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The Māori All Blacks and the Decentering of the White Subject: Hyperrace, Sport, and the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

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In this article we examine a range of media discourses surrounding the continued existence of the Māori All Blacks, a “racially” selected rugby side, and a specific public controversy that erupted in New Zealand over the selection of former All Black great Christian Cullen for the Māori All Blacks in 2003. Having never played for the Māori All Blacks or publicly identified as Māori, Cullen claimed *tangata whenua* status via *whakapapa* (genealogical connection) to his Ngāi Tahu grandfather. We argue that Cullen’s selection emerged as a contentious issue because of the fragmentation that the inclusion of his “Whiteness” within the confines of “an Other” team (i.e., the Māori All Blacks) brought to bear on traditional colonial binaries of race in the context of late capitalism. Finally, we locate the debates over Cullen’s selection and the continued existence of the Māori All Blacks in relation to the current racialized political climate that has fueled a Right-wing reaction to the growing Māori self-determination movement.

Dans cet article, nous examinons une série de discours médiatiques néo-zélandais entourant l’existence continue des All Blacks, un club maori qui fait de la sélection « raciale », et la controverse publique entourant la sélection de Chris Cullen pour le club en 2003. N’ayant jamais joué pour les All Blacks ou ne s’étant jamais identifié comme Maori, Cullen a demandé le statut de tangata whenua par le biais de whakapapa (un lien généalogique) à son grand-père Ngāi Tahu. Nous suggérons que la sélection de Cullen est devenue un point contentieux à cause de l’inclusion de sa « blancheur » au sein d’une équipe vue comme « Autre », déstabilisant ainsi les binaires coloniaux traditionnels associés à la race. Enfin, nous situons les débats entourant la sélection de Cullen et l’existence continue des All Blacks maoris en relation avec le climat politique et racial actuel qui nourrit une réaction conservatrice et de droite face au mouvement grandissant d’auto-détermination maori.

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We read about the injustices that have been done to the Māori more than 150 years ago, and that they want what is rightfully theirs. Well, how many times do we have to make full and final payments to them to right the “wrongs” . . . We condemn South Africa for the apartheid policies that they had, but we are no better. The only difference is that it is OK to be racists if you are Maori. There are so many government bodies and groups that actively promote teams, etc., that are available only to Maori. The Maori All Blacks is wrong. If you are not good enough to get into the All Blacks, then you shouldn’t be able to go into a team that excludes white. That is racism. But it’s acceptable if you are a Māori. (Mehrtens, 1999, p. 7)

A number of scholars within the sociology of sport community have taken up Susan Birrell’s (1989) call for more sophisticated analyses of racial issues and sport, focusing in particular on issues of racial identity (Grainger, 2006; Hughes, 2004; Markovitz, 2006; Staurowsky, 2000). Most recently scholars have engaged new issues pertaining to whiteness in relation to a variety of political-economic and sociocultural contexts (Brayton, 2005; Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005; King, 2005; King, Leonard, & Kusz, 2007; McDonald, 2005). Consider Cosgrove and Bruce’s (2005) examination of the media coverage of the death of New Zealand-born sailor and adventurer Sir Peter Blake in 2001. For Cosgrove and Bruce (2005), Blake’s death was a critical moment in the reproduction of whiteness in New Zealand that allowed media commentators to reposition the centrality of the white male subject in the national imaginary:

Through a process of ignoring race while representing Blake as the kind of man who epitomized the way New Zealanders would like to see themselves, the media effectively, if temporarily, reanchored whiteness as the central metaphor for national identity. (p. 349)

Cosgrove and Bruce (2005) alerted the reader to the current struggle occurring over the centrality of white male subjectivity by locating the discussion in the specific context of relations between New Zealand’s indigenous *Māori*¹ and white *Pākehā*² populations.

The current article picks up on this theme through an analysis of New Zealand’s most racially contested sporting “text,” the New Zealand Māori rugby team (commonly and hereafter referred to as the Māori All Blacks³). Consider the recent debates over the team’s legality, highlighted in 2004 when former New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU)⁴ chief executive, David Rutherford, called the team’s “race-based” selection policies illegal in relation to contemporary employment laws. Rutherford suggested that in the new era of professional rugby, “any player could take a personal grievance against their employer on the basis of improper selection policy” (“Maori selection,” 2004, p. 3). In turn, the eminent New Zealand rugby purist, commentator, and former chairman of the provincial Otago Rugby Football Union, Ron Palenski, responded to Rutherford’s comments by defending the team based on its conventions, suggesting the team was “not racial enough:”

Maori rugby is one of the aspects that sets New Zealand apart from the rest. . . . Maori rugby, if it is to continue to be respected and taken seriously, has to be more rigid in checking the ethnic bona fides of its players. A legal challenge

could come not because of the racial nature of the selection, but because the selection is not racial enough. (2004, p. 1)

Palenski's reference to legal challenges in relation to the "ethnic bona fides" of players demonstrates that the team's racial signification has recently been undergoing reconfiguration. In this article we argue that the increasingly business-like approach taken by New Zealand's national rugby administrators reflects a broader societal shift from "imperialism" to "multinationalism" (Bargh, 2007). Inadvertently, this has led to a devaluing of racial binaries previously upheld by the Māori All Blacks.

In the era of multinationalism, it is our contestation that the Māori All Blacks has largely become a farm team for one of New Zealand's most recognizable icons, the All Blacks (i.e., New Zealand's national rugby team). Some context must be provided to qualify this statement. The southern hemisphere rugby season is currently defined by two major international fixtures: the Super 14 (a relatively recent professional rugby competition between provincial teams from New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa), which begins in February and ends in May, and the Tri-Nations international tournament played between national teams from New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa, which typically begins in June and ends in July. Since the creation of this seasonal format in 1996 (see Hope, 2002), the Māori All Blacks have typically been selected alongside the All Black and the Junior All Black (formerly known as New Zealand A) squads following the conclusion of the Super 14. The coordinated selection enables the NZRU to keep those players who are next in line for All Black honors match-fit and under the scrutiny of All Black selectors. The Junior and Māori All Blacks have, therefore, emerged as valuable farm teams for the All Blacks.⁵

Up until recently only those players who were both visually and culturally accepted as Māori made themselves available to play for the Māori All Blacks. However, the transforming significance of the Māori All Blacks has meant that the team's traditional race-based selection policies have become increasingly diluted to enable as many top-level players as possible the opportunity for continued exposure. Thus, genealogical as opposed to cultural affiliation to Māori identity has been foregrounded by the NZRU. It should be pointed out that historically a multitude of genealogically eligible players (but with little cultural affiliation) chose *not* to play for the Māori All Blacks because of official and unofficial racist selection policies in New Zealand rugby and the broader social stigma of identifying as Māori.⁶

Inevitable tensions regarding the policy change erupted in 2003 (a Rugby World Cup year) when former All Black great Christian Cullen was selected to play for the Māori All Blacks.⁷ Having never played for the Māori team previously or publicly identified as Māori, Cullen claimed indigenous status via *whakapapa* (genealogical connection) to his Ngāi Tahu⁸ grandfather. Many New Zealand rugby fans and pundits greeted Cullen's newfound indigenous identity with derision and cynicism. Cullen was not selected for the All Blacks in the 2003 Tri-Nations squad because of a reoccurring knee injury and subsequent poor form. Cullen's iconic status, however, meant that his bid to be included in the World Cup squad selected later that same year could not be easily dismissed, and thus, he was selected to play for the Māori All Blacks in their upcoming test matches against Tonga and England. The selection allowed Cullen to be exposed to international rugby in the

hope that he would regain his lost form and, subsequently, a position in the All Black 2003 World Cup squad.

The public controversy over the selection issue was further inflamed by Cullen who contemptuously suggested he was eligible for the Māori team because, “You only need a little fingernail, don’t you?” (Butcher, 2003, p. 39), while sarcastically noting that he would have to learn *te reo* (the Māori language) and the Māori All Blacks’ prematch *haka* (“vigorous dances with actions and rhythmically shouted words,” Moorfield, 2005, pp. 18–19). It should be noted that Cullen’s sarcasm was most likely directed at the NZRU and the All Black selectors for requiring him to undergo the pretense of playing for the Māori All Blacks to regain a place in the All Black team that for seven years previous had been regarded as a certainty. Of most significance to this article, however, is that the public cynicism over Cullen’s selection into the Māori team focused less on his athletic prowess and primarily on the displacement of Cullen’s whiteness into a traditionally “brown” team. That is, many commentators, fans, and pundits regarded Cullen as “white” and, therefore, ineligible to play for the Māori All Blacks.

The debates over Cullen’s selection also occurred at a time when the continued existence of a racially selected sports team (i.e., the Māori All Blacks) came under intense public criticism. The criticism over the Māori All Blacks stemmed from growing discord with Māori separatist initiatives, which intensified in 2004 and led to one of New Zealand’s most racially divisive political moments. By 2004 it was increasingly clear that previous Pākehā tolerance of Māori political assertiveness was waning thin, leading to a prominent Right-wing backlash that rearticulated Māori claims to indigenous rights as “Māori favoritism” and “reverse racism.” For example, in early 2004 Don Brash, the then leader of the opposition National Party, delivered his now infamous speech on *Nationhood*, which castigated the “dangerous drift towards racial separatism in New Zealand” (2004, p. 2). Brash promised that a National Government would “remove divisive race-based features from legislation,” arguing that “there can be no special privileges for any race” (2004, p. 14). Brash’s speech rejuvenated the flailing National Party, which gained 17 points immediately following his address—an unprecedented gain for a New Zealand political party. The growing antagonism toward Māori favoritism also led to reactionary politics by the governing Labour Party who, for instance, ratified the Foreshore and Seabed Act, which disqualified the Māori right to govern traditional preserves. The Act led to the resignation in protest of Māori Labour MP Tariana Turia, who subsequently led New Zealand’s largest ever political protest march from the top to the bottom of the North Island. Later, Turia formed the Māori Party, which successfully ran in the 2005 election gaining seven parliamentary seats. In all, “The supreme irony of 2004 is that it began with a speech that shamelessly sought to submerge Maori in some kind of ethnic melting pot but ends with Maori stridently asserting their political identity as never before” (Armstrong, 2004, p. 12).

At this time, the swelling Right-wing constituency reinterpreted the Māori All Blacks as a team emblematic of broader issues of reverse racism. For instance, the lengthy quote from a letter to the editor that introduces this article is a particularly aggrieved assessment that identifies the Māori All Blacks as a prominent example of racism in reverse. Sports commentators argued that Māori All Black players gain an unfair advantage over their Pākehā counterparts by being afforded additional visibility. In many ways, this criticism is not without merit given that

the All Black squad selected for the 2003 Tri-Nations tournament, for example, eventually formed the bulk of the All Black World Cup squad picked later that year. Thus, the exposure given to players like Cullen in the Māori All Black games was crucial to their chances of World Cup selection. The commentary below by a columnist for the Right-wing *National Business Review* locates Cullen's selection as an example of rampant "political correctness" (i.e., a catchphrase and code for "reverse racism" in New Zealand):

Three cheers for Christian Cullen. The All Black great has been criticised in recent days for the "convenient" way he has finally discovered his "long lost" Maori heritage and is "cynically" using it to try to reclaim his place in the national team that is building for the World Cup. . . . The unfair advantage international Maori rugby provides for certain players over other ethnic groups in the battle to gain inclusion in the All Blacks has reached a pivotal stage. I always believed that with the arrival of professionalism this outdated anachronism of the rugby game would disappear. Instead, the *politically correct* in the [NZRU] continue to provide a platform for one group to perform at a higher level . . . while other deserving applicants have been "banished" to the anonymity of club football. Even a fool can see there is no justice in a system that provides a second tier of major competition for one race but excludes the others, including the two major racial contributors to New Zealand rugby, the Europeans [Pākehā] and the Pacific Islanders. (Verdon, 2003, p. 12, emphasis added)

The current article argues conversely that the Māori All Blacks' selection policy has changed not because of *political correctness*, but rather because the team has been transformed and commodified to support the All Blacks and the commercial imperatives of the NZRU. The article also argues that the transformation has inadvertently exposed the processes that uphold the power of whiteness. Players who are visually and culturally understood as white, such as Cullen, have been compelled to play for an indigenous sporting team in the hope of gaining or regaining All Black honors. Consequently, the invisibility of whiteness has been exposed, and we argue that the decentralization of white subjectivity is symptomatic of the postmodern condition. To provide an analysis of the postmodern condition, the article foregrounds one of the most preeminent theorists of postmodernity, Fredric Jameson.

Theory: Fredric Jameson and Whiteness

As a rubric for situating the above racial milieu within an even broader analysis of the postmodern condition, the following theoretical discussion focuses on Fredric Jameson's descriptive yet immensely influential and polemic essay *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1984). Jameson is regarded as the "best known and most influential Marxist literary and cultural critic writing in English . . . offer[ing] one of the most compelling historical analyses of the general climate of postmodernism" (Sim, 2001, p. 288). Of particular interest to the current article is Jameson's description of the "decentering of the subject," a resultant of an economic shift from modernism's "imperialistic stage" to "late capitalism."

According to Jameson, late capitalism constitutes the purest form of capital yet to have emerged: “a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas. This purer capitalism of our own time thus eliminates the enclaves of precapitalist organization it had hitherto tolerated and exploited in a tributary way” (p. 78). The decentering of the subject is key to what Jameson views as the “hitherto uncommodified areas.” For Jameson, the subject of modernism contained a central core-being that made possible “affect,” or a depth of feeling stemming from the distance between a true self and emotion. In contrast, the flat individual of late capitalism has experienced a “waning of affect,” in which a core-being and depth “is displaced by the fragmentation of the subject . . . the ‘death’ of the subject itself—the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego or individual . . . the *decentering* of that formerly centered subject or psyche” (1984, p. 63). Jameson suggests the decentering of the subject is inextricably tied to the commodification of culture and, in turn, the end of style, uniqueness, and individuality, where “aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally” (1984, p. 56). Recently, the decentered subject has been epitomized by the figure of Bateman in Brett Easton Ellis’s (1991) novel *American Psycho* in which the human and the social “are collapsed into the visual and the material so that sex, bodies and relationships are as indistinguishable, disposable and meaningless, or meaningful as clothes, CDs and interior design” (Edwards, 2006 p. 131).

Jameson has been criticized for ignoring race, gender, and sexuality in his analyses. Indeed, a criticism of modernism and, to an extent, postmodernism has been its white hetero-patriarchal centrism (hooks, 1990). White men have been at the vanguard of both the modernist and postmodernist movements. When theorizing first the subject of modernity and then the decentered subject of postmodernity, there is often an implicit and silent understanding that the subject has been/is a white male. Although Jameson, for instance, seemingly discusses arbitrary figures, such as Van Gogh, Munch, and Andy Warhol, the privileging of white men in his essay speaks to the invisibility of white masculinity. References to people of color and women, for example, seldom enter into his text, and discussions of race, gender, and sexuality simply do not feature.

When, however, Jameson’s theory of late capitalism is employed with race in mind, the centrality of whiteness to the conception of the subject becomes lucid. Jameson is critical of the postmodern condition, describing a fragmented image culture that consumes stereotyped and clichéd sets of nostalgic images, rather than engaging with genuine history and projections of culture in the future. According to Jameson, the consumption of nostalgic images by the subject of postmodernity has led to a cultural “depthlessness” and “blankness.” For example, in the television program *The Sopranos*, lead character, Tony Soprano, consumes American heroic white masculinity through his viewing of old movies featuring Gary Cooper, Clarke Gable, and the like. The consumption of nostalgia demonstrates the blankness and depthlessness of Tony’s masculinity as he imbibes male self-confidence from a bygone era. A subjectivity based on image construction (as opposed to the belief in a stable core identity) is inherently destabilized or, in the case of Tony Soprano, stricken by panic attacks. Jameson views the decentering of the subject as tied to a loss of confidence in the way in which truth was conveyed under the conditions of modernism, conceiving of the unsettling nature of the postmodern condition in spatial terms:

Postmodern hyperspace—has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world . . . the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects. (1984, pp. 83–84)

In contrast to Jameson's criticism of postmodern culture, we argue that the decentering of the subject and white male subjectivity's lack of self-assurance, in particular, suggest an opening up of a space where previous racial and gender stratifications can be resisted or repositioned. For instance, if the notion of "postmodern hyperspace" is reconceived in racial terms to theorize a "postmodern hyperrace," then it is possible that the confusion and disorientation caused by late capitalist structures, which Jameson describes, is also taking place in terms of conventional racial stratification. Postmodern hyperrace suggests late capitalism will affect racial categorizations to move *beyond* modernity's racial binaries. That is, the decentralization of white subjectivity resulting from the influence of late capitalist structures produces racial diffusion and the reconfiguration of racial signifiers. For instance, within the objective conditions of modernism, the materiality of colored skin (the signifier) inherently held meaning (the signified), which became modernity's normalized racial truths. Under the conditions of late capitalism, however, there is no longer a one-to-one relationship between the signifier and the signified. Consequently, Wiegman (1995) argued that the rupture between the material body as signifier and the signified challenges the logic of race in the postmodern condition:

In the increasing production of simulated visual fields, in the deeply wrenching knowledge of an eye that continually misperceives, in the loss of epistemological assurance in the referent—in all of these, the logic of race attached to a corporeal essence is challenged at its most fundamental level of bodily belief. (p. 41)

One corollary of this is that the dichotomy of white and black, once thought to be real, is exposed as an illusion.

Hyperrace and the movement beyond conventional racial structures via the decentering of subjectivity is reminiscent of Homi Bhabha's notion of "hybridity." Hybridity refers to "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2003, p. 118). Like Jameson, Bhabha (1994) conceived of the postmodern (or postcolonial) condition spatially, arguing that hybridity enables a "Third Space." Bhabha suggested that imperial power attempts to essentialize and define indigenous cultures in relation to the West, but inadvertently, what is produced are hybrid cultures that inherently escape essentialist binaries. For Bhabha, the postcolonial condition produces undefined spaces between conventional subjectivities (Meredith, 1998). In the New Zealand context, for instance, the intermixture of indigenous and colonizer cultures does not produce discrete Māori and Pākehā cultures as pure and original; rather a space beyond such parameters is created where "we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this 'Third Space,' we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves"

(Ashcroft et al., 2003, p. 118). The current article argues, therefore, that the post-modern conditions produced by late capitalism have inadvertently decentered white subjectivity, creating a space where hybrid or hyperracial configurations are able to move beyond conventional racial binaries. The location of Christian Cullen's whiteness within the Māori All Blacks, we suggest, is indicative of such racial and spatial transformations.

Method

The genesis of this research project began in May 2003 when Cullen's Māori All Black selection became the focus of a national debate. Using the database Factiva, searches were conducted for articles, columns, and letters to the editor in New Zealand daily newspapers and magazines to discern how Cullen's selection was mediated in relation to broader debates over contemporary race relations. Searches were initially restricted to those articles, columns, and letters that addressed Cullen's selection between May and September 2003. What emerged in the initial analysis, however, was the frequent articulation of the Cullen controversy in relation to the continued existence of the Māori All Blacks as a racially selected sports team. This was especially so in relation to the broader notions of reverse racism and Māori favoritism already discussed. Subsequently, the database search was extended to include any articles, columns, and letters to the editor that discussed or debated the ongoing existence of the Māori All Blacks between 1999 and 2004. This time period roughly corresponds to the eventuation and proliferation of a popular Right-wing political constituency and, as a reactionary upshot, a period of heightened Māori political activism.

In this article the Māori All Blacks and the media discourses surrounding the team are treated as cultural texts to be deconstructed. In postmodern thought, "text" refers not only to written materials, but also to painting, architecture, information systems and to all attempts at representation, whatever form this may take. For postmodernists, it would be . . . accurate to state that the world is constituted by text" (Sim, 2001, p. 370). Jameson's project, for example, compared and contrasted cultural texts from the imperialistic and late capitalist stages. In perhaps his most famous comparison, Jameson deconstructed and compared Van Gogh's *Peasant Shoes* and Andy Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*. In his analysis of *Peasant Shoes* he suggested the work inherently signifies "some vaster reality which replaces it as its ultimate truth" (1984, p. 59). In comparison, Warhol's work was considered to turn "centrally around commodification" signaling "the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness" (p. 60).

Results and Discussion

The current article follows the work of Jameson (1984) by examining the transformation of the Māori All Blacks from an imperialistic text to a text of multinational capital. The analysis "exposes [the] text's internal differences and attends to its repressed contradictions" (Sim, 2001, p. 222) to demonstrate that the Māori All Blacks in the imperialist era were originally conceived as a team for Māori players who were visually and culturally understood as "native" athletes. It

is our contestation that in the imperialist era the team signified latent segregation and upheld a Māori/Pākehā racial binary. Under the conditions of late capitalism, however, previously held assumptions about the team are undermined by, for instance, Cullen's Māori selection causing the text to deconstruct. That is, Cullen's whiteness and his seemingly haphazard recourse to a distant genealogical connection to justify his racial identity caused the text to implode based on its own definition and assumptions as a team reserved for indigenous athletes.

The Māori All Blacks as an Imperialistic Text

In this section the Māori All Blacks are deconstructed as a cultural text of the historical economic phase referred to by Jameson as the "stage of imperialism." The term *imperial* is also used in recognition of New Zealand's colonial history as part of the British Empire, a situation that ostensibly, at least, continues to this day. Until the 1950s and even the 1960s and 70s, most New Zealanders predominantly constructed their identities in relation to being British subjects as part of a broader network of Commonwealth countries, even though most New Zealanders had never visited Britain. New Zealanders (including many Māori) generally referred to Britain as "home." Thus, the formation of the Māori All Blacks as a national indigenous sporting team occurred, seemingly paradoxically, within the context of a burgeoning Commonwealth nation with strong markers of imperial identity. It is also important to note here that the NZRU has historically had strong ties with its imperial equivalent, Britain's Rugby Football Union formed in 1871 (Dunning & Sheard, 2005). Today, the NZRU remains under the auspices of the International Rugby Board, which is housed and essentially controlled by the four "Home Nations": England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

The primary task when deconstructing the Māori All Blacks as an imperialistic text is to expose "its repressed contradictions" (Sim, 2001, p. 222). The central paradox of the Māori All Blacks is its continued sustenance by the NZRU. That is, why would an imperial administrative body and key promoter of imperialistic nationalism accommodate a segregatory and potentially subversive text within its jurisdiction? The paradox is even more puzzling given the egalitarian orthodoxy (verging on socialism) of New Zealand's developing nation. To unpack the contradiction, the NZRU's supposed racial egalitarianism needs to be first deconstructed. Renowned New Zealand historian, Sir Keith Sinclair, enunciated rugby's egalitarian rhetoric in racial terms: "Rugby stimulated national pride and national feeling. It brought the nation together, providing a focus for a feeling of unity. It brought Pākehā and Maori together" (cited in Zavos, 1992, p. 79). According to popular New Zealand rugby writer and creator of historical popular memory, Spiro Zavos, the NZRU has been an inclusive administrative body that has promoted rugby as a site where the two races blend together:

The hostility to the native race was never shown by administrators of Pakeha players in our national game. Rugby in New Zealand, from the 1880s, provided the paradigm for how New Zealand society should have opened itself up to the Maori community last century and this century. . . . The rugby community was the one important force in New Zealand life that behaved in the proper way. (1992, pp. 77–80)

The surface reading of the Māori All Blacks by commentators such as Zavos suggests the team signifies racial inclusion and imperial egalitarianism. In contrast, our reading suggests the egalitarian rhetoric served to veil the notion of Māori/Pākehā segregation, which more accurately reflected New Zealand's race relations. The inherent segregatory nature of the Māori All Blacks remained unspoken (unconscious) within dominant discourses. The subjugation of the Māori All Blacks under the panoptical governance of the NZRU (Ryan, 2005a, 2005b) reflected an imperial master reigning tight control over his native subjects. Ryan (2005b) does not make this link, but the NZRU's micromanagement of the Māori All Blacks, which he outlines, suggests that they were keenly aware of the team's importance to the construction of dominant discourses surrounding race and the Commonwealth nation.

In reality, the rhetoric of egalitarianism was a smokescreen for an unofficial, but accepted, segregation, both in rugby and in broader New Zealand society. In New Zealand's developing imperial nation, Britain's class system was transported to the antipodes and transformed so that New Zealand became largely segregated along racial lines. Here, an "inferior" native race was accommodated in the margins of a superior white settler society. The enclosure of Māori rugby within a larger national administrative body perfectly resembled this unofficial segregation. From 1840 (when New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi, was signed) up until the late 1950s (i.e., during the period of mass Māori urbanization), the largely rural Māori population were free to retain a number of their cultural vestiges but were only able to perform these practices in segregatory fashion—that is, as token gestures within broader society (e.g., the *haka* performed before All Black games) or on unmarked rural reserves (i.e., on *marae* [communal gathering places]). Given this situation, authentic Māori culture was wholly segregated from Pākehā society, while tokenistic performances were held up as signifiers of a racially inclusive imperial nation. The section to follow examines how, under the conditions of late capitalism, Christian Cullen's Māori All Black selection and the transformation of the Māori All Blacks into a farm team for the All Blacks has problematized the imperialistic racial configurations of Māori and Pākehā and the egalitarian rhetoric exposed in the current section, while bringing to the fore the previously unspoken segregatory nature of the Māori All Blacks.

The Māori All Blacks as a Text of Late Capitalism

Can you imagine the outcry if Australia had a separate Aboriginal team or South Africa a separate black team like the New Zealand Maori. Imagine the South African quota system (supposedly to avoid racism) being applied to the New Zealand situation. The All Blacks would have a completely different composition. Racism comes in many forms! (Macpherson, 2003, p. B2)

In a previous section, it was claimed that the dominant discourse surrounding the Māori All Blacks in the imperialist era reflected a broader egalitarianism that was, in actuality, a smokescreen for the reality of Māori/Pākehā segregation. It is our suggestion that because of Cullen's fame, his selection into the Māori All Blacks has especially served to deconstruct the egalitarian rhetoric and expose the team's segregatory character. In the context of allegations of Māori favoritism and a

growing discourse of reverse racism that inflamed the debate over Cullen's selection, many conservative commentators began to condemn the Māori All Blacks based on the team's previously hidden segregatory underpinnings. The racism inherent to a team founded on a race-based selection policy is seemingly obvious. Yet, it has not been until recently that the New Zealand public has chosen to recognize the team's intrinsic prejudice. This suggests that previously unthreatening texts (such as the Māori All Blacks) are being reinterpreted in attempts to reassert Pākehā dominance. It is a feasible analysis that Cullen's selection prompted a conservative rearticulation of the social significance and meaning of the Māori All Blacks. As Cosgrove and Bruce (2005) convincingly demonstrated, in New Zealand the contestation over the centrality of white subjectivity is regularly displaced and simultaneously repositioned. Similarly, it is our position that the threat posed by the *new* Māori All Blacks, while prompting a rearticulation of the dominant discourse also reveals a decentering of white subjectivity. One of the strengths of Jameson's theorization is that he recognized late capitalism's "prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas" (1984, p. 78), which inadvertently included white male subjectivity. Thus, the conservative reinterpretation of the Māori All Blacks as a team based on indigenous privilege reveals how the transformed space (based on racial hybridization) that the team now occupies functions to destabilize the centrality of white subjectivity and expose white privilege.

In many of the following commentaries, the authors either explicitly or implicitly identify a context of reverse racism in which being Pākehā is now equated to being a victim. In some respects, this sort of commentary is accurate; the centralized white subject and white privilege are victims of the postmodern condition. In the following two letters to the editor, the segregatory nature of the Māori All Blacks is unveiled, exposing a destabilized white subjectivity:

The only example of the racism in New Zealand rugby is the existence of Maori rugby. Racism is not about calling people names. Racism is not a European privilege. (Jessep, 2003, p. B2)

I believe we have one glaring example of racism in rugby, the Maori All Black team is racially selected and I'm sure if there was a team selected solely for Europeans there would be a loud protest from a large sector of the community. (P. Williams, 2003, p. B2)

Both letter writers clearly demonstrate the threat to whiteness that the current assertion of Māori rights is invoking by desperately blaming Māori for New Zealand's transforming racial spaces. These and the following letters conveniently overlook the fact that the Māori All Blacks are administered within a historically Pākehā-controlled organization, the NZRU:

As long as we have racially selected teams there can be no question as to the presence of racism in our rugby. I strongly object to the continuance of Maori rugby teams chosen entirely on racial grounds. I know this is a traditional practice but the Maori/non-Maori relationship under the present PC [politically correct] rules frowns on racial separation and while the non-Maori sector observe the new era, the Maori do not. This is their whole trouble. (I. Davies, 2003, p. B2)

The letter writer suggests that “the present PC rules frowns on racial separation,” unconsciously revealing the imperialistic era’s unofficial support of racial segregation.

In all national mythologies, the manner and style of collective memory is crucial and inherently political (Bell, 2003). Endemic to all the letters presented in this section is historical amnesia. Consider the following excerpt from a letter to the editor:

The civil rights movement which took place in the US during the 1960s was about preventing segregation. It was about ending “white-only” buses, sports teams and the exclusion of other races. How are Maori-only scholarships, Maori-only at Waitangi, and the Maori All Blacks any different? We all share this country, and if I were to start a white-only national rugby team I would be considered racist. (Thomson, 2003, p. 4)

This letter writer attempts to disavow the Māori All Blacks on a basis of civil rights, blissfully ignoring the fact that as African Americans were fighting and dying for their civil rights, the NZRU sanctioned a white-only All Black team to tour South Africa in 1960. Moreover, 22 years before this letter the aforementioned National Party in cohort with the NZRU sanctioned the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand (including a much lauded match between the Māori All Blacks and the Springboks that ended in a draw). The tour was in direct opposition to the *Gleneagles Agreement*, an international accord banning contact with South African sporting teams because of South Africa’s apartheid system. The letter writers’ historical amnesia speaks to the pervasive power of New Zealand’s imperialistic egalitarian discourse, while explaining the ease with which many New Zealanders have come to consciously blame Māori for the disruption of white privilege. That is, the current dominant discourse highlights the unwillingness of New Zealanders to acknowledge their racist histories, while pointing to the threatening nature of the new Māori All Blacks with regard to transforming race-based spaces.

The Māori All Blacks, Hyperrace, and Whiteness

We do laugh sometimes. Paul Tito is a redhead and Tony Brown is a 5ft 8in blond, there are a few Samoan and Tongan descent players . . . so I think it’s more of a New Zealand invitational team than anything. (cited in Stokes, 2006)

The above quote from Morgan Turinui (an Australian of Māori descent who played his debut test match for Australia in 2003) encapsulates the section to follow. Turinui sarcastically speaks of the challenge to imperialistic racial configurations that the new Māori All Blacks pose, especially in reference to visual understandings of race (in this instance, hair color and body type). Turinui also describes the new Māori All Blacks as an “invitational team,” highlighting the team’s transformation into a farm team. The NZRU’s continued administrative control over the Māori All Blacks and sponsorship by multinational companies means the team has been subjugated to the NZRU’s larger aims of profit maximization and its corollary—maintaining the global notoriety of the All Blacks as the most dominant team in

world rugby history. Although Jameson marks the 1940s as the shift from the “stage of imperialism” to multinational capitalism, for the purposes of this article, the NZRU’s shift from imperialistic to multinational administration of the Māori All Blacks occurred during the mid-1990s. During this time the NZRU underwent a dramatic transformation from an amateur sporting body with ties to national corporations (including Steinlager and Canterbury Ltd.) and the State broadcaster (Television New Zealand), to a corporate-modeled sporting organization with affiliations to major global corporations (including sponsors Adidas, Iveco, and MasterCard) and media conglomerate News Corporation (Hope, 2002). These profound alterations in the structure and organization of rugby in New Zealand mimic Jameson’s understandings of historical economic transformation in which a traditional administration driven by an imperial impetus to protect the interests of the local is replaced by an organization focused on profit maximization and the commodification of local culture.

Under these conditions the transformation of the Māori All Blacks into a farm team for the All Blacks has led to the dilution of racial binaries. The following commentator identifies this transformation by sardonically suggesting that several high profile “white” players could have benefited from “resurrecting” their forgotten indigenous genealogy:

The Maori team becomes hugely more important as a display case for talent capable of making the jump to the All Blacks if required. No wonder Cullen, Braid and ex-Cook Islander Ryan Nicholas were so anxious to resurrect their forgotten whakapapa. Perhaps Andrew Mehrtens, Simon Mailing and a few others should examine their fingernails. (“Hanging on,” 2003, p. 8)

In 2003, the Māori All Black Coach, Matt Te Pou, quickly responded to criticism surrounding the perceived whiteness of his selections and, in so doing, unintentionally explains the new policy of racial dilution under the logic of this “moment”: “They’re all Maori, the whole lot. I’ve got a couple of guys in the team that are Fijian and Maori, Europeans and Maori, Irish, German, it’s just the type of life we’re in at the moment” (“It’s more,” 2003, p. 31).

The reconfiguration of racialized spaces inadvertently acts to destabilize the centrality of whiteness:

Half the Maori All Blacks look curiously white, which doesn’t make sense, unless they’ve been dabbling on make-up. Are ring-ins allowed to lend weight to the team? Or were the selectors wearing powerful sunglasses? In my book, real Maori, the brown ones, are being discriminated against, and spectators conned. If a team is labeled “Maori” we want it to look like the real thing, not a custard imitation. (I. Williams, 2003, p. A10)

It is possible that Cullen’s inclusion in the Māori All Blacks signals the death of the white masculine subject in New Zealand. Through Cullen’s selection, New Zealanders became aware of his hybrid genealogy. Previously, Cullen had been a picture postcard of Pākehā masculinity (i.e., he is incisive, intelligent, strong, and dependable). Cullen’s Māori All Black selection, therefore, undermined the centrality of white masculinity previously upheld by the racial binaries of Māori and Pākehā by presenting a racialized figure that floated beyond such polarizing descriptions.

In his reading of E. L. Doctorow's novel *Ragtime*, Jameson argued that the method of signification "makes it virtually impossible for us to reach and thematize those official 'subjects' which float above the text but cannot be integrated into our reading of the sentences" (1984, p. 69). As explained in the following, Cullen's Māori All Black selection occurred at a time when the future of New Zealand's racial polarity was increasingly under threat, when previously entrenched racial subjectivities are replaced by subjects who float beyond dominant interpretation:

Census data show that around half of Maori men and women have non-Maori partners. Even amongst those Maori affiliating only with the Maori ethnic group, a third have non-Maori partners. In many social policy debates, Maori and non-Maori are treated as separate groups. Increasingly, however, the two populations cannot be seen as entirely distinct. (Callister, 2003, p. 1)

In Edward Said's (1978) conception of "Orientalism," white colonial power is sanctioned through definitional control of the colonized. Said argued that the colonizers define themselves as normal, superior, and rightful holders of power through the allegorical construction of the Other as abnormal, inferior, and the rightfully dispossessed and powerless. The hybridization of races in the postcolonial situation inherently challenges the traditional definitional control Said described. Similarly, we perceive Cullen's selection as challenging Pākehā privilege (Bhabha, 1994).

Given what is possibly at stake then, the intensity with which the New Zealand public entered into the Cullen controversy was understandable. For example, the following column identifies Cullen's selection as symptomatic of a dystopic racialized future where "fading skin tones" challenge the nation state (i.e., "One New Zealand"):

Given its respected status in New Zealand's rugby history and prominent inclusion in the Maori renaissance, it is unlikely that the [Māori All Blacks] relevance will fade apace with the skin tones. It will not be too many generations ahead before most of the country will be able to claim Christian Cullen's "little fingernail" quota of Maori blood if they choose, and not just the near-600,000 who happily identify the link today. Maori youthfulness, with something like 38% under the age of 15 compared with 22% for non-Maori, and procreativity—2.5 per "Maori" woman compared with the non-sustaining 1.8 for non-Maori—it might frighten the One New Zealand Foundation but it means the selection pool for the Maori rugby team gets increasingly interesting. ("Hanging on," 2003, p. 8)

Cullen was not the only player selected in the 2003 Māori All Blacks to gain extra notoriety because of his previously understood whiteness. For example, Daniel Braid (a player on the verge of All Black selection in 2003) was selected in the 2003 Māori All Blacks via his previously publicly unrecognized Māori genealogy. Like Cullen, Braid was regarded as too white to play for the Māori All Blacks, and his selection highlighted the contested space of racialized configuration. The following columnist outlines how previously held notions of race based on "blood quantum" become confused under the conditions of late capitalism:

Apart from Cullen, Auckland flanker Daniel Braid looks like a poster boy for robust Nordic good health and athleticism. Alternatively, a poster boy for the Cancer Society and the need for such pale-pink skins to never be seen outdoors without ample sunscreen and a hat on top. But Daniel's father, Gary [a former All Black], recalls that his wife, Sue, was a 16th Maori or thereabouts—no one was really counting and, in the perfect world, nor should they. That made one in 32 parts of Daniel's genetic make-up Maori. Or was that one in 64, since no one was really counting? ("Hanging on," 2003, p. 8)

It is our suggestion that the confusion about whiteness and Māoriness brought about by the selection of players such as Cullen and Braid into the Māori All Blacks has served to decenter white subjectivity and, in so doing, has exposed racial disparity. In parodic style, typical of postmodernity, this telling quote speaks to the realities of imperialism for indigenous people: "I expect that Christian Cullen will want to change his ethnicity again after learning he will live 10 years less than his pakeha teammates" (A. Davies, 2003, p. 6). Indeed, Māori on average do die 10 years earlier than their Pākehā counterparts, and accordingly, Cullen will quickly want to repatriate his Pākehāness. This quote picks up on the postmodern fragmentation of modern identities where the *absolute* of difference is able to emerge. That is, the space between traditional racial binaries is made prominent revealing "the enormous cost of these signifiers" (Hill & Every, 2001, p. 105).

Another cost of the traditional Māori/Pākehā binary in New Zealand has been the silencing of the voices of New Zealand resident Pacific peoples, who have struggled to make prominent their position in the space between the conventional Māori/Pākehā divide. In the following parodic commentary, a New Zealand Sāmoan columnist questions how Cullen can play for the Māori All Blacks but cannot play for Sāmoa (to which Cullen has more cultural affiliation). The commentary is an important one to this debate because it insists on the recognition of non-Māori/Pākehā identities in New Zealand identity construction:

It's true that he has a matai [chiefly] title from his grandmother's village in Samoa. True, too, that we mentally ticked him as one of ours each time he won All Black selection. No matter that the bloodline was mostly German, we felt sure that the talent was purely Manu Samoa. So are we going to get precious about the fact that our boy, Christian Cullen, has suddenly invoked Ngai Tahu links through his grandfather? ("With multiple," 2003, p. 16)

In the last five years, the increasing prominence of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, such as Sāmoans, Tongans, and Fijians, in popular culture such as sport and film (e.g., *Sione's Wedding*) has inherently challenged the preserve of "kiwiness" typically reserved for the descendents of the white settler and indigenous populations. The following commentary from newspaper columnist and politico Michael Laws exemplifies a Right-wing response to the transforming racial iconography in popular culture:

With Tana Umaga's [a Sāmoan born New Zealander, who captained the All Blacks] captaincy, the Polynesian takeover is near-complete. There will need

to be a Samoan verse added to the national anthem soon—new stars like Mose Tuali'i and Sione Lauaki requiring a conscious effort at pronunciation. Add Fijian flier Sitiveni Sivivatu to the mix and little wonder next month's Pacific Lions test is being billed as Polynesia "A" versus Polynesia "B." (2004, p. C8)

Laws's piece clearly shows a resistance to the recognition of Pacific peoples as true New Zealanders (Grainger, 2006). Interestingly, in his analysis of postmodern architecture, Jameson outlines that the postmodern building mirrors the "vernacular of the city . . . no longer attempt[ing], as did the masterworks and monuments of high modernism, to insert a different, a distinct, an elevated, a new Utopian language into the tawdry and commercial sign system of the surrounding city" (1984, pp. 80–81). Similarly, in the reconfigured conception of New Zealand rugby, team compositions respect the vernacular of New Zealand's rapidly diversifying racial landscape and, as a consequence, challenge the racial "monuments of high modernism."

Conclusion

The logic of late capitalism has led to a postmodern condition in New Zealand in which the centrality of the white subject is being decentered and white privilege unmasked. The term *hyperrace* has been coined because we believe racialized subjects are being produced that defy definition via the racial binaries constructed since colonization. In this newly conceptualized space, anything is possible. For example, the previously mentioned political coleader of the Māori Party, Tariana Turia, plausibly suggests that eugenics is the answer to assimilating Pākehā into a Māori nation: "From a *whakapapa* context, inter-marriage does not weaken the blood ties or reduce the blood connections which we value highly in our society. Having mixed ancestry may be of great benefit for building nationhood" (Laugesen, 2004, p. A3). The emergence of a reverse eugenics discourse to breed whiteness out of white privilege is profound, given that early colonists (in alignment with cultural evolutionism) promoted eugenics as a way to breed the savage out of the savage. More importantly, Turia is pointing out that regardless of hybridity and blood quantum, *whakapapa* allows those people who have genealogical ties to Māori ancestors access to indigenous history and culture.

What does this new de-racialized space mean for Māori, however, given that Māori identity has in part been formed through colonial construction? Historically, the dominant constructions of Māori culture and people have been uncritically reified by white New Zealanders. In reaction, however, many Māori have come to construct themselves in relation to their oppressor. The paradox of the postcolonial condition is that while Māori have come to "stridently assert their identity," postcolonial Māori identity (especially in its radical political forms) has been constructed in reaction to the Māori/Pākehā binary. As explained previously, Māori and Pākehā identities are inextricably tied. Thus, the transformation of racialized spaces under the conditions of late capitalism also impacts traditional conceptions of Māori identity. For example, Cullen's selection has functioned to illuminate the contested nature of the Māori All Blacks as a hyperracial space (i.e., as a space where there are hybrid forms of racial identity), yet the ratified selection policy based

on multinational ideology certainly does not endorse conventionalized notions of Māori culture. Māori political activist and current coleader of the Māori Party, Pita Sharples, for instance, advocates that being Māori is not a matter of blood quantum (which serves to divide people) but rather a matter of belonging. Simply put, if a person culturally identifies as being Māori, then they are Māori. Thus, in relation to Cullen's selection into the Māori All Blacks, Sharples argues:

It doesn't bother me whether he's one-32nd or one-half; what would interest me is whether he's a Maori when he walks into a nightclub or when he walks on the marae, and not just to get into a rugby team. When we define Maori in terms of culture it's a belonging thing rather than an exclusive thing. I don't applaud or condemn; as a Maori I want the strongest team we can have, but that's not the issue. The issue is when is a Maori a Maori, I don't know, it's in the heart. ("It's more," 2003, p. 31)

Sharples speaks of identity markers that are clearly at odds with the logic of late capitalism, in which cultural identity is *deeper* than the type of superficial identity that can be summoned through blood quantum to play for a rugby team in the professional era. Indeed, Sharples's commentary speaks to the most disturbing feature of the postmodern condition—the flatness and blankness of the commodified cultural text so aptly described by Jameson. For much of their history, the Māori All Blacks provided honor for the Māori community because of their successes against the best international teams in the world and because the players were both culturally and visually Māori. Commodification processes, however, have sanitized the Māori All Blacks culturally and in terms of skin color. Cullen's brazen remarks following his selection epitomize this cultural sanitization.

In this extremely insightful quote, Jameson suggests that in the imperialistic stage there was a hegemonic "face" that could be a focus of political activism:

If the ideas of a ruling class were once the dominant (or hegemonic) ideology of bourgeois society, the advanced capitalist countries today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm. Faceless masters continue to inflect the economic strategies which constrain our existences, but they no longer need to impose their speech (or are henceforth unable to). (1984, p. 65)

In relation to race, Jameson's ideas suggest that the decentering of the white subject also decenters Māori identity because of the inherent juxtaposition described by Said (1978). That is, Māori identity and Pākehā identity have only been enabled in relation to one another, and therefore, the decentering of one will naturally decenter the Other. Māori, therefore, especially in their political assertions for self-determination, have come to frame their identity in relation to the descendents of New Zealand's white settler population. This colonial and postcolonial population, at least, had a face, but in a hyperracial future, how do Māori configure their political subjectivity? The logic of late capitalism in affecting the postmodern condition has decentered white subjectivity, and in so doing, it has configured a hyperracial spatialization in which hybrid racial identities function to challenge white privilege. Māori like Pākehā are, however, not immune to the "prodigious

expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas” (Jameson, 1984, p. 78) and thus also face a future in which an identity based on a false sense of tradition will become untenable.

Notes

1. *Māori* is a generic word that initially meant “normal” but has come to represent New Zealand’s indigenous peoples.
2. The word *Pākehā* stems from precolonial words such as *pakepakehā* and *pākehakeha* (and the like) common to certain parts of the Pacific, referring to “imaginary beings resembling men, with fair skins” (Williams, 1975, p. 252). The word has evolved throughout colonization to commonly refer to “New Zealander of European descent” (Moorfield, 2005, p. 108).
3. The name the Māori All Blacks imitates New Zealand’s national rugby team, the All Blacks.
4. For most of its existence New Zealand rugby’s national administrating body has been called the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU); however, it is now called the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU). Thus, for the sake of ease, we refer to it throughout as the NZRU.
5. In 2003, there was neither a New Zealand A squad nor a Junior All Black team to showcase and try out non-Māori players on the fringe of making the All Black World Cup squad later that year.
6. The selection policy for the Māori All Blacks has historically been based on genealogical ties. Originally, the policy stemmed from clauses of the Native Land Act in terms of entitlement to land, based on the applicant being “a Maori or a half-caste Maori.” When the Native Land Act was revised in 1947 under the Maori Land Act and the subsequent definitional clause was amended, the NZRU also changed their selection policy to include “a Maori or a descendant of a Maori” (personal communication; This information was provided by one of the anonymous reviewers of the current article who, therefore, cannot be named).
7. Between 1996 and 2002 Cullen had been a regular fixture in the All Blacks, earning himself the reputation as one of the greatest ever All Blacks of his particular position. Cullen amassed 60 games for the All Blacks, including 58 test matches (games played against other national teams).
8. Ngāi Tahu are the predominant people of New Zealand’s South Island.

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