Australian cultural populism in sport: The relationship between sport (notably cricket) and cultural populism in Australia

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Abstract

The way 'mainstream' Australians see themselves is characterised by key polarities, defined according to what popular culture allows and prohibits at the same time. Sport becomes a vehicle through which those with nationalistic leanings express their adherence to sentimental ideas of a bigger Australian story. However, this outlet—originally conceived in outback stations—is not available to all classes, races, and genders. Traditionally in the past, one was only allowed to fully participate if one was lower class, white, and male. This contradicts the oft-touted idea that sport has the ability to bring 'the people' together, a sentiment which is criticised by the intellectual elite. Cricket represents an interesting case study, due to its roots in both British imperialism and its adaptation into Australian cultural mythology. It highlights how a relaxed and enjoyable 'game' can take on patriotic qualities that originate in ideals of bushrangers and mateship. As witnessed in recent ball-tampering scandals, cricket and sport more broadly are utilised by the media and politicians to define what being 'Australian' means. This usually reflects their own respective imperatives, whether that be to create divides in the community or promote unity through shared identity. Based primarily on insights shared by Peter Goodall in *High culture, popular culture: The long debate* (1995), this paper charts the historical origins of Australians' relationship with sport in broader popular culture to demonstrate that the way cultural populism is carried out within the entertainment sector is no coincidence, due to commonly inherited historical scripts. It also has implications for minority groups and their inclusion in national identity. While sport brings us together and has obvious wellbeing benefits, it also has the capacity to be manipulated by populists.

Introduction

Australian popular identity is characterised by its inherent dichotomies, with its narrow nationalism being simultaneously constructed by what it stands both for and against. This polarising populism is especially evident in the sporting arena, which has become an outlet for demonstrating alignment with idealistic narratives of a greater Australian cause. However, access to this widespread, shearer-originated mode of expression and associated way of life is exclusive, with only those of certain class, race, or gender backgrounds deemed eligible to participate fully. This is despite promises of sport having the capacity to unify 'the people', a claim viewed with deep scepticism by 'high culture' intellectuals, such as those in universities. Imbued with colonial heritage and local legend, cricket is an example of how a form of entertainment transcends its status as a casual pastime to become a symbol of patriotism, grounded in bushland mateship mythology. Sport is manipulated by the media and politicians to impose a definition of Australianness that best suits their goals, whether agitating towards division or promoting hegemony. Influenced by key theorists writing on cultural populism, I shall examine the ways in which the history of populist Australian thought and action proliferate in the Australian passion for sport, especially as it is imbued in cricket. It is possible to attribute our current perspectives on and uses for this common pastime to key historical themes. The debate lies in whether cricket and sport are as unifying and democratic as popular messaging around them would have us believe. There is potentially something more divisive afoot, considering nationalistic agendas. Thus,

while acknowledging more contemporary progress and adaptations to different audiences, the central streak of sport remains a major avenue through which cultural populism is conducted, either positively or negatively. This is due to its associations with the historical enactment of Australian national identity and its subsequent privileging of particular cohorts and ideas.

What is cultural populism?

The term 'popular culture' is widely utilised in both formal and informal analysis of the world around us, and has been defined in opposition to elitist 'high culture' (Goodall 1995). It has been made distinct from 'mass culture', which refers to something constructed by the volume of lay persons, more or less, although McGuigan (1992) describes how this separation has been eliminated by some scholars, to move towards a more unified conception of popular culture. There does exist the impetus, however, to distinguish cultural populism from this pejorative cousin, as this term has more significance within an (albeit complicated) academic context.

Simplistically, cultural populism is populism translocated from the political to the social. Cultural populism is more than populism being used for political means, as is witnessed, for example, in the activities of demagogues selling out to the lowest common denominator, through a chimera of having faith in 'the people'. For a more specific definition, cultural populism, according to McGuigan (1992, p. 4), is 'the intellectual assumption … that the symbolic experience and practices of ordinary people are more important analytically and politically than Culture with a capital C'. As such, cultural populism is constructed in opposition to intellectuals who have deemed themselves the arbiters and guardians of culture, in its refined sense. It is, therefore, ironic that it is a popular intellectual endeavour to examine and define what popular culture is. How popular culture is practised by the 'folk' is a preoccupation of intellectuals, while those for whom this culture is a reality are unable to set their own boundaries around it (instead dictated by academics). It seems bizarre that intellectuals would impose such a model, but arguably it could be motivated by a fascination with the Other.

This phenomenon of subverting cultural authority in defining popular culture can be viewed very clearly in the construction of Australian identity, based on national folklore and imperial roots inscribed in literature. In real terms, there is clearly an important intersection between popular culture and cultural populism. While not all popular culture is populist—appealing to 'ordinary people', such as 'woke young internet intellectuals'—and not all cultural populism can be classed as popular culture—being accepted in the mainstream, such as far-right ideologies)—one cannot ignore the definite link in the Australian context, especially when discussing sport and its relationship to national identity. Thus, in understanding the components of cultural populism, we can see how it is applied to the sporting sphere. While the concept has its limitations, such as a hazy definition, its aforementioned relevance makes it a useful lens through which to examine cricket especially.

British colonial roots of Australian populism in sport

The origins of the intellectual conception of the cultural populism espoused by Australian society can be located within the British Empire's colonial mission of spreading and upholding the Anglo-Saxon race, as espoused by Captain Cook (Horne 2010). Embodying the typical depiction of a frontier society, the Australian landscape was used to prove the success of British stock being able to survive the harsh wilderness, by replicating and adapting British society in this new setting. In removing the best of the Motherland from their natural habitat and translocating them into a hostile and previously mythical antipodean environment, the subsequent flourishing of early colonies was proof of the social Darwinist theory of survival of the fittest. As Cashman (1998, p. 35) describes, it showed that Anglo-Saxon blood was not thinned by the hot sun, which is perhaps an idealised reading of the success of early colonial life. This overcoming of harsh conditions, and refusal to quit despite difficulties being faced, is a central premise of sporting success, in that the human body is pushed to its limits and conquers the environment. This hardiness is embedded in pursuits that value physical endurance and being 'the winner', which the British essentially were doing in settling Australia.

Sport was used as a key tool in the civilising process, where success became a standard by which subordinate societies had to prove their worthiness and imperial loyalty (Adair 2011). Sport was an easily accessible method for disseminating British values and discipline, by uniting the colonies through social control in the guise of international competitions. This was particularly straightforward for the British in Australia as, according to Toohey and Taylor (2009, p. 837), there existed a paucity of cultural alternatives. Matches were more than games: they were a means of cultivating respectability and ensuring that colonial peoples became 'cultured', hidden behind a pretence of 'diplomacy' (Heenan & Dunston 2013). Victorian snobberies, especially those relating to ethnic and class divides between the white aristocrat and plebeian, were reproduced on Australian soil (Sandiford 2008, p. 1).

The British motivation to compete in sport was best disseminated through 'the quintessentially English game of cricket' (MacKenzie 1998, p. vi), even more so than through the widespread and longstanding game of rugby. While some mutual borrowing occurred, with colonial societies like Australia adapting the sport to their own climates and lifestyles—as seen in the Ashes series—cricket transmitted the imperial legacy from dominate to subordinate. According to Cashman (1998, p. 34), 'more than any other sport, cricket has exemplified the colonial relationship between England and Australia and expressed imperialist notions to the greatest extent'. Thus, the form of cultural populism deemed most desirable in the early days of the colonies was one that was fundamentally British, and it was embodied and reaffirmed through the playing of sport, particularly cricket.

Defining Australian culture in opposition to British influence

While early nineteenth-century conceptions of Australian culture were designed to emulate their English overlords, a pivot took place—with the rise of workers' rights in the late nineteenth century—where establishing the British as the opponent became a strong feature of national populism. One can partially attribute this change to the introduction of a strong Irish contingent—whose culture involved a heavy emphasis on folkloric tradition and national mythology—within the working population of New South Wales. Given the strong hatred of the English by the Irish, it is unsurprising that such an 'us vs them' mentality blossomed. According to Sandiford (1998, p. 10), 'the story of imperial cricket is really about the colonial quest for identity in the face of the colonisers' search for authority'. In this way, sport became a means through which new Australians—among them convicts and new immigrants, including the Scottish and Irish—could define themselves against the ways of their ancestral homes or traditional opponents. Even though the inherent superiority of the British Empire was still recognised early on— as demonstrated in a 'deferential pro-imperial nationalism' (Cashman 1998, p. 48)—it became a point against which colonies had to define themselves.

Winning in sporting matches against the British was perceived as being good for the country and a barometer for the nation's readiness for independence, or Federation in the Australian case. Australia was at the head of this charge—being viewed as one of Britain's more senior white colonies—as the relationship with the mother country evolved. According to Mandle (1973), national cricket teams did exist prior to 1901, in an emerging sense, and they became a vehicle for emerging nationalism. Australian teams were still imbued with a feeling of inferiority because of this power imbalance with Britain, and were determined and motivated to prove their worth and competitiveness with their 'arrogant and imperialising metropolitan cousins', despite their demographic disadvantage (Sandiford 1998, pp. 1–2). This was symptomatic of a wider march towards freedom within the decolonisation movement, with cultural populism often being central to expressions of nationalism. In some ways, Australia began to see itself as superior to the Old World due to its potential for forging a new and innovative society. According to Goodall (1995, p. 83), there was a 'sense that Australian identity had to be won at the price of rejecting cultural ties with Europe'. This was articulated through demonising the opposition in sporting matches, vestiges of which can be seen in cases such as the Bodyline Cricket controversy of 1932–1933 and up until the present day, especially in the regular Ashes test match series between England and Australia. Australian cricket crowds are often described by British commentators as being slanderous and are disparaged for their boorish jingoism (Cashman 1998, p. 48).

In addition, national pride is attributed to individual successes, where a prolympic culture of elite sportsmanship and medal-winning—especially that evidenced in the Olympics—became a means through which Australian populism was disseminated and measured. According to McKay and Roderick (2010, p. 296), this was glimpsed in the public's extreme outrage at the relative 'failure' of the nation at the 1976 Montreal games, where the Australian team received no gold medals and significantly less medals overall than the English. As such, we have witnessed 'the ascendancy of extrinsic rewards over intrinsic incentives in sport' (McKay & Roderick 2010, p. 296), with the mere sentiment of national pride no longer being adequate without the accompaniment of medals. The authors also identify the strong links between authoritarian populism in its nationalist sense and this victory-focused culture (McKay & Roderick 2010, p. 307). Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was held personally responsible for the poor performance at the 1976 Olympics, which led to his creation of the Australian Institute of Sport. It is therefore evident just how prominent a role sport plays in defining national identity (Horne 2010, p. 22). It is thus possible to trace the Australian anxiety surrounding the impetus of proving their country's worthiness in the sporting arena, and how this evolved due to the nation's subordinate status to Britain.

A young 'low culture' moves against old 'high intellectualism'

Symptomatic of the disdain for imposed imperial ideals, a key feature of Australian cultural populism has been its construction in opposition to high culture inherited from the British intellectual aristocracy. Australia has often been presented as a paradise for the 'working man', where sentimentality is attached to the values of the squattocracy, the original home of amateur sport, and a strong cockiness is translated into feisty behaviour on the sporting field (Toohey & Taylor 2009, p. 837). A rejection of the 'higher' endeavours of culture defined by the aristocracy—such as religion or art—was central to the interactions of the pastoral (farming) industry with wider society, which, due to its widespread presence in early local industry in the nineteenth century, saw an uncensored and unrestrained grit colouring the harsher attitudes of average Australians. The 'battler' and 'mongrel' archetypes that punch above their weight are marketed as desirable attributes to have within a team, with captains of the Australian cricket team having been described as such, notably Rick Ponting in the early 2000s (McKay & Roderick 2010, p. 297). This unscrupulous tenacity valued in athletes was also a key feature of the idealised 'bushman' figure of the late nineteenth century, along with a strong dislike of authority and fierce patriotic dedication within working life. This stems from a pride in convict culture that was both closely bonded to others in the same boat (sometimes literally)—as a sporting team is—and self-reliant, and drew inspiration from the early pastoral tradition of criminal settlers faced with 'the harsh conditions of the Australian interior' (Goodall 1995, p. 89).

With the country—in its colonised form—being relatively young itself, an appreciation of youth was at the forefront of Australian identity in the early twentieth century. With most athletes being young (early 20s) themselves, they came to embody this youthfulness and prowess when serving as soldiers at Gallipoli. A pride in young, working-class values also translated into contempt for the gentry and the intellectual class, with universities being viewed as too conservative, pretentious, and out of touch. This resulted in a relative intellectual emptiness in the twentieth century in Australia, with achievement being meagre and many bohemian scholars on the left pursuing knowledge overseas. Such a widespread departure meant that the mainstream was not challenged as often or as vehemently by public intellectuals, who often hold populism in check in other countries. The antipodean antipathy towards intellectualism continued into the late twentieth and twenty-first century: former prime minister John Howard alluded to the cultural elite—and by extension universities—as harbouring 'powerful vested interests' (Snow & Moffitt 2012). What limited critique has come out of high culture has centred on lamenting the place of sport in society, at the expense of supposedly more 'cultured' pursuits (Toohey & Taylor 2009). According to Goodall (1995, p. 105), 'the other side of the vilification of what Australia has become is an idealism of what it might be'. In other words, Australians are so harsh on ourselves because it is part of our aspiration to be the 'lucky country'.

While some intellectuals did have a fundamental desire to see their new land—to which they attached idealistic hopes and dreams—flourish, it is difficult to ignore the ways in which this could be imbued with notions of British superiority and 'they could be like us' attitudes. Furthermore, according to Kampmark (2013, p. 53), 'theories of social decline preoccupy historians, not merely of civilisation, but also of cricket itself'. Cricket has traditionally been widely viewed as the 'gentleman's game', with icons of propriety—such as the members' pavilion—being highly important to its enduring mythology. This is because, in its early days, 'those who ran the game were pro-imperial, mostly Protestant and Masonic as well' (Cashman 1998, p. 42). The recent morphing of cricket into more of a working man's game—with high-tempo limited overs matches in a league-style competition being more prominent since the 1980s Packer takeover of major media outlets like Channel Nine (the chief cricket broadcaster)—sought to emulate elements of the US baseball model (English 2011). Thus, the opposition of Australian society to intellectual high culture has remained prevalent over the decades and has permeated into sporting culture. However, it is interesting to note the repackaging of cricket from an elite to a working man's sport over time, and elucidate how these contradictions remain at the heart of the game.

The larrikin and his mates on the sporting field

The centrality of narratives of fraternal larrikinism and masculine mateship within the Australian form of cultural populism can be found in many forms of entertainment, especially sport. The camaraderie fashioned in the trying conditions of frontier societies is emulated within the model sporting team. Individual honour is esteemed, but is presented within the context of something bigger than just the single player (as in 'Tall Poppy Syndrome'). Parallels could, for example, be drawn to the Digger legend of the ANZACs during World War I—the idea of fighting for a greater cause being the main component. Being a member of the team, however, was an exclusive privilege, reserved for those of the male gender. This baggage still persists to some degree and can be seen in the restrictions imposed upon women's cricket by Cricket Australia, a very male-dominated organisation, in terms of their access to broadcast time and reasonable pay (Stronach & Adair 2009). According to Stronach and Adair (2009, p. 910), 'the men who run the game of cricket have recourse to substantial amounts of revenue and sponsorship income, which are deployed as they see fit'.

With the embodiment of the larrikin and the bushman evident in team mateship in sport, it is unsurprising that these legends are mimicked in literature, especially given the previously demonstrated colonisation of working-class space by high-class intellectuals as well. Archetypes of the bushman portrayed in the likes of Henry Lawson's poetry, the little boy from Manly who encapsulated prowess and health, and the ocker figure who overthrows sophistication have left a legacy for male players, but there is little equivalent for their female counterparts, despite the fame afforded to some noteworthy female athletes like Cathy Freeman. Such behaviours were embodied by the popular Labor leader and prime minister Bob Hawke, who played up his layman skill for beer sculling when interacting with cricketers and other athletes, while masking his Rhodes Scholarship education (witnessed firsthand by the author of this paper at a match). According to Toohey and Taylor (2009), with this proliferation of sometimes toxic commitment to traditional and rough ideals of masculinity within Australian sport comes a lower concern for sportsmanship and ethics. Coupled with a long-established sponsorship link between sporting clubs and public houses (now known as pubs)—as witnessed through beer advertisements on televised cricket broadcasting breaks—a tendency towards drinking, smoking, and gambling remains dominant and part of the sporting experience. For example, the Melbourne Cup— 'the race that stops a nation'—is revered so highly in Australian culture that an entire state receives a public holiday, despite its basis in betting, consuming copious amounts of alcohol, and laddish behaviour. Thus, through the proliferation of outdated legends of mateship and tropes of masculinity, the iterations of cultural populism surrounding sport remains highly male-dominated.

Translocating the idealised, imagined Australian heartland into sport

A critical tenet of cultural populism has been the protection of an idealised 'heartland', which in this sporting context is the supposed rural, Anglo-Australian mainstream. For Taggart (2000, p. 95), the heartland is 'a territory of the imagination … an evocation of that life and those qualities worth defending … that place, embodying the positive aspects of everyday life'. Stemming from the enshrined divide between the metropolis of London that was so despised and the dearly beloved outback, rurality and outer suburbia have become key components of local sporting legend. Images of backyard, dry local oval, and beach cricket put the Australian landscape in the foreground, mixed bizarrely with a slight replication of the British countryside through the flat, lush cricket ground in its more professional format. Ironically, the proliferation of rural mythology has often come at the hands of intellectuals in the past, to romanticise and fiercely defend what they do not actually have access to. Again, we have the situation whereby those not directly participating in, or at the mercy of, the populist culture are able to define the rules that dictate how it is carried out. This likely emerged out of the counterculture that sought to reject snobbish elements of city society, created in the boarding houses of Sydney, for example. Yet even scholars and poets who were pro-imperial—or were born overseas, such as Thomas Spencer—took it upon themselves to develop the bush mythology, bespeaking a fascination with the rugged and exotic Australian wild and the survival of British people in it. This romanticisation emulates the works of nineteenth-century scholars who examined the 'common folk' and how they contributed to the formation of nation-states—for example, Germany—mirrored in Australia's journey towards Federation.

Despite the gradual move of many working-class Australians from across the Great Dividing Range to urban coastal cities, sport has remained a large component of the way in which Australians romanticise the great outdoors, the theatre for much sporting activity. Sport has remained part of the socialising process, whereby local clubs become a realm in which citizens demonstrate their commitment to the Australian way of life and enact their civic duty by supporting their teams. This was a feature of small country towns, and remains a core component of much community life. According to Putnam's (1995) analysis of cultural populism using concepts of de Tocqueville (1839), voluntary association can be regarded as a measure of the strength of civil society, and this is an idea that remains central to participation in sport in Australia. Thus, the over-romanticised involvement in upholding the traditional and popularised notion of Australian society is at the heart of the organisation of sport.

Racialised participation in sport in Australia

However, it is important to note that due to the centrality of these nineteenth-century origins to national mythology, the presence of other races is not traditionally constituted as part of the symbolic and popular Australian enactment of sport. Even today, figures such as Usman Khuwaja are a rarity and a vulnerable one at that, due to the occasionally racist jibes he has experienced. Those who espouse the 'three cheers' view of Australian history—rather than the 'black armband' version that accounts for the decimation of Indigenous Australians—glaze over the suffering of those who did not fit the Anglo mainstream and were penalised by the White Australia Policy. According to Goodall (1995, p. 108), the populism of the past was characterised by this exclusion, where—for example—shearers discriminated against the Chinese. This has created the conditions for a situation where racial profiling and xenophobic slurs have become the norm in the conduct of Australian sport, as witnessed in the Adam Goodes saga. Furthermore, any efforts made by ethnic groups to mobilise and adapt the Australian sporting culture to their own way of life have been strongly discouraged, such as the attempted de-ethnicisation of football (see Hallinan & Hughson 2008) and the protection of rugby against an over-saturation of 'islander imports' by conservative parents in prominent boys' private schools like Scots in Sydney. However, it is worth noting that these stereotypes and prejudices are evolving to recognise the distinct skill set of different nationalities, though whether this is based on utilising their bodies for white means rather than true equality is another question. Cricket is a prominent example of white-washing, with players of colour being an anomaly—potentially due to being

perceived as intruders—and racialised sledging becoming commonplace. Even the classic white uniforms of the long-played test format of cricket and general Australian cricketing lore espouse an ideology of pure, untainted Anglo-Australianness.

There is certainly a reason that the sport appealed as much as it did to the conservative (and monarchist) prime minister Sir Robert Menzies during the 1950s and 1960s, due to his Anglophile outlook and fondness for the sport's imperial roots. John Howard, who was noted for his rigorous dedication to sporting the tracksuit of the Australian cricket team on his well-known morning walks, advocated for the return to a simple monoculture. This was something that could be found in cricket, which for Howard also represented the utmost embodiment of Australianness, shown by his assertion that the pinnacle of success was captaining the Australian (men's) cricket team (Hallinan & Hughson 2008, p. 2). By endearing themselves to the masses of white Australians that still dominated society through the infiltration of what was familiar to them (sport), these politicians could potentially mobilise a powerful sector of the population to maintain a racial hegemony, though whether it was this explicit is another debate. However, these attempted efforts were perhaps unrealistic in the long term, given the general trajectory of society towards globalisation and diversity. This acceptance of some versions of difference was also achieved through the contribution of sport to the protection of social capital in society, which, once attained, makes life easier for those belonging to the mainstream (Putnam 1995, p. 2). Zakus, Skinner and Edwards (2009, p. 994) describe how 'well-managed sport can play a role in generating social capital, as it can facilitate the building of networks of trust, safety and mutuality within a community'. These values also characterise the idealised version of an open national community. However, the racialised stratification of Australian sport—and society more generally—is in direct contradiction to this supposed 'fair dinkum, have a go' egalitarian ethos. Consequently, while some attitudes have moved with the times, ultimately populist attitudes surrounding Australian sport— especially cricket—are characterised by their upholding of the racial hierarchy, which is reinforced by prominent figures and historical precedents. However, it is important to note that way in which certain racial groups—such as the Italian community and soccer at one point—can popularise sport from the bottom up, though this is not necessarily the mainstream approach.

Media coverage of cultural populism through sport

In addition to its propaganda-like manipulation by politicians, sport is a central arena through which the practice of mediated populism can be observed. A definition of what is deemed Australian is influenced by the headlines disseminated in tabloid newspapers, and the overarching Australian identity is highly regulated by the media more generally. According to Adorno (1991), the media is caught up in the culture industry, in the manufacturing of narratives. These can be viewed in the representation of athletes as heroes and battlers fulfilling a national destiny (McKay & Roderick 2010, p. 306), and how we either sympathise or become angry with them on the grounds of whether they do the country proud (or even cheat, as in the case of the Australian cricket team's ball-tampering scandal in 2018, the swift recovery from which suggests national shaming is non-binding, especially if you are white and generally deemed of honourable character). These individualistic accounts of the successes or failures of these sportsmen and sportswomen—predominantly the former—contribute towards a wider discourse surrounding collective pride, where single wins are construed as wins for all (Hallinan & Hughson 2008, p. 1). Advertisements are also used to reinforce the cultural narrative that surrounds sport and serve to perpetuate notions of Australianness and its relationship to masculinity. According to Goodall (1995, p. 107):

> although there is plenty of old-fashioned populism to be had in the beer ads that punctuate the one-day cricket as it is televised on Channel 9, there have been new and subtler forms of it as well, as it has learned to move with the times and take on new forms in a changing world.

A key trope of these more innovative campaigns is the commodification of nationalist sentiment, in that products—such as fast food and mobile phone plans—are presented as embodying Australianness, often with quite an abstract association involved.

Due to its inherent relationship to Australian national identity, sport is also commoditised and becomes part of the culture industry—as conceived by Adorno (1991)—itself. Rowe (1999, p. 7) describes this media sports cultural complex and how these relationships are 'always everywhere in process, influencing and being influenced by each other in a perpetual dance of assertion and counter-assertion'. These links between product and sport and culture can sometimes be intangible, but look towards creating an imagined democratic community that shares the same values. The commercial infiltration of sport became particularly dominant during the 1980s, where the Packer family (with their considerable wealth) broke up the older aristocratic order of cricket to make way for a more mediatised model. McGuigan (1995, p. 6) urges analysing the role that public communication has in disseminating and reinforcing institutional power, as well as socio-economic relations, in discussing cultural populism. Through the media, (mainstream) Australians have ready access to this populism as, according to Horne (2010, p. 22), it is believed that 'to play sport, or watch others play and to read and talk about it, is to uphold the nation and build its character'. Singing about sport is also central to the national consciousness, demonstrated through the likes of Paul Kelly's music conjuring the bushman myth and the legendary 99.94 average cricket player Donald Bradman, as well as the appropriated popular tune 'Come on Aussie Come On'. Thus, the media plays a central role in quite literally broadcasting populist messages, a phenomenon which is highly prevalent within Australian sporting culture.

Where does this leave 'mainstream' Australia?

Australia is a society that is liable to be affected by many of the central strategies of cultural populists, whether intentionally or otherwise, and this is extremely evident in the sporting sphere. As a 'sport-crazed populous', Australian citizens are conditioned towards having a quasi-religious faith in a common, universally relatable sporting identity, so much so that it is considered degenerate in many circles not to be interested in sports (Horne 2010, p. 22). In Horne's words, 'sport to many Australians is life and the rest is a shadow'. Sport and Australian nationalism are fundamentally intertwined and basically interchangeable in some contexts, based on a shared history and cross-contamination of value dissemination. Sport made its way into the conduct of inter-country diplomacy and colonial mediation, while simultaneously being imbued with imperial doctrine or positioned as a reaction against it. Class conflict can also be traced within the evolution of Australian sport, emulating the working man's disdain of high culture intellectuals. Similarly, sport is a prominent arena in which the relatively unregulated conduct of racial and sexual exclusion takes place, despite positive growth and developments such as the recent better payment of female cricketers. This is largely due to the resilience of historic myths of Anglo mateship and masculine larrikinism and their continued influence. Sport in more recent times has also been used as an avenue through which modern political motives and media-regulated ideals can be spread, with the complex involving the media, sport, culture, politics, and the economy warranting further scrutiny. Overall, sport—and cricket especially—represents a useful case study through which scholars can examine the conduct of cultural populism.

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