

PLAY, COMMUNITY AND DEMOCRACY: UNDERSTANDING HOW PLAY CAN STIMULATE DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the link between play, community and democracy to illuminate how play can stimulate vibrant communities which manifest democracy. To expound the link between play, community and democracy, this paper first highlights the notion of democracy and the democratic principles that underpinned Australia's Federation in 1901. Play is then explored to demonstrate how play can stimulate relationships and communities which promulgate the democratic principles on which Australian was founded. Furthermore, this paper highlights the dangers of play's commodification in today's commercial era of professional sport. If play is corrupted, the formation of communities and the way they operate will also be damaged, thus undermining democracy.

KEYWORDS: Play; Community; Democracy

Professional sport is now an undeniable and growing branch of the entertainment industry. As such, professional sport is now a spectacle, watched and consumed by millions of sports fans across the world. What was once based on being free, spontaneous and creative, is now, in many instances, organised and restricted by game plans, set plays, tactics and is produced as entertainment for consumption.

The evolution of play, games and sport has been widely studied and explored by many sport and cultural theorists and historians. So too has the commodification of professional sport and the consequences of this for athletes, fans, the community and culture. However, this study seeks to go to the very

heart of professional sport and its community to discuss play and democracy, or more particularly, how play can create, stimulate and uphold democratic principles and characteristics such as those Australia was committed to at its founding in 1901.

This paper will highlight the link between play, community and democracy to illustrate how play can stimulate vibrant communities which function as democracies. If play is corrupted, the formation of communities and the way they operate will also be damaged, thus undermining democracy.

To expound the link between play, community and democracy, it is first necessary to understand the notion of democracy and the principles that underpinned Australia's Federation in 1901. From there we will further explore the play element and how it stimulates democracy.

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY

In his most famous book, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Johan Huizinga writes that the 'play element' of a society is at the heart of how a society forms and defines its community and culture. He explains how 'play', in its most autonomous sense, is responsible for allowing citizens to come together for a common and enjoyed activity. Huizinga goes on to say that through these play experiences, citizens begin to create a culture that ultimately stimulates and binds the community.¹

Other modernists, such as Hegel and neo Hegelian British Idealists writing around the time of Australian Federation shared a similar view. They argue the underlying cornerstone of a political community is the active participation of its members in pursuit of the common good and general will of the community, for a common interest and common goal, where the relationships that the members of a community have are based on shared, common values and principles.² According to Hegel, it was the culture of the community that is the

¹Huizinga, J., *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, Beacon Press, Boston 1950, pp. 11.

²Sawer, M., *The Ethical State? Social liberalism in Australia*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2003 p. 44; Boucher, D., 'Practical Hegelianism: Henry Jones's Lecture Tour of Australia', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1990, p. 423; Boucher, D., and Vincent, A., *British Idealism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2011; Gare, A., 'The Neo-Liberal Assault on Australian Universities and the Future of Democracy: The Philosophical Failure of a Nation', *Conrescence: The*

binding force of this relationship.³ Huizinga takes this a step further back, stating that it is the 'play element' and the 'games of the people' that are responsible for creating a society's community.

Hegel argues that the state is a political community because it is a cultural community, because its constitution is grounded in a national culture, because its political institutions are deeply interwoven and interdependent with all other aspects of culture and similarly, they express the values of the national culture. He also claimed that the individual identified with the state through participation within the community and that the state was responsible for fostering the ability of its members to reach their full potential. If people did not find their worth or identity through the community then they would seek to do so through conspicuous consumption. He considered it the duty of the state to ensure that the market is directed at achieving the common good of the community.⁴

This idea was enriched towards the end of the nineteenth century by a new liberal or social liberal philosophy inspired by British Idealist philosopher, T.H Green. In developing Hegel's philosophy, Green wrote that true democracy can only exist when all members of society are free to participate in their community. "When we speak of freedom", he wrote "we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something, and that too, something we enjoy in common with others."⁵ Green argued that pure freedom existed in the pursuit of the common good, as for Green, liberty meant the full participation in the life of the community. For a society to be truly democratic, its citizens need to be collectively active within the community.⁶

Green was arguing for an active citizenship and a collective will, oriented to the common good. He believed that through being able to freely and

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³Hegel, G., *Philosophy of Right*, Britannica Great Books of the Western World, Volume 46, Encyclopaedia Britannica, London, 1952, p. 153f (section 253); also see: Hegel, G., *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, transl. Knox, T. M., Oxford University Press, London, 1967

⁴ Hegel, G., *Philosophy of Right*, 1952, p. 153f

⁵Green, T.H., 'Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', in Harris, P., and Morrow, J., (eds.) *T.H. Green: Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 199.

⁶ Green, T.H., 'Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', p.199

collectively work for an enjoyed and common goal, individuals within society could reach their full potential. The community was integral to what Green saw as necessary in how a democracy should be defined.⁷ Huizinga saw the role of play as crucial in enabling citizens to be collectively active in the pursuit of enjoying something in common with others. In fact, he believed that the community and its culture spawned from play and developed in play forms.⁸ Like Hegel, Green proposed that it was the role of the state, not the market, to nurture freedom and to ensure citizens could develop their full potential and function effectively within the community.

Idealists in Australia adopted, embraced and extended this theory, arguing for the importance of the community and active participation within it to achieve a democracy. It was Huizinga's strong belief that the community was initiated through the 'play element', which manifested into a society's democracy.

What 'idealism' meant to early Australia is most clearly evident in the work of Walter Murdoch. Murdoch, a friend of Alfred Deakin, embraced Green's philosophy, arguing the importance of the state's responsibility to nurture and develop the democracy of a community was to allow citizens to reach his or her highest potential. Murdoch was a social liberal who taught at 'The College,' Warrnambool, before becoming professor of English (1912) and later Chancellor of the University of Western Australia. In his bestselling book, *The Australian Citizen: An Elementary Account of Civic Rights and Duties*, Murdoch wrote that the state was responsible for allowing citizens to realise themselves by attaining a good which is common to themselves and other men, by nurturing the community.⁹

Thus the community is at the core of a democracy and the relationships that its citizens share with each other. It is also the community (as opposed to the market) that allows them to actively participate for a shared and common good. Furthermore, according to Huizinga, this process begins with the act of

⁷ Green, T.H, 'Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', p.199

⁸ Huizinga, J., *Homo Ludens*, 1955, pp. 14

⁹ Murdoch, W., *The Australian Citizen: An Elementary Account of Civic Rights and Duties*, Whitcombe and Tombs, Christchurch, 1926, pp. 8; see also: Lake, M., *Alfred Deakin's Dream of Independence*, Deakin University, Melbourne, 2006

playing, which enables citizens to express themselves and the common and shared lifestyles of the community.

To fully understand how the play element stimulates community and democracy, it is necessary to explore the theories of Johan Huizinga and his definition of play.

UNDERSTANDING THE PLAY ELEMENT

In his book, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Johan Huizinga provided what other, more recent theorists might describe as the ‘classical’ definition of the play element.¹⁰ While many theorists have since expanded upon Huizinga’s analysis of the play element and its links with culture and the community, they have generally provided a broader analysis of play, often incorporating it into more general definitions of ‘games’ and ‘sport.’

While play is undeniably a part of games and sport, Huizinga’s definition deals specifically with the act of ‘playing’ and therefore provides the best definition of play in its rawest and purest form. Later, when discussing how the ‘play element’ has changed he discusses the ‘play element’ *in* games and sport as a way of describing how play has evolved from what it was at its origins.

HUIZINGA’S CHARACTERISATION OF PLAY

In its purest and original form, Huizinga believed play was based on enjoyment and fun. He saw play as being free and spontaneous and as “a discharge of superabundant energy to seek the satisfaction of some imitative instinct.” For Huizinga, having ‘fun’ was at the core of the play element, but acknowledged that when engaged in the act of playing – and only when playing – play, could indeed be serious.

The notions of ‘fun’ ‘enjoyment’ and ‘freedom’ underpin all of Huizinga’s key play characteristics, for if a player was no longer having fun, or was not enjoying him or herself, or no longer felt free when playing, then, according to Huizinga, they were no longer playing.

Huizinga stated that play had four distinct characteristics:

¹⁰ Huizinga outlines his definition and characteristics of play in ‘Nature and significance of play as a cultural phenomenon’, in *Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in popular culture*, pp. 7-13

- Play is free; in fact, it is freedom
- Play is not ordinary or real
- Play is secluded and limited
- Play creates order, is order

In summing up his four main characteristics of the play element, Huizinga defines the play element as:

A free activity standing quite outside the consciousness of ordinary life, as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest and no profit can be gained from it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space and according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It creates the formation of social groupings, which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.¹¹

For Huizinga, the social groupings which he described in his definition of play were in fact, what we would describe as a grassroots sporting club today. Furthermore, he saw these organisations as vitally important in enabling citizens to take an active and meaningful role in the organisation that formed from play, even if a citizen was not physically playing. This level of engagement within the sporting club helped bind communities and importantly, helped enable citizens to actively engage with others in something they felt ownership of, therefore assisting them to reach their full potential.

Furthermore, fundamental to Huizinga's definition and characteristics of play is that he saw play as completely autonomous from other fields in society. It was because of this autonomy that play was seen by Huizinga as the fundamental cornerstone of building and establishing the community. Huizinga believed that play gave citizens an opportunity to come together and express themselves while participating in a shared and common experience and in doing so, create their culture. Fundamentally Huizinga believed that play was an expression of the people that enabled citizens to bond and work together for a common goal or pursuit. Thus citizens began to define their relationships through play and felt ownership of the principles, values and virtues that determined the spirit in which they played. The games that citizens played

¹¹Huizinga outlines his definition and characteristics of play in 'Nature and significance of play as a cultural phenomenon', in *Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in popular culture*, pp. 7-13

were essentially the games of the people. They were a result of the people expressing a common will and want to come together for a common and enjoyed activity. From this, argued Huizinga, came community.¹²

CHILDHOOD PLAY

For children, play is generally what Huizinga describes it to be in *Homo Ludens* – free, fun, creative, spontaneous, absorbing and separate from the ordinary and the real.¹³

Through play, children are able to be their true, natural and whole self and as such, they are able to form social skills and relationships with those they play with.¹⁴ Indeed, their play experiences and subsequent spawning relationships are the basis of democracy, learned as children.

However, play on its own does not create democracy. It is when play stimulates active communities that democracy is manifested. As such, it is not until children are able to freely make their own decisions that they are able to form their own social groups and participate in the play communities of their choosing. Until then, parents and guardians are likely to choose who their children play with.¹⁵

It is when we are free to play and free to choose what we play and who we play with that we can form our strongest relationships. It is then that the active participation and engagement within the social groups we form can be most meaningful and rewarding. Within these communities participants feel responsible for, and obligated to each other to actively pursue a shared passion and goal.

Thus, as children, we play with freedom, flair and creativity, which enables us to reveal our true selves and form strong relationships with those we play with. However, it is not until we are older that we form the communities from our play activity that foster democracy.

¹² Huizinga, J., 'Nature and significance of play as a cultural phenomenon', in *Homo Ludens*, pp. 13

¹³ Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, *Einstein Never Used Flashcards : How Our Children Really Learn - And Why They Need to Play More and Memorize Less*, (Emmaus: Rodale Press, 2004)

¹⁴ Beverlie Dietze and Diane Kashin, *Playing and Learning* (Canada: Pearson Education, 2011)

¹⁵ Dietze and Kashin, *Playing and Learning*

Our first play experiences within sporting clubs may be instigated by our parents and guardians. However, at some stage, each individual will be old enough to freely decide if they want to continue to play or not. Importantly, their active participation within the community must be of their free choosing.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING FREE

The importance of play in enabling citizens to be 'free' to form culture and communities was highlighted by Donald Winnicott in his book, *Playing and Reality*.¹⁶ In many ways, Winnicott's insight in psychoanalysis confirms the insights of Huizinga – a cultural historian. An English paediatrician and psychoanalyst, Winnicott related the play element to psychoanalysis to argue that a patient cannot be completely open, honest or their whole self if they are not able to play.

According to Winnicott, "It is in playing, and only playing, that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self."¹⁶

Winnicott argued that we are only truly free when we are playing. When we are playing, we are unrestricted, spontaneous, creative and our true selves. This is when relationships are formed. When citizens come together in an autonomous and unrestricted environment they are free to do or act as they please. The end result of what they do and how they act forms their relationships.

Furthermore, Winnicott argued through the autonomy of play, a patient could get to know his or her environment, trust the environment and develop trust for others within the environment, enabling them to be completely open, honest and share their whole personality with their doctor. As such, he believed there was a "direct development from transitional phenomena to playing; and from playing to shared playing; and from this to cultural experience."¹⁷ It is because of the autonomy of play that a player feels completely free to be their whole self; their creative self; their spontaneous self – and in doing so form real

¹⁶ Winnicot, D.W., *Playing and Reality*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974, p. 74

¹⁷ Winnicot, D.W., *Playing and Reality*, p. 75

and genuine relationships with fellow ‘players.’ From these relationships they form communities, largely built on trust.

However, once the patient’s environment was compromised or restricted, so too was the freedom of the patient and their ability to communicate. As a result they could not be as open or as creative and the bond, trust and connection between patient and doctor had been harmed. For Winnicott, it was through play that a patient felt free to be their whole self and share their whole personality. In a broader context, it is only when we are free to play and be our whole selves that we can form true relationships, communities and ultimately, democracy.¹⁸

Therefore, when play is free it can stimulate strong, binding relationships that form the foundations of community. These communities enable its members to participate in democracy.

COMMUNITY AND DEMOCRACY

It is through the community that democracy is revealed. When communities are stimulated by the play element, the same democratic values that Australia committed to at its founding in 1901 are manifested in communities. This idea is illuminated by Jane Jacobs in her book *The Death and Life of the Great American Cities*.¹⁹ In her study of American neighbourhoods, Jacobs argued that the relationships formed by members of the community resulted in a social capital that was built upon the trust between, and camaraderie of, the community’s participants. She argued that this social capital was necessary for the neighbourhood’s participants to work towards their common and shared goals. By ensuring all members of the community are empowered to contribute in a meaningful way, citizens were not only able to enrich their own lives, but also those of fellow community members. This assisted in ensuring they felt a sense of individual development, satisfaction and self-worth.

For Jacobs, ensuring community enrichment is the decentralisation of power, whereby members trust each other to act in the common interest. If power becomes the privilege of just a relative few, no longer can members of the community simply get on with working on a project that they believe will

¹⁸ Winnicott, D.W., *Playing and Reality*, p. 75

¹⁹ Jacobs, J., *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House, New York, 1993 (1961), p. 148

benefit their fellow community members. Instead they are now forced to answer to several layers of bureaucracy to seek permission or approval before being able to act. This makes citizens feel far more like subjects than active participants.²⁰ Jacobs argues this minimises the collective will to work together to enrich the life of the community. Thus, the community is weakened at the hands of centralised power.

This argument is highlighted in the work of Robert Putnam. In his most famous books, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* and *Making Democracy Work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*, Putnam speaks about the notion of community, and in particular, the decline of the community over the last 30 years.

For Putnam, social capital is at the heart of citizens engaging with each other and developing voluntary associations that form the foundation of interaction and discussion between society's citizens. Furthermore, Putnam states that the social capital accumulated within these voluntary associations are the essence of true democracy.²¹ Describing social capital as "the features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit," Putnam believes that the social capital accumulated through personal interaction and civic engagement is foundational to the fabric of their social lives.²²

According to Putnam, social capital has three components: moral obligations and norms, social values (especially trust) and social networks, which, he believes, are essential in sustaining strong democratic societies. In *Making Democracy Work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*, Putnam outlined the different government reforms of 1976-77 in Italy's North compared to the South to argue the importance of social capital in sustaining strong civic engagement, community and, ultimately, democracy.²³

²⁰ Jacobs, J., *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, p. 143

²¹ Putnam, R., *Bowling Alone, The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2000, p. 61

²² Putnam, R., 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital', in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6 1, 1995, p. 67

²³ Putnam, R., *Making Democracy Work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p. 130

Putnam noted that the government reforms succeeded in Northern Italy because it was accompanied by strong civil engagement. As part of the Northern Italy reforms, government power was decentralised, with new local governments created to encourage and foster citizens to collectively participate in making a collective difference within their community. By providing citizens with a local voice and means to be heard, the Italian government was effectively encouraging citizens to act as participants within society with a choice of either enriching the life of the community or undermining it.

Putnam argued that this encouraged citizens to actively and voluntarily come together to interact with one another and collectively work towards shared and common goals. This fostered a sense of civic responsibility, trust, assistance and collaboration, which in turn, provided citizens with a sense of self-worth and satisfaction in making a meaningful contribution to society.

“In the North the crucial social, political, and even religious allegiance and alignments were horizontal, while those in the South were vertical. Collaboration, mutual assistance, civic obligation, and even trust – not universal, of course, but extending further beyond the limits of kinship than anywhere else in Europe in this era – were the distinguishing features in the North. The chief virtue in the South, by contrast, was the imposition of hierarchy and order of latent anarchy.”²⁴

For Putnam, trust and a sense of obligation one citizen felt towards another was fundamental to freedom and democracy. Putnam argued that trust was at the heart of forming voluntary associations and fostering active, free participation within them. According to Putnam, voluntary organisations such as sports clubs facilitate communication between individuals, improves the flow of information to and from individuals and increases the trust each individual has in each other. In doing so, the sense of obligation members feel towards each other to help achieve their collective goals also increases. It is this trust that binds the community together and enables members to freely participate within the organisation.²⁵

If an individual trusts the environment they are part of and the citizens they are engaged with, they will then feel the freedom to be their true self and to

²⁴ Putnam, R., *Making Democracy Work*, p. 130

²⁵ Putnam, R., *Making Democracy Work*, p. 177

contribute to the life of the community. In doing so, they are able to work together towards a common, shared outcome, thereby attaining some sense of self-worth, reward and satisfaction. Putnam argued that this trust and freedom is foundational to democracy. He also warned that if the trust of a group is undermined or individuals begin to act outside the interests of the larger group, then the community will be weakened.²⁶

In *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital* and *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam argued that voluntary associations, such as sporting organisations, were founded upon the common interest of its members and the trust they formed through social interaction with each other. In turn, by engaging with each other and working collectively towards the goals of the larger group, the trust between members strengthened, thus fostering the necessary freedom they require to be active participants within the group.²⁷

However, Putnam noted a growing distrust within America and highlighted an aggregate loss in membership of many existing civic organisations. To illustrate why this is problematic to American democracy, Putnam used bowling as an example. Although the people who bowl in America had increased in the previous 20 years, the number of people who bowled in teams, leagues or organised competitions had decreased. Instead, people were choosing to bowl alone, meaning they were not participating in the personal interaction and discussion that might have occurred if they were bowling in a team or as part of a larger group. Putnam argued that this decline in social capital is eroding communities and democracy in America and suggested that multiple media and technological advances over the last 30 years promote individualism and isolation at the expense of personal interaction.²⁸

While Putnam spent little time discussing where his theories of social capital, community and democracy fit in a historical context, the idea that genuine community is foundational to the development of individuals, their freedom and, indeed, democracy, is not a new one. Indeed it can be further

²⁶ Putnam, R., *Making Democracy Work*, p. 171

²⁷ Putnam, R., 'Bowling Alone', 1995, par 35

²⁸ Putnam, R., 'Bowling Alone', 1995, par 13-39

understood through the theories of Ferdinand Tönnies, Hegel and a number of British Idealists writing around the time of Australia's Federation in 1901.²⁹

Tönnies' 1887 work of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* argued that social ties can generally be categorised as either belonging to personal social interactions, roles, values and beliefs, based on such interaction (*Gemeinschaft*) or, as belonging to indirect interactions, impersonal roles, formal values and beliefs, based in such interactions (*Gesellschaft*).³⁰

According to Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft* provided a platform for citizens to come together to enjoy a common way of life, where, through experiencing the traditions, rituals and activities of *Gemeinschaft*, members were able to form a sense of identity and close social ties to other members of the group.³¹ These social bonds were often based upon an emotional connection, sense of loyalty, obligation and even responsibility to each other to help achieve their common goal, which ultimately tied the community together. When Tönnies wrote about *Gemeinschaft*, he referred to a collective will, a common way of life, common beliefs, concentrated ties, frequent interaction, familiarity and emotional bonds. However, Tönnies argued that a weaker, less communal social grouping also existed, which was often influenced by money and other capitalist ideals such as individualism and self-interest – *Gesellschaft*.³²

For Tönnies, *Gesellschaft* describes the associations in which the collective purpose of a larger group never takes precedence over the individual's self-interest. These social groups lack a sense of common and shared goals, whereby members are often concerned with self-status. They emphasise secondary relationships with a weaker sense of loyalty and weaker feelings of

²⁹Sawer, M., *The Ethical State? Social liberalism in Australia*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2003 p. 44; Boucher, D., 'Practical Hegelianism: Henry Jones's Lecture Tour of Australia', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1990, pp. 423-452; Boucher, D., and Vincent, A., *British Idealism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2011; Gare, A., 'The Neo-Liberal Assault on Australian Universities and the Future of Democracy: The Philosophical Failure of a Nation', *Concrescence: The Australasian Journal of Process Thought*, Vol. 7, 2006. To view article, visit: <http://www.concrescence.org/index.php/ajpt/article/view/86/48>

³⁰To review Tönnies' conceptual theory of the transformation from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, see Tönnies' classic theoretical essay: Tönnies, F., *Community and Society*, Translated by Loomis, C., Harper, New York, 1957

³¹ Tönnies, F., 1957, p. 15

³² Tönnies, F., 1957 p. 21

obligation and responsibility to the larger group. When discussing *Gesellschaft*, Tönnies referred to dissimilar ways of life, dissimilar beliefs, infrequent interaction and even regular competition between its members. It was the common interest in personal gain that ultimately bound these social groups together.³³

In noting the shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, Tönnies was not just noting a weakening of the community, but also an undermining of democracy.

From the above analysis it is clear that democracy is manifested in communities which are based upon the freedom of citizens to actively participate and contribute towards the common interest. The relationships between community members are based on the trust each member has in the other and the trust that all members have the best interests of the community at heart.

If this is weakened and the individual begins to dismiss the common interest in favour of their own individual interest, then no longer is everyone working towards the common goal. Trust is now broken and democracy weakened.

Furthermore, of fundamental importance to democracy is ensuring that all members of the community are able to reach their full potential by freely contributing within the community towards the common good. If individuals become more concerned with self-status and power and less concerned with the greater good, then they may also find themselves working against the common interest (in favour of their own), thus minimising the collective participation of the group, inhibiting the freedom of the community. By accumulating significant individual power, they may reduce the power of others. Indeed within a democracy, those with relative power need to be trusted to be acting in the best interests of the majority.

If this is not the case the community is weakened, so too is democracy. Furthermore, as play stimulates community the undermining of democracy actually begins with the corruption of play.

To fully understand this it is necessary to explore play's transformation and the implications this may have for the community and democracy.

³³ Tönnies, F., 1957 p. 41

THE CORRUPTION OF PLAY

While Huizinga identified the Industrial Revolution as the key moment in time when play became entertainment, he traced the origins of this transformation back to the Roman Empire and a time when play became as much about those watching play as it did those participating in play. According to Huizinga, the Romans recognised that play could be organised and treated as a tool to entertain crowds of keen and interested onlookers.³⁴ Stadiums such as the Colosseum were packed with thousands of spectators watching a contest or performance. They were being entertained.

Huizinga argued that at this very moment, play had lost its innocence and was effectively being used as an item of entertainment. Furthermore, Huizinga argues that this move from 'play to display' was a deliberate attempt by the Ruling Class of the time to use play to distract the proletariat from their otherwise subordinated and 'dull existence.'³⁵ It was used by the ruling class as an item of escapism, to keep the masses at bay and engrain their position at the top of the social hierarchy. In being used as such a tool, according to Huizinga, play had lost its autonomy. It had become organised and owned by the Ruling Class; used to achieve a secondary result – an escapism or reward. Suddenly play had become a commodity and an organised product of entertainment with the crowd becoming 'consumers'. Play had been undermined.³⁶

Huizinga believed that from the time of the Industrial Revolution material interest and economic capital determined the course of the world. Play was becoming more organised, more structured and more influenced by economics and, more specifically, money. While play and games have been a part of society since the beginning of mankind, the notion of organised sport as we know it today is a far more recent phenomenon. Sport, as a recognisable and structured organisation, is not universal, but in fact emerged in a particular location (Britain) at a particular time (early industrialisation).³⁷

³⁴Huizinga, J., *Homo Ludens*, p. 74

³⁵Huizinga, J., *Homo Ludens*, p. 13

³⁶Huizinga, J., 'Western Civilisation', p. 75

³⁷Rowe, D., 'Understanding Sport and Media: A Socio-Historical Approach', in *Sport, Culture and the Media*, Open University Press, Berkshire, 2004, p.11.

Throughout industrialisation, games that included rough play or physicality were considered too unstructured in both rules and time and often caused injury and even death. Ruling elites became concerned with this behaviour and were of the opinion that able bodied men, during their time of leisure, should compete in purposeful sports. Therefore a more conscious effort was made to structure and organise play. Around this time a 'moral panic' emerged about the leisure time activities of the working class and as a result, pressure built for greater control over working class activities. Workers were expected to arrive at work fit, healthy and ready for demanding, arduous and sometimes demanding shifts. As a result, some 'unorganised' games were banned. However, at the same time there was a movement to promote healthy physical activity and to remove unhealthy urges among working citizens. It was believed that if a nation's citizens were healthy, they were more likely to be more productive and efficient in the work place.³⁸

This was the beginning of organised sport. Sporting events were organised to enable the Ruling Class to ensure their workers were controlled in their leisure time; to keep them fit and healthy; and to offer them an 'escape' so they would return from their leisure time, content and ready to work.³⁹ As such, play was being utilised as a means of enhancing the interests of the Ruling Class rather than to create an environment that advanced the common interest and greater good.

Money also played an important role in the emergence of organised sport, and has led to the professionalization of many sports. For the emergent entrepreneurial capitalist class who accumulated wealth by making and selling goods and services, and for the working class who had no means of support other than their own labour power, the idea of professionalising sport and 'playing for pay' held great attraction. Thus, pure amateurism was challenged by professional, commercial sport and entrepreneurs, capitalists and workers alike all meshed to transform sport into a business where profits and income could be generated by all involved – from promoters to administrators to coaches and players. Professional sport was used as a tool to make money.

³⁸Rowe, D., 'Understanding Sport and Media: A Socio-Historical Approach', p. 20

³⁹ Rowe, D., 'Understanding Sport and Media: A Socio-Historical Approach', p. 28

In losing its autonomy to the influence of money, Huizinga bemoaned that ‘play’ was no longer separate to the real and ordinary world; it was no longer free and in many instances it had lost an element of freedom, enjoyment and fun. As such, play could no longer act as the stimulus for creating communities.⁴⁰

WHEN PLAY BECAME SPORT

In the final chapter of *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga concluded that never, to that point in history, had an age taken itself with more seriousness. He believed that culture had ceased to be played – instead, it was imposed from the top and sold to consumers as an item of entertainment.⁴¹

Throughout the nineteenth century, and in particular the Industrial Revolution, the lives of the world’s inhabitants were restructured. Capitalist, urban, industrial and political revolutions began to unfold with the circulation of popular and more radical political movements. From this emerged an all-encompassing, dominant business bureaucratic model of living that placed the objectives of structure, organisation, regimentation, efficiency and, importantly, money at the forefront of society. This, according to Huizinga, completely transformed the play element and the role it played in developing culture and stimulating active participation in society.⁴²

As play became organised and structured, it was transformed into sport and increasingly took on characteristics of serious business. “What we are concerned with here,” he writes, “is the transition from occasional amusement to the system of organised clubs and matches.”⁴³

Importantly, Huizinga stressed that as play became more structured and organised, it has also become more serious, “Ever since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, games, in the guise of sport, have been taken more and more seriously.”⁴⁴ Huizinga argues that this is largely, if not solely, because the play element had lost its autonomy to the economic market and was therefore

⁴⁰ Huizinga, J., ‘The play element in contemporary civilisation’, p. 195

⁴¹ Huizinga, J., ‘The play element in contemporary civilisation’, p. 206

⁴² Huizinga, J., ‘The play element in contemporary civilisation’, p. 213

⁴³ Huizinga, J., ‘The play element in contemporary civilisation’, p. 196

⁴⁴ Huizinga, J., ‘The play element in contemporary civilisation’, p. 196

‘used’ for a secondary purpose – to make money; to distract the masses; to keep labourers fit and healthy; to provide them with an escape. It was used as a tool and owned by the Culture Industry. It was serious. It was a business and as such, something of the pure play quality had been lost.

Huizinga writes:

“The spirit of the professional is no longer the true play spirit; it is lacking its spontaneity and carelessness. For the professional, playing is no longer just play. It is also work.”⁴⁵

Play had become serious because play had been incorporated into the economic market. Sport now imitated play. It also imitated a business. Play had become a commodity, a skill, an item of labour. It was a shadow of what Huizinga described play to be at its origin and therefore, its role in society and in stimulating community had been corrupted. No longer was civilisation developed in play forms; instead, civilisation, and in particular the dominant business bureaucratic model of its time, determined play. For Huizinga, sport was ‘false play’.

“Civilisation today is no longer played and even where it seems to be play, it is false play...it becomes increasingly difficult to tell where play ends and non-play begins.”⁴⁶

These ideas were enriched by Christopher Lasch in his book *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. In a chapter titled *The Degradation of Sport*, Lasch discusses the play element in modern sport, arguing that sport and play could no longer be discussed as something ‘beyond’ the real and ordinary life. Play had been corrupted by money. For Lasch, all play forms within society – both in leisure time and at work – had been superseded by individualism and the necessary calculation, prudence, analysis and efficiency to accumulate economic capital. The dominant business bureaucratic model that shapes modern society does not allow for pure play. Therefore, citizens are increasingly turning to modern sport for their nourishment of play. Devoid of such activity at work, they seek forms of

⁴⁵ Huizinga, J., ‘The play element in contemporary civilisation’, p. 204

⁴⁶ Huizinga, J., ‘The play element in contemporary civilisation’, p. 206

freedom and spontaneity outside of their ordinary life – through the leisure industry.⁴⁷

However, what they do not realise is that sport, like business, is now restricted by structure, analysis and a desire to succeed; or more particularly, to not fail. It is careful and concerned with image. It is hierarchical, with management and coaches calling the shots – not the players. It mirrors the very business bureaucratic model citizens seek to escape from. In fact, it is now part of the business bureaucratic model. Because it mirrors the neoliberal makeup of the rest of society, citizens cannot see that sport, and within that ‘play’, is no longer free, no longer completely spontaneous or separate from the ordinary or the real. It is a business – part of the entertainment industry. Players are entertainers who display their talents for consumers and the act of playing, at the elite and professional level of sport, is their work.

Writing about sport and the culture industry in the United States, Lasch claimed that the first stage of play becoming an object of mass consumption began with the establishment of ‘big time’ athletes in universities as early as 1878. In their quest for recognition and their desire to be better than their competitors, universities began using sport and their athletes to promote their brand. Increasingly universities used the reputations of their athletics winners and football captains to promote their academic courses and to attract enrolments and gain financial support from local businesses.⁴⁸ During this period, universities ceased functioning solely as universities, and, like sport, began functioning as businesses. Play was used as a tool to help universities promote their institution and sell their brand.

To maintain a positive image and reputation and to impress businesses who had invested in the university’s sports program, “there was a need to maintain a winning record: a new concern with system, efficiency and the elimination of risk.” A new emphasis on drill, discipline and teamwork became central to play and records and analysis arose from managements’ attempts to reduce winning, and play, to a routine measure of efficiency. Play had lost its sense of freedom and spontaneity. Instead it began to mirror the business of the sport it

⁴⁷ Lasch, C., ‘The Degradation of Sport’, in *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, Abacus, London, 1980, p. 57

⁴⁸ Lasch, C., ‘The Degradation of Sport’, 1980, p. 58

belonged to. Management began calling the shots on how a player would play. Structures were introduced. Tactics were analysed and the inspirational appeals of old fashioned coaches were met with amused cynicism.⁴⁹

At the same time, a new form of journalism, one which sold sensationalism instead of reporting news, helped to professionalise amateur athletes, assimilate sport to promotion, and to turn professional athletes into entertainers. Newspapers reported the business side of play in the sport section. The sport section contained stories about clubs and their finances.⁵⁰ As Huizinga stated in *Homo Ludens*, it was difficult to tell where play finished and where non-play started. Certainly play was no longer separate from the ordinary or real and was, in fact, a business, with business characteristics.

Lasch bemoaned the role of money in play, particularly at the expense of loyalty. According to Lasch:

“The athlete, as a professional athlete, seeks above all to further his own interest and willingly sells his services to the highest bidder.”⁵¹

For Lasch, the sense of community from play had disintegrated. While it still may have existed in some form, it was fake, or secondary to the individual interests and financial wants of the player. Players increasingly saw themselves as the entertainers of a ‘show.’ Yet, these ‘entertainers’ no longer played with the same sense of carelessness, abandon and spontaneity that defined play at its origin. Instead they ‘performed’ within a team structure, with a game plan, with tactics, analysis of key performance indicators and efficiency. Prudence, caution and calculation, so prominent in everyday life, came to shape sport as they shape everything else.⁵²

NEOLIBERALISM:

In more recent decades the political ideology of neoliberalism has exacerbated the transformation of play and growth of professionalised and commercialised sport, both in Australia and abroad. Indeed, Australia’s neoliberal path has

⁴⁹ Lasch, C., ‘The Degradation of Sport’, 1980, p. 59

⁵⁰ Lasch, C., ‘The Degradation of Sport’, 1980, p. 60

⁵¹ Lasch, C., ‘The Degradation of Sport’, 1980, p. 61

⁵² Lasch, C., ‘The Degradation of Sport’, 1980, pp. 62-63

closely followed the United States and other Western countries who enthusiastically embraced economic rationalism.

Neoliberalism is the philosophy that money and markets can always do everything better than governments, bureaucracies, and the law. Over the last three decades, the transformation in Australia effected by this philosophy may be seen as the triumph of economic rationalism, the doctrine that to organise society more rationally all social forms and all social relations should be based on market principles and be subject to market imperatives.⁵³

Led by conservative governments of the United States and United Kingdom, and embraced by Australia, this philosophy came to prominence in the late 1970s in response to stagnating economic growth, stagflation, and increasing government budget deficits. After a generation of Keynesian economic rule based on macro-economic policy and the importance of government in stimulating economic activity and growth, Western leaders began placing a greater emphasis on micro-economic reform and market-based imperatives, which are fundamentally the characteristics of neoliberalism.⁵⁴ At the core of the neoliberal agenda is the unwavering belief that, when able to act freely without government interference, the market will be self-regulating and produce the most efficient, productive, and effective economic outcomes, thus creating higher quality products and services at a more efficient cost.⁵⁵ This will, in turn, lead to higher consumer demand, increased profits, and increased employment opportunities.

However, the neoliberal policies of privatisation, deregulation, and reduced government spending were in opposition to the principles and government agenda to which Australia had committed in shaping democracy at its founding in 1901. In establishing a true and genuine democracy, Australian leaders believed that the state was responsible for ensuring citizens could act freely in common with others, enabling them to strive actively for shared and common goals.⁵⁶ Social welfare programs were fundamentally important in ensuring all

⁵³Michael Pusey, *Integrity under Stress: Economic Rationalism in Canberra—A Nation Building State Changes Its Mind* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1991), 208.

⁵⁴Manfred Steger and Ravi Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 21–49.

⁵⁵Pusey, *Integrity Under Stress*.

⁵⁶Sawer, *The Ethical State?*, 44; Walter Murdoch, *Loose Leaves* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1909), 64f.

citizens had appropriate access to the resources considered necessary to engage and participate freely in community life. Therefore, they strongly advocated government spending on welfare and the redistribution of wealth to those who needed it most. By doing this, not only individuals but also the broader society would benefit, evolving and developing into genuine communities.⁵⁷

In Australia, industries which had always generated some level of money, such as professional sport, became fully embedded in the neoliberal mantra of producing profit. Nothing was off limits or out of bounds – not even the play element; everything that could be used to generate profit was utilised. Even industries which were not fully privately owned or did not function to profit implemented neoliberal styles of management.

Overseas, in the United States, United Kingdom and other western economies, the impact of neoliberalism on sport has been even more pronounced. Indeed professional domestic sport in Australia is still somewhat egalitarian and socialistic when compared to other sports such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Football League (NFL) in America and the English Premier League (EPL) in the United Kingdom.⁵⁸

GRASSROOTS SPORT

The transformation of play and the subsequent erosion of the community in fully professionalised sports appears most stark when comparing it to youth and grassroots sports.

In Australia, grassroots sport still stimulates community. It fosters active engagement and participation and provides a platform for citizens to work together to achieve a shared and common goal.

There are approximately 70,000 sports clubs in Australia.⁵⁹ 6.5 million Australians participate in organised sport each year⁶⁰, and, importantly, 2.3

⁵⁷Green, 'Lecture on "Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract"', 199.

⁵⁸ For a comparison of total player payments between the NBA, NFL and Australia's highest paid sport, the Australian Football League (AFL), visit: 'Global Sports Salaries Survey 2016', *sportingintelligence*, accessed 21 December, 2016.

⁵⁹ 'Sports Club Development,' *Clearinghouse for Sport*, accessed 21 December 2016, https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/knowledge_base/organised_sport/sports_administration_and_management/sports_club_development

million people volunteer time for sport each year -- the largest volunteer group in the country.⁶¹

While still organised and structured, sport at the grassroots level is far more autonomous than professional sport. In particular it is less influenced by money, meaning the actions of those who participate in grassroots sports are generally influenced by a shared and common interest or goal rather than economic capital or power. These shared interests and common goals define their relationships.

Likewise, because grassroots clubs are not yet completely structured as businesses, participants are more able to contribute to important decisions and actively help work towards achieving important outcomes.

However, even at the grassroots level neoliberal, business characteristics are becoming ever more present. In some Australian Football Clubs competing in country and suburban leagues, some players are paid up to \$70,000 a year, more than the average individual wage in Australia. Indeed some playing lists are paid a total of \$400,000.⁶²

This signifies that in some grassroots sports, play is losing its autonomy to money, which could undermine the play element, the game's communities and democracy, just as it has in professional sport.

OTHER INSTITUTIONS

It is important to note that the decline of community and democracy has not been restricted to professional sport. Other community based institutions, such as religion, have also suffered a decline in active participation and engagement from its members.

⁶⁰ 'Play. Sport. Australia: The Australian Sports Commission's participation game plan,' *Australian Sports Commission*, accessed 21 December 2016, https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/646774/ASCs_participation_game_plan_web.pdf

⁶¹ 'Play. Sport. Australia: The Australian Sports Commission's participation game plan'

⁶² Roslyn Lanigan, 'How Much Is Your Local Footy Team Worth?', *Weekly Times*, accessed 26 March 2014, <http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/sport/how-much-is-your-local-footy-team-worth/story-fnkerdz1-1226864231606>.

At the last census, 13.1 million Australians (61 percent)⁶³ said they identified themselves as Christians, but less and less of them are going to church. In 1954, almost three quarters (74 percent) of Catholics regularly attended mass. Today the figure is closer to 10 percent.⁶⁴

The decline in religious participation is further evidence of the declining play element in culture resulting in the erosion community. Huizinga believed that many forms of culture originated from play phenomena, such as ritual, ceremony and upholding tradition – all fundamental elements of religion. He believed religious communities, like sport, was formed through play – characterised by being separate to the ordinary and real, ordered within a certain time and space and united by a common interest.⁶⁵

However, once these play like phenomena became more complex or influenced by money and power, Huizinga argued they no longer existed separately to the ordinary and real. He then takes this a step further to suggest that when this happens, life and society cease to be played. Play, by losing its autonomy, loses its sense of spontaneity and joy and instead becomes overtly structured and organised.⁶⁶

While the Church has always been structured and organised, in the modern world it has never appeared more rigid and its power, never more centralised. Like sport, it may have lost its sense of spontaneity and joy, or its members may not feel free when participating in the church community, feeling more like subjects than participants. Thus, for many, their trust in the Church has declined and they are less active in ceremony, ritual and in upholding traditions, ultimately signifying a decline in the Church's community.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE COMMODIFICATION OF PLAY

For Huizinga, the commodification of play had drastic consequences for society. In its purest form, the play element was a driving force behind citizens

⁶³'Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012–2013,' *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, accessed 21 December 2016

⁶⁴ Barney Zwartz, 'A thinning flock of Catholics at all-time low,' *The Age*, September 13 2013, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/a-thinning-flock-of-catholics-at-alltime-low-20130922-2u8ri.html>

⁶⁵ Huizinga, J., *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1950, 5

⁶⁶ Huizinga, J., *Homo Ludens*, p. 5

coming together to develop the values, principles, spirit and relationships that revealed democracy at work.

However, when play lost its autonomy, the ownership of play and the prevailing values of playing were no longer owned by the community. Instead, play was owned by the Culture Industry and was sold to consumers. The values of play mirrored those of the business model in the capitalist world, which were largely imposed by the Culture Industry who used play as a tool to help serve their own interests and ensure they remained at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy.

Furthermore, the relationships that consumers shared with play, and with each other, were increasingly determined by their consumption of sport and therefore were based on the ideals, values and principles imposed by the Culture Industry. No longer was the culture of a society founded in the spontaneous, carefree, fun, autonomous element of play.⁶⁷

The consequences of such transformations have been discussed by many cultural theorists for hundreds of years. One of the first studies of the commodification of culture was by the Frankfurt School of Research, and in particular Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer. In their most famous work, *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that when culture items, such as play, are commodified and incorporated into the Culture Industry, culture becomes homogenised and somewhat simplified. The values, principles and messages that consumers are exposed to through their consumption of such culture are limited and potentially not advancing the common interest or common good. Furthermore, the dominant messages are no longer determined from folk culture such as play or the coming together of the grass roots of society, but are enforced from the top-down by 'culture manufacturers.' As such instead of communities forming through 'play forms', play was instead merely a mirror of the dominant ideals of the Culture Industry, which served to benefit the ruling elite.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Huizinga, J. *Homo Ludens*, p. 30

⁶⁸ Adorno, T., and Horkheimer, M., 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in Curran J., (ed), *Mass Community in Society*, Edwin Arnold, 1977, p. 349

Therefore, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, the common good and common interest of a community that once developed in play forms is now lost. The community is no longer created from the grass roots of a society, or through play. Instead it is shaped by an industry concerned with generating economic capital.⁶⁹

In his book, *Understanding Power*, Noam Chomsky discusses how sport as entertainment can reduce active participation within society, while encouraging passive consumption.⁷⁰

Chomsky noted that while we have experts within the sporting industry; every supporter of the game considers themselves as an expert too. Many supporters often believe that their expertise and knowledge of the game is as good as those who are paid to analyse the game. They believe that their comments are as valid as any so called expert, and as a result, feel comfortable challenging almost any coach or expert on any issue of the game. Chomsky noted that this is unusual and almost unique to sport.

Chomsky also noted that their willingness to challenge any expert shows that many supporters and consumers of popular sport give much of their time and attention to sport.⁷¹ Play is now sport and very much part of the entertainment industry. It is now a business, consumed by spectators. It is serious and talked about every day of the week in newspapers, boardrooms, pubs and lounge rooms. It is part of real and ordinary living, yet it is no longer able to develop active participation within a community. As Chomsky writes, this new form of organised sport mirrors the business world we live in. Furthermore, he, like Adorno and Horkheimer, argues that it serves as a tool to distract the masses from being active participants within society.⁷²

⁶⁹ Huizinga, J., 'The play element in contemporary civilisation', p. 206

⁷⁰ Chomsky, N., *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, in Mitchell, R., and Schoeffel, J., (eds), Scribe Publications, Carlton North, 2002, p. 98

⁷¹ Chomsky, N., *Understanding Power*, p. 99

⁷² Chomsky, N., *Understanding Power*, p. 101

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE COMMUNITY AND ITS DEMOCRACY?

In his book, *The Society of the Spectacle*, French Marxist theorist and philosopher, Guy Debord, argued that authentic social life had been replaced by the spectacle – a representation of authentic life. Debord stated that “all that was once directly lived has become mere representation,”⁷³ arguing that active, genuine, authentic participation within society had been replaced by the consumption of the spectacle. Debord argued that the spectacle simulated authentic social life, but was in reality a passive, corrupted version of social life. According to Debord, the relationship between the spectacle and the citizen had superseded the community. That is, the spectacle had supplanted genuine activity and “the social relationship between people is mediated by images.”⁷⁴

Furthermore, Debord argued that the ‘spectacular society’ and the economic principles which have stimulated the ‘entertainment and spectacle age’ has diminished the quality of life in society and the relationships between its citizens.⁷⁵ As Debord stated in Thesis 1 of *The Society of the Spectacle*, “All that was once directly lived, has become mere representation.” This reduces the individual’s ability to attain a true sense of community and active participation in society. As such, citizens are less likely to feel a genuine sense of belonging and self-worth.

If play once enabled society’s citizens to form communities by coming together to enjoy a common, enjoyed activity that was autonomous and separate from other parts of society, then the commodification of play means the dynamic of the community and the way the community is formed and defined has changed.

The significance of this is illuminated by the work of Thomas Frank, who in his book, *One Market Under God*, argued that today’s definition of what constitutes a community is largely based on individual interests and has money at the core of an individual’s freedom within a community. Frank discusses the American Financial Industry to argue the shift towards individual incentives

⁷³ Debord, G., *The Society of the Spectacle*, transl. Nicholson-Smith, D., Zone Books, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1994, Thesis 1

⁷⁴ Debord, G., *The Society of the Spectacle*, Thesis 4

⁷⁵ For examples of Debord arguing this point, see: Debord, G., *The Society of the Spectacle*, Thesis 6, 10, 16, 17, 19

motivating citizens to participate within the community.⁷⁶ He also argues that money today underlies the foundation and building blocks of community. In doing so, Frank argues that the financial industry has become the model of this new form of community, encouraging mass participation – meaning for the millions of people playing the stock exchange, the market represents *them* and acts in *their* interests and on *their* behalf.⁷⁷ For them, playing the stock exchange reinforces the community and democratic notions that countries such as Australia, for example, was committed to at its founding – active participation, in common with others, as a community.

However, Frank argues that this type of community is not real. He argues that play on the stock exchange is based on the potential to accumulate economic capital and therefore participation in the stock exchange market is based more on individualism than a collective good.

Frank argues that participants playing on the stock exchange celebrated *their* economy doing well; however *their* freedom was increasingly dependent upon economic capital. Their freedom to reach their full potential within the community was determined by how much economic capital they could accumulate and how much it enabled them to consume.⁷⁸

Using this example, the stock exchange provides a model for the whole of society – including sport. Increasingly, many of society's institutions have placed the objective of profit-making at the forefront of their operation and decision making. In sport, this has happened to such an extent that the 'play element' has been commodified – money is made by players from playing, spectators pay money to stadiums and clubs to watch players display their talents and media outlets broadcasting play as an item of entertainment have reaped millions from broadcasting play as a form of entertainment to its consumers. Therefore, while communities still exist in some way through participating in play, money now underlies their existence.

⁷⁶Frank, T., *One Market under God: extreme capitalism, market populism and the end of economic democracy*, Vintage, London, 2002, p. 92.

⁷⁷ Frank, T., *One Market under God*, pp. 95

⁷⁸ Frank, T., *One Market under God*, p. 98

CONCLUSION

As this paper has shown, when play is free, creative, spontaneous and unrestricted it encourages citizens to actively participate in something which they enjoy, in common with others. Furthermore, when we play, we show our full and whole self and see the full self of others, enabling those who play together to form relationships. As the whole self has been revealed, the relationships are built on trust, which forms the foundations of community.

It is through the formation and operation of the community that democracy is manifested. Within the community participants are encouraged to actively engage and participate together, towards a common good. Importantly, the community must facilitate the freedom individuals require to fully engage in the community, to develop and to reach their full potential where each member of the community trusts the other members to work in the common interest.

As the above analysis has highlighted, if play is transformed, the community, and subsequently democracy, is undermined. When play is commodified, it is less spontaneous and creative. Importantly, it is also less free. Instead it is carefully managed and packaged meaning that for those who play, they are restricted in revealing their full, creative selves. For those who consume play, they are now less likely to actively contribute within the community – instead they are passively consuming play as entertainment.

Furthermore, when play is packaged by the entertainment industry, it can be utilised to serve the interests of the industry, rather than the common interest of the community. That is, play can be utilised to reap profits for athletes, sports administrators, media owners and other members of the Culture Industry. This can mean the common interest or ‘greater good’ is overlooked for individual interests, or the interests of a relative few – generally to make profits.

And, as highlighted above, for those in positions of power, organised play and ‘packaged play’ as entertainment can be used to keep the masses at bay, or to ensure they are less active in the community and in contributing to a common good. The consequences of this is that the community and democracy are undermined. The notion of trust appears particularly damaged.

This paper has highlighted that the freedom of play stimulates relationships based on trust. These relationships form the basis of community. Within communities, members are trusted to work together for the common good and in the interests of others. It is this trust that enables citizens to act freely and unguarded within the community. Furthermore, by contributing within the community, citizens are able to feel a sense of self-worth and develop and reach their full potential.

When play is transformed into a commodity, and money becomes one of its most prevalent characteristics, individual interest can supersede the common interest, thus compromising trust, the community and democracy.

Therefore, the role of play in developing communities and upholding democracy is clear. Even in professional sports some sense of freedom, spontaneity, carelessness and creativity must remain key characteristics of play. Furthermore, professional sporting bodies must take an active role in encouraging and facilitating participation in sport and play at the grassroots level to ensure citizens freely engage in play and have the opportunity to develop strong relationships based on trust. Failure to do this will undermine community and democracy.

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