion of creativity being only afforded selectively to very few talented persons, such as artists, scientists or inventors, its essential nucleus is a simple combinatorial activity both mundane and essential to human agents.[36] On the surface it may seem that Vygotsky's observation has become a lived reality, as the demand to be creative regardless of the professional endeavour has never been more pervasive. Indeed, Richard Florida in his ode to the creative class claimed that human creativity is the single most significant driver of the social change since the 1950s, incidentally allying with Vygotsky in the creative exceptionalism of humans.[37]

The entrepreneurial proposition that 'we're all creatives now' is superficially empowering, but it hides the underhand ways in which creativity is used to legitimise the 'economy of insecurity'.[38] As this status quo lives on, failures in the community sector are attributed to a creativity void as opposed to precipitous funding reductions.[39] In the same vein as a lack of flexibility and readiness for casualised workforce is paralleled to the absence of creative thinking. The proliferation of such discursive constructions across the sectors of the economy and the layers of the society obscure the nucleus of both creativity and neoliberalism.[40]

In this niche, creativity is reduced to an entrepreneurial resource, safeguarding the longevity of consumerist economy, and is reductively applied to fill the void of

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[36] Lev S. Vygotsky, 'Imagination and Creativity in the Adolescent,' *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2004): 11.
[37] Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2012).
[38] Nadine M. Kalin, 'We're All Creatives Now: Democratised Creativity and Education,' *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 13, no. 2 (2016): 32–45.
[39] Oli Mould, *Against Creativity* (London: Verso, 2018).
[40] Rodney Jones, 'Introduction: Discourse and Creativity,' in *Discourse and Creativity*, ed. Rodney Jones (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 1.

meaning and purpose apparent in many industries, which lack utility other than economic growth.[41] The purposeless reality of some these commercial spheres is masked with arts-based creativity training and work-place wellness initiatives respectively unleashing innovation in the ennui of middle management and deferring the worries of overwork.[42]

Of course, these dynamics do not bypass the juggernaut of the sports industry and all of its subsidiaries, but the kernel of the competitive sports remains both intact and perceptible. Layers of repetitive chatter and technological superfluousness coat over colliding bodies and uncomfortable exposure of human vulnerabilities. The excesses of mediation and commerce enclose sport into the consumption paradigm while simultaneously constructing and inflating its cultural significance.[43] While some derive meaning from these excesses of neoliberal ingenuity and business acumen, others scour the layers of chatter and mediation to discover deliberately unreasoned nature of play that underpins the spontaneous and fragile creativity of sport.[44]

In play, creativity is everywhere: in the order it invents, the spontaneity it enables and creative imagination it unleashes.[45] Johan Huizinga noted that similarities in poetry and play are not mere coincidences of form and style, but once again are produced by the essentially ludic quality which underpins them both.[46] Thus, the norms and rules of poetry are compared to the conditions of games: confined to a particular time and place yet outside of necessity.[47] Order and chaos, also, meet in children's play where imagination and rules dialogue in fulfilling otherwise faraway

[41] Trent Cruz, 'Creative Management: Disciplining the Neoliberal Worker' (PhD diss., The University of Western Ontario, 2016); similar themes emerged in the discourses on self-care in the academic workforce, see Siobhan O'Dwyer, Sarah Pinto and Sharon McDonough, 'Self-care for Academics: A Poetic Invitation to Reflect and Resist,' *Reflective Practice* 19, no. 2. (2018):243–9.
[42] Ibid.
[43] E.g., Walsh, '"Lest We Forget."'
[44] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 132.

desires, that way laying the ground for more concrete future expressions of creativity.[48]

Sport, like creativity, is intertwined with desire-driven fantasies that renovate throughout the life cycle.[49] Children often dream of becoming athletes or being like sport stars. These fantasies, then, crystallise in adolescence by either transforming into future ambitions or reverting to secretive imaginings. For example, as Steph's desires grew to athletic goals, John's fantasies of being like George Best did not progress beyond a daydream. In the end, both life courses enlisted sport as a site of childhood, retaining its ludic foundation and a sense-making grounded in their 'desire-driven fantasies' expressed through vicarious athletic lives.[50]

Beyond the obvious imaginings of sporting triumphs fulfilled by those we follow, sport produces (or is enveloped in) a myriad of less definitive longings. A side-by-side comparison of Billy and Steph's narratives reveals contrasting desires surrounding the AFL and its crowded commercial spaces: as Billy imagines a possibility of a different league, Steph by and large accepts the League's status quo reality and its excessively Americanised and *McDonaldised* culture.[51] In this instance, the disparity in the imaginative inclination can be attributed to the availability of past experiences: Billy builds on his overseas encounters and reminiscences of the VFL fan activism whereas Steph's first memory of football is underpinned by the Fitzroy's surrender to the League.[52]

This simplistic comparison draws a link between the past and the future – central to the creative tension between reproduction and production.[53] While reproduction merely simulates accessible reality, production builds imaginatively on the past to

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[48] Vera John-Steiner, M. Cathrene Connery and Ana Marjanovic-Shane, 'Dancing with the Muses: An Cultural-Historical Approach to Play, Meaning Making and Creativity,' in *Vygotsky and Creativity: A Cultural-Historical Approach to Play, Meaning Making and the Arts* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 3–16.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 13.
[51] Ritzer, *McDonaldisation*. On Americanisation as a broader trend of Australian culture see Cashman, *Paradise of Sport,* 122-5.
[52] On Footscray Fightback see Nicholson and Stewart, 'Role of Sport Journalists.'
[53] Vygotsky, 'Imagination and Creativity.'

realise newness for the future.[54] This once again highlights critical flaws in the recent rise of everyday creativity, discussed above. When creativity is enlisted to sustain the dominant paradigm, it is deliberately confined to original reproduction of its control.[55]

Avoiding excessive psychologisation and celebration of the past – which is equally problematic as the present – the contributors' everyday creativity is apparent in small acts of resistance against the dominant cultural narratives of their respective sports, because it is in those opposing acts that the possibilities for the future are reimagined.[56] While Andrea's continuous commitment to South Melbourne even in the face of the new soccer league might be seen as devoid of creative work in its apparent preoccupation with the past, her loyalty to South Melbourne ought to be considered not in relation to the past and the present, but instead through a tension between the dominant and the marginal.

Vygotsky continuously employs a dialectic between imagination and reality to explain the mechanics of creative activity whereby unrelated elements of experiences embedded in reality are combined to design a new object, which once realised becomes an unquestionable element of reality.[57] This definition of creativity in and of itself demonstrates the changeability of reality and its latent sensitivity to context. Building on accounts of creativity produced within fan studies, creative production in its ideological verve tends to be subversive, transforming the dialectic of the past and the future into the tension between the dominant and the marginal.[58] This creativity affords a genuine understanding of social conditions, but its capacity to chart the path for social change is dubious.

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Mould, *Against Creativity*.
[56] On everyday creativity see Monika E. Reuter, *Creativity – A Sociological Approach* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[57] Vygotsky, 'Imagination and Creativity.'
[58] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1979).

Billy's narrative draws the contours of potential change both in football structures and in society at large. Although his involvement in Australian rules football is more reflective than some of the other five biographies, this ambitious lineage of transformation is still relevant across the board in observing productive creativities other than immediate choreographies of specific subcultural groups or content production which recycles wholesale commercial offerings.[59]

Although Zoha consistently equated sport to being 'a vacation away from reality', it was also evident that diversionary activity was underpinned by a symbiotic relationship between her lived reality and a possibility for change: at times in sport she observed a familiar inability to work collaboratively whereas in other instances she reflected on athletes ability to put cultural differences aside on the field of play. Similar instances of lateral and imaginative thinking – the cornerstone of creativity – were evident in Mike's narrative, ranging from his sensitivity to the on-field appearances to the historical narratives surrounding the game. Yet, partisanship evident in Mike's chapter stands in a stark contrast to Zoha's distain for traditional collectivities. Although the lateral alignment of historical narrative and cricket is exemplified by Zoha's father and hence familiar to the contributor, her volition divorces the two.[60]

Comparable devices are employed by Steph in transposing the story of the Geelong Cats to her personal narrative and decoding the players' biographies in the context of her own unfulfilled athletic ambition:

> I just remember thinking: imagine being him and thinking that the opportunity [has] passed you … cause there are so many people who would like to play at that level and just like never got there, and he was probably thinking: that's me, I'm just one of those people who like never got there. And then, suddenly he's just like out on the field with like, you know, all of these elite players. I just remember thinking that must be the most amazing feeling.[61]

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[59] For an example of research on football subcultures and their immediately creative expressions see Mark Doidge, *Football Italia: Italian Football in an Age of Globalisation* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); on content production see Henry Jenkins, 'Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching,' *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5, no. 2 (1988): 85–107.

[60] Liberation War is also known as the Bangladesh Liberation War – the conflict in 1971 that was initiated by the Bengali nationalists in a wake of the genocide in Bangladesh.

[61] James Podsiadly's career is discussed in Chapter 4.

For all three – Mike, Zoha and Steph – these instances of lateral thinking are predicated on the deeply contemplative spectating practices underpinned by the close following of the on-field events. In these analytical modes of spectating Mike and Steph build on the prior experiences of playing their respective games of cricket and Australian Rules, and Zoha contemplates the on-field action through her prior personal experiences of non-sporting pedigree.

The continuity between sports spectatorship and other day-to-day realities is taken a step further in Mike's fandom trajectory, where lateral thinking is employed in the material production of a written text. The contributor's use of cricket knowledge in cultural production is comparable to the textual productivity of media fans.[62] Yet, what is interesting about Mike's epistemic pursuit and its countenance of continuity is that, unlike Andrea's desire to sustain a family tradition and Zoha's somewhat unsuspecting sustaining of familial and cultural ties with cricket, it is directly relevant to a professional career.

> Thought I could cut back teaching not leave, but they did not ask. So, that's the only time I thought I could have this [writing] over teaching, and I still see that wasn't a heap of money, was it? So, I pondered with an idea going full-time journalist, but … not having to know where to start …

Owning to the 'creative revolution', the relationship between work and leisure is changing.[63] In that vein, Mike's narrative produces a curious meeting point of the two. His desire to turn the pastime of cricket not only into a more structured epistemic exercise but also into a paid job actively questions the capitalist idea of leisure as entwined with notions of release and escape.[64] While the latter notions are discursively employed by Mike at various stages of our dialogic collaboration, his lived reality of cricket points to a deviating conception of leisure.

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[62] Fiske, 'Cultural Economy of Fandom.'; Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences,* 148.
[63] Florida, *Rise of the Creative Class*.
[64] Chris Rojek, *Decentring Leisure: Rethinking Leisure Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

Garry Crawford's fan career model discursively aligns with Mike's lived experience.[65] Yet, its offer to interrogate sports fans' identities and their fandom trajectories through stages that emulate professional career progression is predicated on Abercrombie and Longhurst's fan continuum, which inadvertently infers a binary between consumption and production.[66] I do not suppose that this binary is necessarily morally dual as argued by Matt Hills, but it obfuscates everyday negotiations of creative outputs and social interactions relating to fandom.[67]

Perhaps, by default as opposed to critical consideration Crawford's model is not anchored in anything other than a transition from a casual and leisurely engagement in sport to a more structured career-like endeavour that way obscuring its theoretical call for flexibility and plurality.[68] It generally aligns with career modelling of leisure activities that seeks to introduce structure in understanding progressions and lack thereof in recreational endeavours.[69] Narrative description, however, illuminates both the movement across structures and the diversity in career-like commitments.

The narrativity of Mike's story, for example, reveals that a shift from epistemic curiosity in cricket to paid freelance assignments was not so much a progression in his fandom trajectory but rather an attempt to replace his professional career as a teacher with a job that would accommodate his passion for cricket.

> As with many guys with jobs that was a job. [It] enabled me to feed my family and house my family … there were aspects that I liked: reading out stories and putting up funny voices and sitting there for half an hour and they'll look at you. That was really nice, but it became a choir. So, you know, I'm lucky … but it was an effort to be a teacher …

Although John never once suggests that he dislikes his job, his imaginings of a new career in the *Make-a-Wish* foundation align with Mike's search for something different, a supplementary or alternative activity to his teaching career. Both men

[65] Crawford, 'Career of the Sport Supporter.'
[66] Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences,* 148.
[67] Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 29.
[68] Crawford, *Consuming Sport*.
[69] Robert A. Stebbins, *Careers in Serious Leisure: From Dabbler to Devotee in Search of Fulfilment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

throughout our conversations disclose creative and enjoyable aspects of their professional careers. For Mike, as indicated above, it was about being in front of pupils: 'reading out stories and putting up funny voices'; while John considers historical reflections, he, at times, engages with in his day job:

> I am a solid plasterer. So, I do restoration work, part of my psychic is to think about how those plasterers plastered the wall 150 years ago: where did they get the materials, what was available. You know, all those sorts of things that I can replicate …

Taken out of context, it is easy to implicate these episodes in career trajectories or other continuums and, in turn, analyse them with the tacit work/leisure distinction. Besides the biographical setting, alignments of – and tensions between – leisure and work should be unpacked in their contextual sensitivities. Semantically both Mike and John engage in capitalist separation of work and leisure although discursively and biographically they question its rigidity.[70] The ambiguity arising in discourse is not centred on the 'rise of the creative class' and its celebration of professional incursions in leisure, rather it enters fan biographies via creative deficits and impulses.

While career model reproduces both the leisure/work distinction and the neoliberal convergence of the two, it does not interrogate their confluence and auxiliary interactivities. As work and leisure lose their structural and lived distinctiveness, creative impulses and deficits need to be considered in their contextual sensitivities, both biographical and structural. Thus, there is then scope to think about sports fandom in relation to the imposition and the undoing of that distinction and their lived consequences.

Communion: Longing and Belonging

The formation of the self is both unending and socially conditioned. A person is not merely a building block of society as the self is inherently social. The façade and the

[70] Chris Rojek, *Capitalism and Leisure Theory* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985).

core of who one is are not only continuously shaped by self-identification with surrounding subjects and objects and classifications attributed by others, they are also informed and formed by the immediate ties and social interactions with family, friends, acquaintances and strangers.[71] In other words, the self is only a means to denote a continually evolving social formation. This formation, known as a relational self in the sociology of personal life and other intersecting fields, fundamentally rejects the rigid boundary between the self and society.

The relational self also reinvents the dichotomy of agency and communion underpinning numerous psychological frameworks in questioning availability of agency in the absence of communion.[72] This does not erase agency as the human volition to choose, instead it highlights that agency can only be fulfilled in communion. Similarly, it does not imply that the only expression of the self is that of social identity, but rather that to have an identity means to live in a society.[73] The fundamental difference between the two is that social identity in its macro theoretical pedigree is embedded in group membership diverting from the relational edifice of the society itself.[74]

It has long been since suggested that following a sports team can offer fans an extension to their identity.[75] The countenance of this proposition is social identity via the 'imagined communities' and traditional collectivities.[76] The permanence and uniformity implicated in group membership, however, bypass the diversity in which people relate to their supported teams and their totems and, equally, neglect the multidimensionality and changeability of fandom.[77] This view is grounded in separateness of the self and the society as opposed to their unremitting connectivity.[78]

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[71] Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); Smart, *Personal Life*.
[72] Andrea E. Abele and Bogdan Wojciszke, 'Introduction: The Big Two of Agency and Communion as an Overarching Framework in Psychology,' in *Agency and Communion in Social Psychology*, ed. Andrea E. Abele and Bogdan Wojciszke (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 1-12.
[73] Tajfel, 'Social Categorisation, Social Identity and Social Comparison.'
[74] May, *Connecting Self to Society*, 5.
[75] Sandvoss, *Game of Two Halves*.
[76] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Tajfel, 'Social Categorisation, Social Identity and Social Comparison.'
[77] Some of this diversity is shown in Cash and Damousi, *Footy Passions*.
[78] May, *Connecting Self to Society*.

The six narratives demonstrate volatility and adaptability of sports fans' identifications that change, evolve and cease to exist amidst unfolding life paths and evolving circumstances. Their identifications both with their teams and with their sports were rooted in something and yet able to travel along changing routes. The routes were not one-way trails fortified by social enactment and social comparison, but instead they meandered along everyday sceneries dynamically unwinding in chorus with changing social and cultural landscapes.[79]

This implicit juxtaposition between origins and paths builds on Stuart Hall's proposition to scrutinise people's routes as opposed to their roots:

> Instead of asking what are people's roots, we ought to think about what are their routes, the different points by which they have come to be now … These routes hold us in places, but what they don't do is hold us in the same place.[80]

To elaborate on Hall's eloquent proposition: routes do not replace roots as the latter remains the stops along the former; however, routing a path as opposed rooting it in place affords a lived plurality of contesting group memberships and tailor-made alliances. People's material and immaterial life paths either confront their lived contradictions or gloss them over with ostensible cultural congruence.

This is particularly apparent in Mike's narrative where popular images of Australian national identity emerge in the contributor's interpretations of cricket steadily aligning with well-documented Australian 'cultural cringe'.[81] Symbols and narratives of the former Empire are evoked without much nuance and their situated complexities of power imbalances, historical and continuing injustices. The stability that has been afforded to Mike permeates his passion for cricket where the past and its symbols are safely reproduced.

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[79] Tajfel, 'Social Categorisation, Social Identity and Social Comparison'; McAdams, *Personality Development*.
[80] Stuart Hall, 'A Conversation with Stuart Hall,' *The Journal of the International Institute* 7, no. 1 (1999), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.4750978.0007.107.
[81] Phillips, *Cultural Cringe*.

The ease of Mike's material path affords its grounding in essentialist categories: '[I am] a guy, who lives in Geelong with a wife, who has two kids from Victoria, Australia' – the contributor rationalises his identity. The ability to easily essentialise one's path produces an unspoken nostalgia where comfortable sporting narratives reside.[82] This disposition is also able to claim a cultural high ground beside commercially driven sporting innovation, which duplicitously co-opts diversity.[83] Although cultural concreteness is not necessarily challenged for its own merits, it continues to interact with the nebulousness of lived identity. In this space, Mike as an agent in communion ruthlessly questions media narratives surrounding the ball-tampering scandal that tarnished the presumed reputation of Australian cricket in 2018, showing that despite the unbreakable sensory belonging to the experience of cricket and its cultural edifice, intellectual belonging can be disturbed if not contested.[84]

> I think, we went overboard in the reaction to it … I'm just like: hang on, they've done something wrong here and they deserve the kick up their back side and some kind of penalties … Within a week there was a photograph, I think, in *The Age* of Australian soldiers in Afghanistan with a Nazi flag on their vehicle.[85] And, I know, being in the war zone is different to sport, but I just thought: how can people be so outraged at sandpaper on a cricket ball and yet they tolerate [this]?

Despite more complicated life routes than those of Mike, some rootedness to grand narratives is immediately noticeable in the stories of Andrea and John. Andrea's strong bicultural identity struggles within the self-proclaimed multicultural nation, but in its bipolarity is unavoidably fixated on the roots. While John's Englishness allows him to have a more comfortable cultural alignment than Andrea's despite his first-generation migrant status; it also offers a device to understand and articulate his positionality to his place. That said, the grassroots multiculturalism of the Manchester United Supporters' Club John founded transposes the roots of his passion

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[82] Scalmer, 'Cricket, Imperialism and Class Domination.'
[83] Roland Robertson, 'After Nostalgia? Wilful Nostalgia and the Phases of Globalisation,' in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 45–61.
[84] The Sandpaper Gate – the ball tampering scandal involving senior members of Australia's Test cricket squad. On Sensory belonging see May, *Connecting Self to Society*, 131.
[85] Dan Oakes, 'Australian Soldiers Flew Nazi Swastika Flag from Vehicle in Afghanistan; PM Says Diggers' Actions "Absolutely Wrong",' *ABC News*, June 15, 2018, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-14/photo-shows-nazi-flag-flown-over-australian-army-vehicle/9859618.

for United. Owning to the United's global appeal and hyper-commodified expressions, these roots are further transposed by the club's cultural dislocation.[86] In the place of cultural symbols, commodity emerges as an object to coalesce around and construct a social identity. Yet, this process is multidimensional.[87]

Beyond these alignments with – and interruptions to – grand narratives, the search for belonging is apparent. I have deferred to the theoretically soft notion of belonging in its variant conceptions across the life narratives of fans. When using a shorthand of 'feeling at home', I implied belonging to be a feeling of comfort and safety.[88] In this sense, home is a metaphor and not necessarily a fixed geography – it is a social and emotional location of ease.[89] The location that can be both situational and prolonged, granted and outlawed. To that end, the six narratives gave a tacit sense of each collaborator's easy or uneasy belongings, which signified cultural dislocation as one of the key battlegrounds of belonging that evidently permeated sports fandom experiences, too. This, in turn, verified that, while ubiquitous, belonging can only be grasped in absence and contestation.[90]

Steph's life trajectory does not involve any fundamental changes in relation to culture or geographical location, yet the dislocation of the Fitzroy Lions experienced as a six-year-old formed the key tenets of her subsequent and continuing allegiance with the Geelong Cats. The Lions' Melbourne departure disturbed the ease of Steph's situational belonging in the elusive community of Fitzroy fans and bookmarked it as a feeling worth pursuing, which later foresaw the Cats' strong sense of locale as a sustaining emotional pillar of her allegiance.[91]

> I guess it's just being able to know that I can go down to Geelong and just feel like be[ing] completely among my people like anytime I want to. I still feel like there is a kind of community feeling that's attached to Geelong in a way that's not attached to other Melbourne teams. Especially, emphasised by, you know, when we won our first Premiership in like how many years – decades and decades and decades – the whole town was like painted in blue and white, every shop front had like a billion of stickers

[86] Walsh and Giulianotti, *This Sporting Mammon*.
[87] Crawford, *Consuming Sport*.
[88] May, *Connecting Self to Society*.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Bauman, *Community*.

> outside and like, you know, every single business in Geelong and home in Geelong completely behind their team … whereas … you saw a little bit of that with like Footscray and the western suburbs, but I don't think it's to the same level of like real small community involvement you get in Geelong.

Australian football would have been a part of Steph's life without these emotional connections. Living in Melbourne and her general fondness of sport would have facilitated some interest in the game. However, the story of Fitzroy, the presence of family tradition and sustaining moments of emotional association (to borrow Billy's notion) propose a subliminal narrative of connection, which may be as elusive as that totemically evoked community of Fitzroy, and yet its offer of emotional belonging is settling.

Similar to Steph, decisive shift in Billy's allegiance was in search for belonging as an emotionally settling social location.[92] The contributor chose Richmond due to the team's sustenance of the place-people nexus which allowed him to generate experiences and memories socially congruent to the place and the people surrounding him.[93] In this social and material location, every day can be constructed by his support for the Tigers: running into the Club's President, seeing the squad train while cycling past the Punt Road Oval or remembering the victorious 2017 Premiership run while enjoying coffee and a friendly conversation in front of the Dustin Martin Mural.[94] The foreignness that surrounded Billy's childhood allegiance with the Essendon Bombers not only contrasts with the current availability of everyday belonging via the Tigers but plays a part in its construction and value.

Billy's childhood foreignness is relatively insignificant to the permanently nomadic identity of Zoha, which is manifested in every part of the contributor's life, including her sporadic following of cricket. In the absence of easily claimable identifications, cricket provides momentarily settling space every time Zoha manages to get at least

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[92] Pfaff-Czarnecka, 'From "Identity" to "Belonging."'
[93] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*; Bale, *Sports Geography*.
[94] Dustin Martin Mural is a mural of Dustin Martin, the Richmond Tigers player. The Mural celebrates the Tigers' 2017 AFL Premiership.

some of her spread-out family together to watch 'the English game'. That immediate sense of togetherness is not a large-scale liminal break of communitas, but rather a feeling of familiarity – a sense of being 'at home'.[95] Given the harrowing particularities of Zoha's life story, this sense is an acutely reassuring feeling of safety able to cut through the permanence of her personal sense of not belonging, hence worthy of being recaptured.[96]

Belonging is underpinned by the pursuit of attachment.[97] In Zoha's case, neither cricket nor any one particular cricket team provides such an object, but the experience of watching the game among her family and friends conjures memories, connecting her nomadic self to the places and emotional spaces of the past and the present. In Chapter 6, I reflect on Zoha's explicit declaration of not belonging anywhere as a permanence of her longing. Longing that, in her case, is not only integral to her potential belongings but *is* her belonging – the everyday practice of taking part in the social interactions in the real time and place.[98] If belonging is a sense of ease within the particular place, time and social reality, the comfort Zoha found in admitting to the permanent state of her longing *is*, indeed, her belonging.

Cricket plays a minor part in this. But, in Zoha's narrative it functions as a device which reveals her emotional relation to the social interactions and provides momentary spaces of unquestioned belonging. By the same token, the peace she has made with not belonging, like the fluctuations seen in the attachments of other contributors, once again questions the possibility and availability of stable belongings.

Instead of unwavering loyalty and steady identities, desires and emotional connections transpire in a form of situational, changing and emotionally volatile identifications.[99] Even along the most stable of trajectories, such as Steph's

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[95] Yuval-Davis, *Politics of Belonging*.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (London: Routledge, 1996).
[98] Suzan Ilcan, *Longing in Belonging: The Cultural Politics of Settlement* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002).
[99] Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?'; Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging.'

allegiance with the Geelong Cats, belonging, at times, diverges from an unconditional attachment and becomes implicated in the moral currency.

Steph's moral loyalty to the player, in the case of Daniel Menzel, as opposed to an unquestionable commitment to the club compares to Billy's strong inclination to put his moral framework above the tribal tendencies of sport. Glimpses of that ability to decipher between good and bad without being affected by the instilled affection to your team are also noticeable in Andrea's narrative when she courageously stands up to the fellow South Melbourne fans, whose chants the contributor found morally indefensible. Similar ruptures (at least on an intellectual level) are evident in Mike and John's narratives while Zoha's fandom in its immediate practices is above the normative rules of partisanship. This responsiveness to the unfolding narratives demonstrates that while belonging is sought after, it is not sought after without pre-conditions.

This, and other interruptions, lucidly reveal the interactivity of big and small stories as lived by a person in their authorship of the life story, which is navigated in collaboration with other social actors and amidst shared narratives, including those bestowed from the top and the ones emerging from the bottom. By contextualising human agency in communion with the surrounding narratives, identification with a sports team is observed as an unhelpful reification that obscures the webs of connectedness in which alignments and ruptures occur.[100] In these connections and their changing configurations fandom practices form and transform. These are the connections in which agency aligns or misaligns with narratives of cultures and nations, but also with known social actors, practicalities of life and social conditions.

The collection of six stories does not exhaust the variety of interactivities and connectivities, in which agency enveloped and constructed in everyday social interactions make choices to identify with – and separate from – certain narratives and symbols. Yet, they provide a sufficient catalyst for suggesting that the

[100] Smart, *Personal Life*

parameters of identification continually shift in the ongoing social construction of an agent and an author. In the dialogue between agency and communion, sports fandom emerges as a practice produced and reproduced by diverse circumstances and culturally hybrid experiences, underpinned by structural pressures but equally necessitated by personal life trajectories. The fans are agents in communion, able to make their choices, understand and interrogate obvious issues in sport and society and, in some cases, willing to take steps to confront them.

Therefore, the theoretical softness of belonging emerges as an antidote to the roles and categories that undercut holistic availability of human subject and its inherently social self. The juxtaposition of roots and routes theorise personal fandom paths beyond their alignment to the trajectories of relevant teams. Furthermore, it exposes dynamically shifting availabilities of belonging. Asking who is allowed and who is denied belonging discloses formations of sporting narratives in which the ease of being is granted for some and not afforded to others. It also brings up further political questions around comfortable cultural narratives and safeguarded orthodoxies in relation to the lived encounters with sport.[101]

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This chapter has woven the stories of six sports fans together by placing them within and besides the shared human qualities. It has interrogated how these qualities are exercised in the world of consumerist economy, embedded neoliberalism and make-believe postcolonialism. The meeting points of small and big stories have pointed to intersectional ways to problematise sports fandom that appeal to the possibilities of human subjects as opposed to the dogmatic constraints rooted in the politics of the day.

The joint narrative signalled that the calls to account for sports fandom in the everyday practices and over the life course do not go far enough in innovating

[101] May, *Connecting Self to Society*.

scholarly understandings of the phenomenon. The everyday is significant, but it is often trapped in the cycles and rhythms of the top-down making, residing in the narratives which they uphold while unknowingly suffering from their consequences. Therefore, everyday practices and motivations of sports fans should be discussed while unpacking the lived structural tenors in their dynamic unfolding.

To that end, in this chapter, I brought the six collaborators and their stories together around three intersecting and intersectional themes of curiosity, creativity and communion. As these themes traversed human and political currency, they pointed to divisions between the lives of fans and the embedded doctrine of today: its consumerist logic, duality of work and leisure and supposed individual choice. Placing the interest in sports fandom at the intersection of these competing paradigms affords a re-evaluation of the topic's scholarly utility and future directions.

Conclusion | In Dialogue with Narratives

> If we can simultaneously reconfigure and encounter sports as worthy of care, then our playful and material collisions can become a pivot point for friendships built on solidarity and difference. And then, perhaps, from there, we can find the right material to remake society.
>
> – Matt Hern [1]

The structures of modern spectator sport contrive raw collisions of bodies in their top-down governance, consumerist economy and culture grounded in excess and spectacle. Despite these coercive layers of structure and discourse, people's passions for sport continue to engage in the vicarious on-field drama beyond the immediate spectacle and its consumerist carapace. Ordinary people nurture their extraordinary passions both inside and outside economic imperatives of sport, yet mostly this binary is difficult to sustain as people's passionate engagements are enveloped in – and developed by – both the sport's material reality and its essentially ludic premise.

These passions unfold in synchrony with people's day-to-day lives, their immediate concerns, commitments and relationships. Equally, they surface, grow and live on in the contemporary social and cultural spaces of thorny politics and apocalyptic crises. The first order questions posed as a starting point of this dialogue-based research addressed the why and the how: why do people care about sports and how does this care emerge and develop? The journey along the narratives of six sports fans demonstrated that these questions, for one, cannot be answered in an unanimity of a stringent theoretical framework as fans' motivations not only diverge in principle but are circumstantially formed and situated amidst changing culture and politics.

The dialogically constructed narratives of six sports fans provide detailed accounts of their passions for the teams and sports they follow. The research meta-narratives in their dialogical unfolding illuminate situationally arising motivations and

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[1] Hern, *One Game at a Time,* 132.

circumstantially evolving trajectories of passions. They also signpost cultural and societal properties of people's biographies, their economic entanglements and personal limits. Thus, the narrative emplotments not only illuminate sports passions as part of a person's life but also unmask the conditions in which such passions are viable, necessary and productive.

As argued in Chapter 2, narrative as a research approach actively challenges reification of people's lives into a single category. Following on from this, the narratives of six collaborators (Chapter 3–8) are the 'results' of this study. The narratives carry out a number of tasks: provide a template for studying everyday lives of sports fans where experiences and discourses serve as an entry point, elaborate the image of Melbourne as a sporting city and draw attention to emerging points of departure, which engage in both ethical and political questions.

To that end, the final chapter (Chapter 9) does not devise new theoretical categories to create a general understanding of sports fandom, instead it builds on the junctures of sport and political economy discussed in Chapter 1 to create intersectional spaces in which the sporting lives of the six collaborators can be compared and contrasted. This derives further questions and advises on future directions of research into sports fandom that combine political relevance, emotional currency and discursive construction of the everyday lives.

Unpacking Theoretical Narrative

> allegiances aren't fluid. However accidental or random their beginnings, once they get locked in to the psyche, they take ferocious hold, as if our brains are programmed to pick sides and never look back.
>
> — Warren St. John [2]

Reflecting on his lived experience as an Alabama college football fan, Warren St. John panders to the popular understanding of sports fandom as an unquestionable loyalty that succumbs to in-group dynamics and its foulest implications. While the

[2] John, *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer*, 135.

sentiment bears resonance to some of the collaborators' storylines, the narrative chapters question its fundamental fixation on stability. More generally, nuance and detail of discourse generated in dialogue with the collaborators disturb many other theoretical models and/or their implied permanence. The notions of socialisation, escape and identification are further problematised through the humanly shared qualities of curiosity, creativity and communion, which establish political and cultural significance of encounters with spectator sport.

The lens of curiosity complicates the theoretical paradigm of socialisation by not only reaching into social interactions but also by actively incorporating agentic responsiveness. This, in turn, brings personal nuance and requires contextual understanding of the parameters in which fan-agents respond to the world around them: proximal social actors, culture, tradition and other culturally and socially produced and consumed narratives. The collaborators' narrative episodes extend social enactment dynamic and in small ways reclaim human freedom from the prison of consumer choice. This invites to consider passions of sport in their entwinement with – and detachment from – self-interest and market logic.

This extension of curiosity is bound to both the ludic premise of sport and its intersubjective entanglement in political and economic realities. On a personal level, however, it gives a fan-agent an opportunity to engage in the world and its current condition in a way that is immediately available. I argue, that even the smallest expressions of this type ought to be considered in relation to human creativity as opposed to implicitly political discourses that confine creativity to a mere capitalist resource and, in turn, restrict human freedom to an availability of entrepreneurial opportunity and consumer choice.

Through this lens, the stories of my collaborators bring up questions surrounding the bipolarity of work and leisure as well as the recent blurring of the boundaries between the two. These questions go further than structured leisure and offer a new perspective to contextualise sports fandom in a way that is relevant to the most pressing conditions of people's lives.

Finally, the notion of communion is used to once again highlight the sociality of the self. It reveals how social interaction as opposed to group membership is the key driver of identity construction as even in the comfort of a grand narrative dissenting views and conducts can emerge. However, the ease of cultural and geographical clarity is not afforded to everyone, which complicates both new acquisitions of sporting allegiances and existing affiliations. The narratives of my collaborators indicate the multirooted life trajectories and the varied impacts they had on fandom expressions. Longing and belonging are implicated in these expressions: they connect the legacies of dominance and oppression to the lives of sports fans and, once again, move the conversation into the political realm.

Dialoguing with Narratives

> A separate individual is an abstraction unknown to experience …
>
> – Charles H. Cooley [3]

I started this thesis and the research practice it entailed by interrogating my own point of entry to the process, laying bare my reasons to be curious about sports passions and the frame of this curiosity. The expression of my reasoning is discursively and intellectually circumscribed by my own capacity to both understand and communicate the story that led me to this point. Despite my best attempts to dialogically question my thinking and my intellectual journey, this analysis would have been unavoidably different if performed by a dialoguer asking different questions to those I asked myself. Such a dialoguer would have played a role in the expression of my story that I played in the stories of those I dialogued with.

Different collaborative relationships I have developed with each contributor are a testament to the diversity of motivations and wide-ranging curiosities permeating the narratives of the six fans.[4] These curiosities cannot be confined to the binary of

[3] Charles H. Cooley, *On Self and Social Organisation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 132.
[4] Holly Lynn Busier et al., 'Intimacy in Research,' *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 10, no. 2 (1997): 165–70.

insider and outsider. They were shaped through varied dynamics and relationships which, at times, located me as an outsider in the eyes of my contributors and, other times, as an insider.

The multiple strands of rapport arose in relation to my proximity to – and prior-understanding of – the contributor's sport, supported team(s), cultural positionality and life trajectory. While in some collaborations these markers moved little throughout the process, in other instances they developed perceptibly. Inescapably, the divergent rapports led to different narrative outcomes, potentially predisposing the unwanted circularity in any attempt to reify these narratives into singular categories.[5] Yet, as much as dialogical storytelling is implicated in this circular modality, so is statistically derived knowledge via mathematical theorems and arbitrary thresholds.

Plurality underpins this thesis. Amidst my own analytical reflection on the dialogically emerging narratives, the space is left for further interpretation.[6] My analysis has been grounded in the interplay of – and an unbreakable connection among – the past, the present and the future. Examining the lives of sports fans as opposed to their specific practices not only offered insights into their everyday activities and fandom trajectories but situated their passions in context of cultural, political and moral dilemmas. This, in turn, broadened out and sharpened the scholarly lenses worth adopting in the future. Equally, the thesis left space for divergent interpretations and continuing dialogues.

Amidst creating this interpretative and generative resource, the study also served as a catalyst for personal reflection, change and, in some cases, transformation. In the outcome-driven world, the absence of a singular point of convergence may seem vexing and inadequate. But, in the lived world where the subject faces the object, practice is the purpose. Through the practice of talking and listening, the space was created to remember, to reconsider and to fathom the lives lived and the passions

[5] Smart, *Personal Life*.
[6] Cole and Knowles, *Lives in Context*.

harboured. The emergent revisions furthered the life narratives and either navigated or bent the paths of the six contributors. The theory and practice joined to embody my notional proposition of praxis, which dissected lived disorderliness of passionate encounters with sport and opened a space for the lived consequences under the spell of impassioned but inconsequential care.

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