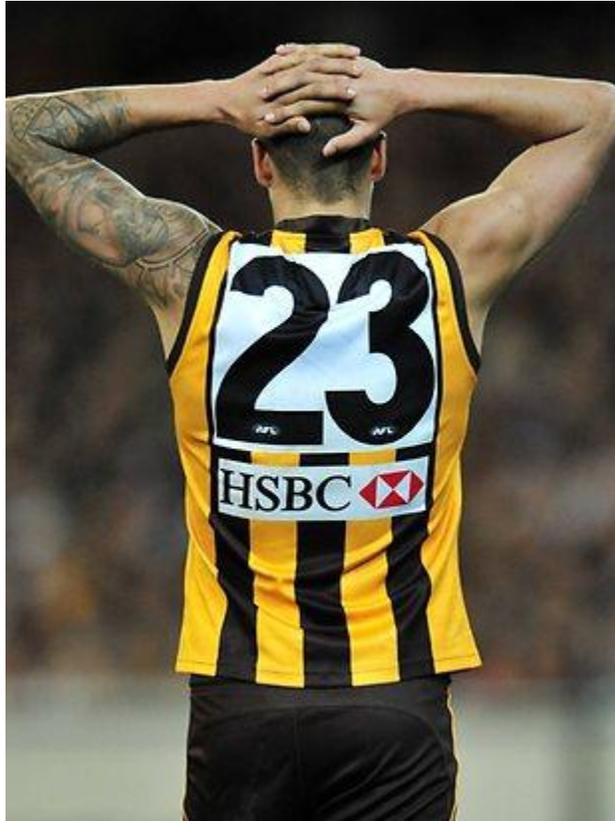


'Magicians', 'freaks' and 'marvels': how the media 'Others' Indigenous AFL players.

Assessment Item 3: Research Project

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Question

How does the media 'Other' Indigenous AFL players?

Abstract

Although overt racism has been virtually eradicated from the AFL, the media's depiction of Indigenous players covertly reinforces negative racial stereotypes. A content analysis of the round eight game between Hawthorn and Fremantle on May 19 2012 reveals a demonstrable difference in the way Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal footballers are portrayed by television, radio and newspaper commentators. This match is typical of the broader regime of representation of Indigenous players, which emphasises natural ability, physical superiority, instinct and 'magic' rather than mental discipline or cognitive skills. These imagined values simultaneously idolise the Aboriginal body and infantilise the Aboriginal mind, with the overall effect of 'spectacularising' the Aboriginal AFL player. With several Indigenous identities recently criticising this 'common sense' stereotype, this article investigates how existing representational practices 'Other' Indigenous AFL players and entrench the dominant racial hegemony.

Key terms

AFL, Indigenous Australia, media, stereotypes, racism.

Introduction

Since the likes of Graham 'Polly' Farmer, Barry Cable and Maurice Rioli blazed the trail for Indigenous involvement in the Victorian Football League - now the Australian Football League (AFL) - in the 1960s and '70s, the relationship between Aboriginal players and mainstream Anglo-Australian culture has significantly improved (Hallinan & Judd 2009, p. 2359; Judd 2010, p. 3). Despite making up merely 2.7% of the Australian population, 10% of AFL players in 2012 are Indigenous, illustrating Aborigines' success in the sport (Mifsud 2012). The AFL's implementation of its Anti-Racial and Religious Vilification Laws in 1995 (Judd 2010), and initiatives like Indigenous Round and the Indigenous Employment Strategy (Mifsud 2012), have successfully promoted the inclusion of Aborigines within the code.

But despite effectively stamping out racial vilification, the AFL has failed to eliminate racism in the form of discursive myths regarding Aboriginal players (Hallinan et al. 2005, p. 70; Hallinan & Judd 2009, p. 2373; Judd 2010, p. 5). The media is central to this 'Othering' process, which stereotypes Indigenous footballers as naturally gifted, but lacking the cognitive attributes of their White colleagues. Put simply, the "common sense" understanding (Hall 1980, p. 134) of Aboriginal footballers is that they possess "brawn" rather than "brains" (Coram 2007, pp. 396-405). The representation of Indigenous AFL players as physically supreme but psychologically primitive perpetuates the Anglo-Australian perception of Aborigines as intellectually inferior (Hallinan et al. 1999, Hallinan et al. 2004, Coram 2007, McNeill 2008, Hallinan & Judd 2009, Judd 2010). The media's infantilisation of Indigenous players, combined with the emphasis placed on their imagined physical superiority and instinct for the game, has the overall effect of 'spectacularising' the racial 'Other' (Judd 2010). With several prominent Indigenous figures appealing to the AFL community to scrutinise their unconscious reproduction of these dominant hegemonic values (Goodes 2010, *Breakfast* 2011, Cockatoo-Collins 2012, Mifsud 2012), this research article will examine how the media entrenches the imagined difference between 'us' and 'them', and legitimises deeply ingrained racial stereotypes.

Literature Review

Stuart Hall's 1997 article "The Spectacle of the 'Other'" is the pre-eminent resource on the stereotyping of minorities. Hall explains that all images carry both a denotative (literal) and a

connotative (thematic) level of meaning (Hall 1997, p. 228). Although these symbolic, connoted meanings are ambiguous, a preferred meaning is privileged by the reproduction of similar representational practices, in a process labelled "intertextuality" (Ibid., p. 232). The repetition of common values - a dominant "repertoire of imagery" (Ibid.) - purifies a certain discourse (or social "common sense" (Hall 1980, p. 134)), and establishes ideological hegemony.

Due to the potential ambiguity of connotative meaning, people who are significantly different to the majority are prone to stereotypes (Hall 1997, p. 229). Difference is a compelling theme of representation because it is essential to meaning; 'white' means 'not black', 'bad' means 'not good' (Ibid., p. 234). Hall argues that minorities are often exposed to binary forms of representation - hero/villain, masculine/infantile, ugly-because-different/attractive-because-exotic - and often encompass dual qualities simultaneously (Ibid, p. 229). These extreme opposites usually imply a dominant pole, where one is normalised, and the other is 'exoticised' (Ibid., p. 231). Because Black athletes are different, they are 'Othered'; their identities are stereotyped in direct contrast to the normalised mainstream culture.

McCarthy, Jones and Potrac (2003) apply Hall's notion of the 'Other' to English football, explaining how stereotypes grounded in historical prejudices present themselves in media coverage of the sport. Through a content analysis of Premier League television broadcasts, McCarthy et al. demonstrate how mediated sport upholds dominant racial hegemony by propagating the view that Black players rely on natural ability and physical superiority, rather than the cognitive abilities of their White colleagues (McCarthy et al. 2008, p. 218). By attributing Black success to this imagined genetic advantage, commentators subjugate minorities by implying they are less intellectually capable (Ibid., p. 226). Considering many White viewers have little personal experience of Black culture, the racial myths normalised by mediated sport are particularly powerful and are therefore likely to influence attitudes towards Blacks in everyday life (Ibid., p. 234).

Toni Bruce (2004) demonstrates how commentators' naming patterns contribute to the 'Othering' of Black athletes by polarising race and contributing to racial stereotypes. In a content analysis of television coverage of American basketball, Bruce found that commentators were more likely to emphasise unusual or exotic Black nicknames or first names to add colour to their coverage (Bruce 2004, p. 871). These unequal naming patterns represent a significant boundary between White and Black players; segregating 'normal' White culture from the culture of the 'Other' (Ibid., p. 861).

Additionally, non-reciprocal forms of address not only subjugate Blacks - the disproportionate use of nicknames for Blacks portrays them as infantile (Ibid., p. 863) - but act as a signifier of racial difference, connoting the imagined values the mainstream audience attaches to Black culture; specifically, "all brawn, no brains" (Coram 2007, p. 405). Interestingly, Bruce blames the reproduction of these racial myths on a lack of training for commentators, who thoughtlessly employ clichés and stereotypes to make sense of their coverage in a systematically racist society (Bruce 2004, p. 863).

Stella Coram (2007) considers how this kind of stereotyping transfers to the Australian context. Coram explains how the media's idolisation of Aboriginal physicality, as well as unequal naming patterns, portray Aboriginal athletes as "ape-like" (Coram 2007, p. 392). Like McCarthy et al. (2003), Coram believes that commentators' disproportionate emphasis on Aborigines' imagined genetic advantage - often described as "freakish" (Ibid., p. 398) - implies intellectual inferiority, echoing race logics grounded in the 18th Century (Ibid.). Failure, on the other hand, is attributed to perceived psychological weakness or flaw in character; an intellectual infantilism heightened by child-like naming patterns (Ibid., p. 404). The author identifies several myths that emerge from this 'ape-like' depiction, for instance, the instinctive savage, the destructive brute, and the attention-craving infant (Ibid., p. 405).

Writing from an Indigenous perspective, Barry Judd (2010) traces these stereotypes to Australia's colonial past. Judd argues that Anglo-Australia's patronising attitude towards the 'savage native' pervades the contemporary mediation of Aboriginal footballers, underpinning stereotypes of Indigenous players as child-like, instinctive and exotic (Judd 2010, p. 4). These myths are the result of deeply ingrained racial discourses regarding the Indigenous hunter-gatherer, whose supreme physical ability is tempered with crude intellect (Ibid.). The disparity between Aborigines' over-representation on the playing field and their under-representation in administrative positions reinforces the racial myth concerning Aboriginal intelligence, and limits the Aborigine to his role as an exotic performer of 'black magic' (Ibid., p. 6), a spectacle for Anglo-Australia to marvel over. This 'spectacularisation' of the racial 'Other' increases and entrenches the distance between 'us' and 'them' (Ibid.).

With several Indigenous identities criticising these stereotypes over the last two years, this research article is a timely discussion. AFL community development manager Jason Mifsud (2012), academic

Sean Gorman (*Breakfast* 2011), former player Che Cockatoo-Collins (2012) and current Sydney Swans captain Adam Goodes (2010) have all called for the media to shift their focus from Aboriginal players' perceived natural ability, physicality and flair towards qualities like hard work and mental discipline. With mediated AFL under newfound scrutiny, it is worth investigating how the current regime of representation 'Others' Indigenous footballers and reinforces the racial myths that 'spectacularise' Aboriginal players.

Methodology

My research article applies the methodology of McCarthy et al. (2003) and Bruce (2004) to the Australian context, in order to illustrate how mediated AFL perpetuates the racial myths outlined by Coram (2007) and Judd (2010). The content analysis features two components. Part one analyses commentators' descriptions of performance, to investigate whether Aboriginal players are excessively praised for their natural ability and criticised for their mental attributes compared to their White colleagues. Part two examines commentators' naming patterns, to consider if Aboriginal players are exposed to infantile terms of address that contribute to their portrayal as child-like and intellectually primitive.

The content analysis examines one AFL game where Aborigines feature prominently: Fox Footy Channel's broadcast of the round eight match between the Hawthorn Hawks and the Fremantle Dockers in Launceston on Saturday May 19 2012. It compares the portrayal of Indigenous Hawks forward Lance Franklin and midfielders Cyril Rioli and Shaun Burgoyne to three Anglo-Australian team-mates who play equivalent positions - Jarryd Roughead, Brad Sewell and Sam Mitchell - as well as three commensurate non-Indigenous opponents - Matthew Pavlich, David Mundy and Michael Barlow.

The first component quantifies positive and negative performance descriptors in three categories: natural, cognitive and overall. Natural descriptors refer to innate qualities, usually physical traits or 'god-given' talents, often relating to flair or style. Some typical comments include, "he was too strong", "silky skills", "good instinct", "he wasn't quick enough", and "brilliant mark". Cognitive descriptors relate to psychological qualities that are seen as the result of mental application, for instance, "lazy effort", "he took the wrong option", "clever kick", "brave tackle", "he's been inconsistent", "he needs to concentrate", or "courageous mark". The final category deals with

evaluations of overall performance, like "he's had a good first quarter", "he's been quiet the last 20 minutes", and "he's struggled to have an impact".

The second element of the content analysis pertains to the naming patterns employed by commentators. Three forms of address are tallied: surname only, first name and surname, or first name or nickname only. Using Aboriginal Hawthorn forward Lance 'Buddy' Franklin as an example, "Franklin" falls into the first category, "Lance Franklin" into the second", and "Buddy" or "Buddy Franklin" into the third.

Discussion

Part one: performance descriptors

Table one: performance descriptors by player.

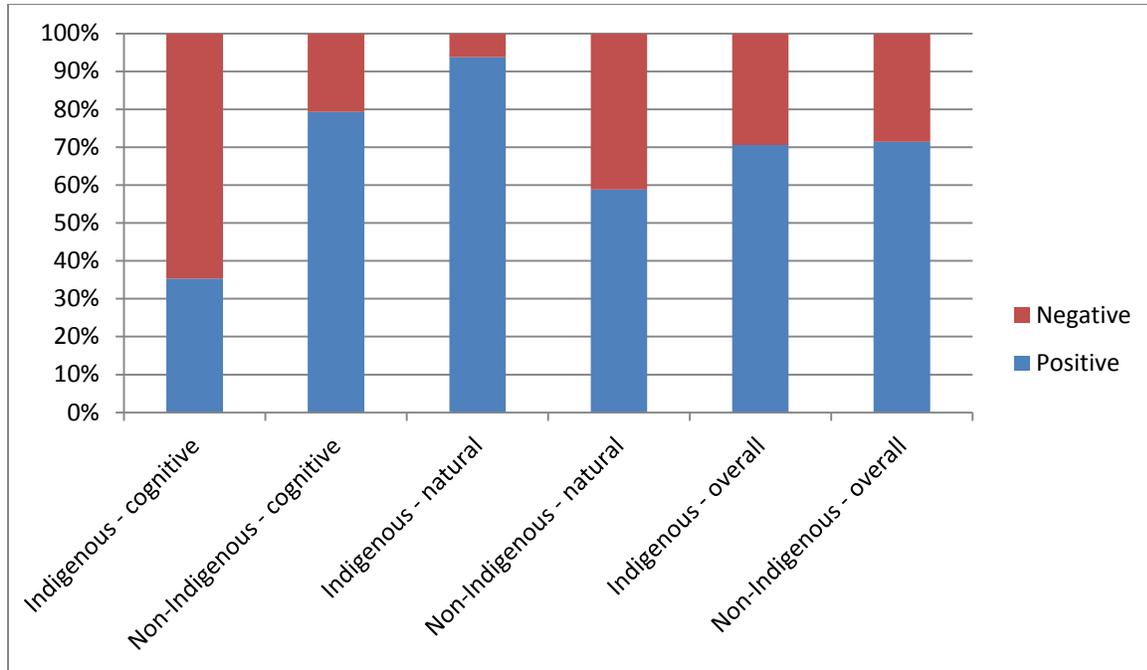
	Cognitive, positive	Cognitive, negative	Natural, positive	Natural, negative	Overall, positive	Overall, negative
Hawthorn - Indigenous						
Lance Franklin	3	5	11	1	3	3
Cyril Rioli	2	3	3	0	7	1
Shaun Burgoyne	1	3	1	0	2	1
Hawthorn – Non-Indigenous						
Jarryd Roughead	6	2	4	3	8	1
Brad Sewell	2	0	2	0	4	1
Sam Mitchell	7	1	0	1	7	2
Fremantle – Non-Indigenous						
Matthew Pavlich	1	2	4	0	5	1
David Mundy	3	1	0	2	3	3
Michael Barlow	4	0	0	1	1	2

Table two: performance descriptors by race.

	Cognitive, positive	Cognitive, negative	Natural, positive	Natural, negative	Overall, positive	Overall, negative
Indigenous - total	6	11	15	1	12	5
Non-Indigenous - total	23	6	10	7	25	10

Figure one: performance descriptors by race. The first two columns illustrate that Indigenous players were much more likely to be criticised for their cognitive traits (65%) compared with their Non-Indigenous colleagues, who were praised 79% of times. The third column shows how Aboriginal

players were almost universally lauded for their natural ability, whereas White players received mixed comments (column four). As expected, the fifth and sixth columns demonstrates that there was no difference between the evaluation of White and Black footballers' overall performance.



As anticipated, the Fox Footy broadcast of the Hawthorn vs. Fremantle game displayed no major discrepancy between the overall evaluation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous players, meaning no overt racism exists, where Aborigines were described as worse players because of their ethnicity. However, there was a significant difference between the portrayal of Aboriginal and White players in terms of the emphasis placed on natural and cognitive attributes. Indigenous players were more likely to be appraised negatively for their psychological attributes (collectively, 11 negative descriptors to 6), whereas White players were typically lauded for traits like cleverness, willingness to work and decision-making (collectively, 23 positive evaluations to 6). On the other hand, non-Indigenous players received a mixed evaluation for their natural ability (10 positive comments to 6), whereas their Aboriginal colleagues received almost unanimous praise for their physical qualities (15 positive comments to 1). This was influenced strongly by the commentators' obsession with Lance Franklin's perceived strength and speed, which attracted 11 positive evaluations.

Physicality

He's one of the most athletic key running forwards you'll ever see.

Jason Dunstall on Lance Franklin, *Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012

Buddy, the raging bull. Deledio taken to ground savagely by Franklin. Franklin, such an intimidating presence on the ground. He just threw him aside there.

Hamish McLachlan on Lance Franklin, *Richmond vs. Hawthorn* 2012

Aerobic capacity as well, probably a ten. He runs up and down the ground. It's not just pace and agility, it's that aerobic engine that is just enormous.

Mark Stevens on Lance Franklin, *The Sunday Rub* April 1 2012

Imagine being 100 kilos, 6'6", and you can run like that. That's just unfair.

Dermott Brereton, *Hawthorn vs. North Melbourne* 2012

JB: *He was a genuine freak.*

DF: *And a lot of the Indigenous boys are. Adam Goodes, he's done freakish things.*

James Brayshaw and Danny Frawley on Adam Goodes, *The Saturday Rub* May 29 2010

The muscle-bound Adonis, who can sustain a sprint few can match and a strength even fewer can tackle, sits just two goals shy of becoming the first player in a decade to reach the century before September.

Courtney Walsh on Lance Franklin, *The Australian* 2008

Despite a generally positive evaluation of Indigenous players, Fox Footy's broadcast of Hawthorn vs. Fremantle reinforces racial hegemony by attributing success to natural qualities rather than cognitive ability. This disproportionate emphasis on Black physicality - an imagined genetic advantage ["that's just unfair" (*Hawthorn vs. North* 2012)] (Hall 1997, McCarthy et al. 2003, Coram 2007) - is broadly evident in the mediation of the sport. The media "lionises" the Aboriginal body, portrayed as an instrument of brutality and violence (Coram 2007, p. 396) ["Buddy, the raging bull, Deledio taken to ground savagely by Franklin ... he just threw him aside there" (*Richmond vs. Hawthorn* 2012)], contributing to the stereotype of Aborigines as "savage" (Coram 2007, p. 399; Judd 2010, p. 4). The Indigenous footballer is depicted as hyper-masculine ["The muscle-bound Adonis" (Walsh 2008); "such an intimidating presence" (*Richmond vs. Hawthorn* 2012)] and physically superior ["that aerobic engine is just enormous" (*Sunday Rub* 2012); "Franklin can sustain a sprint few can match and a strength even fewer can tackle" (Walsh 2008)]. The repetition of this imagery purifies the myth of "freakish" Indigenous athleticism (Coram 2007, p. 398). This is problematic because it ignores the hard work and mental discipline their White colleagues are praised for, implying Aborigines are intellectually inferior. So even when Indigenous footballers are ostensibly celebrated by the media, they are subjugated by the normalisation of the myth that Aborigines are "all brawn and no brain" (Ibid., p. 404).

Instinct

Wasn't that just indicative of the instinct of Cyril Rioli. He's on the boundary line, he taps it inside and chases it himself.

Gerard Healy on Cyril Rioli, *Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012

JK: *He's a magician, this man.*

BS: *Jetta's dug deep into the trick bag there!*

John Kehoe and Brad Seymour on Lewis Jetta, *Sydney vs. North Melbourne* 2012

BM: *Enright and Rioli, Rioli brilliant here. Absolutely brilliant, Rioli!*

DS: *Aw, fantastic! That's what wins you matches.*

BM: *You can't coach that, can you.*

DS: *Nab, that's instinct.*

Bruce McAvaney and David Schwarz on Cyril Rioli, *Geelong vs. Hawthorn* 2008

While the success of bigger Aboriginal players (like Franklin) is typically ascribed to an imagined physical advantage, the achievements of smaller Indigenous footballers (like Rioli) are often attributed to another natural quality: instinct (Hallinan et al. 1999, p. 372; McCarthy et al. 2003, p. 229; Coram 2007, p. 393). The media's focus on intuition or "magic" (Hallinan et al. 1999, p. 69) has the same effect as idealising Black physicality, because it credits Indigenous athletic achievement to imagined natural qualities rather than discipline or mental application ["You can't coach that" (*Geelong vs. Hawthorn* 2008)]. Emphasis on non-rational behaviour implies limited cognitive development, like a low-order species merely mimicking developed society (Coram 2007, p. 399). Mediated AFL upholds these colonial racial discourses by normalising the perception of Aborigines' as intellectually inferior.

Part two: naming patterns

Table three: naming patterns by player.

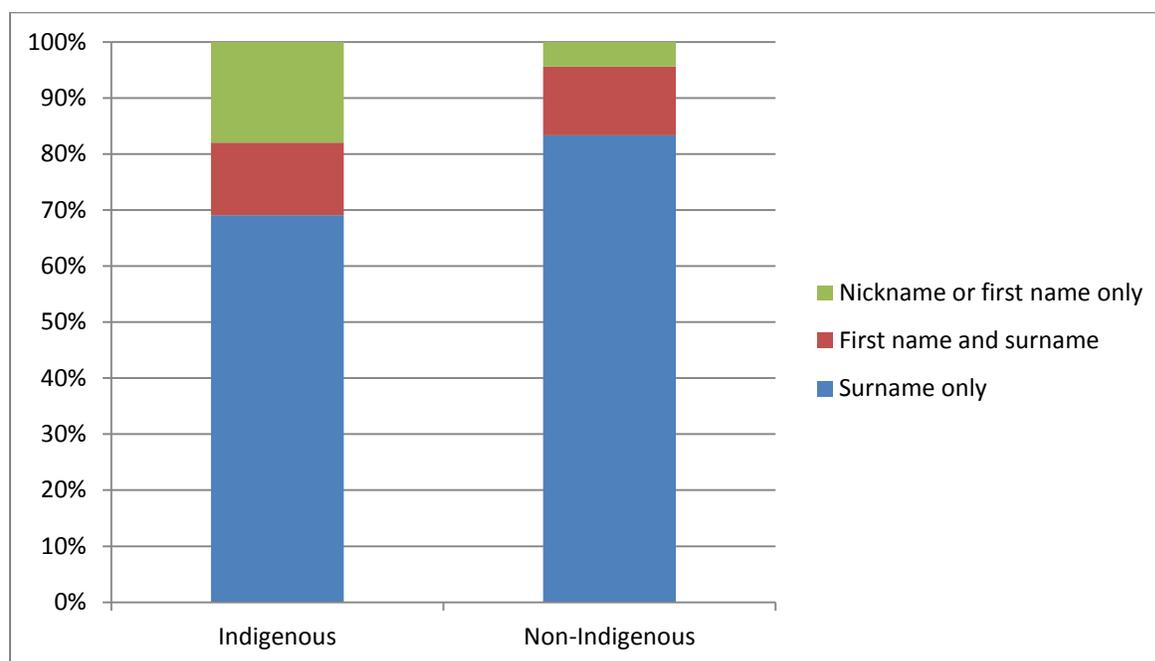
	Surname only	First name and surname	Nickname or first name only
Hawthorn - Indigenous			
Lance Franklin	46	9	13
Cyril Rioli	37	5	12
Shaun Burgoyne	13	4	0
Hawthorn – Non-Indigenous			
Jarryd Roughead	50	8	1
Brad Sewell	27	3	0
Sam Mitchell	25	14	0

Fremantle – Non-Indigenous			
Matthew Pavlich	19	0	8
David Mundy	26	0	0
Michael Barlow	23	0	0

Table four: naming patterns by race.

	Surname only	First name and surname	Nickname or first name only
Indigenous - total	96	18	25
Non-Indigenous - total	170	25	9

Figure two: naming patterns by race. This chart demonstrates that commentators were far more likely to use a nickname or first name only to identify an Aboriginal player, compared to his non-Aboriginal colleagues. Unequal naming practices reaffirm established racial hegemony.



The second element of the content analysis of the Hawthorn vs. Fremantle broadcast shows that Aboriginal AFL players are far more likely to be identified by an infantile form of address. Only three players (Franklin, Rioli and Pavlich) were referred to by nickname ("Buddy", "Cyril" and "Pav") more than once. Significantly, four of the six non-Indigenous players were never addressed by nickname or first name only, and one was nicknamed only once. On average, Aborigines were nicknamed eight times throughout the broadcast, compared to an average of 1.5 times for White players. Also, commentators less frequently used the most respectful form of address - surname only

- to identify Indigenous players.

Infantilisation

Cyril's the deepest forward, he's got Roughead now swapping places with him.

Gerard Healy on Cyril Rioli, *Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012

Dew with the left-foot slipper, long ball, Cyril's there, he leaves it for Buddy (roaring and laughter) Cyril Rioli, it was like a yo-yo! He picked it up and banged it through for a remarkable goal! Fair dinkum, it was like a yo-yo. Unbelievable, Cyril boy Rioli!

Brian Taylor on Cyril Rioli, *Geelong vs. Hawthorn* 2008

BB: *There was nearly goal of the year already, Chris Yarran.*

JB: *Chrissy Yarran, unbelievable.*

BB: *Mark of the year ...*

JB: *... junior boy Rioli.*

BB: *Yep, Cyril said.*

James Brayshaw and Billy Brownless on Chris Yarran and Cyril Rioli, *The Rush Hour* 2 April 2012

The three of them spend the whole interview grinning and looking for a chance to poke fun at one another, in that patently inoffensive way that sometimes exists among really good mates.

The trio's passion and exuberance bring an energy to Carlton, and can help puncture the earnest environment that can develop during the grind of an AFL season.

Warwick Green on Chris Yarran, Eddie Betts and Jeff Garlett, *The Herald Sun* 2012

The commentators' unequal naming patterns for Indigenous players constitute a significant racial boundary marker between Indigenous and non-Indigenous footballers. It is probable that commentators nickname Franklin, Rioli and Pavlich to familiarise their audience with recognisable, 'star' players (Bruce 2004, p. 869). This is especially likely in the case of non-Indigenous Pavlich, Fremantle's captain and six-time best-and-fairest award winner. However, the use of non-reciprocal forms of address for Franklin and Rioli entrench racial difference (Ibid., p. 862). Emphasising 'unusual' first names like Cyril, and pet names like Buddy ("Buddy" Franklin was the only player whose official name strap in Fox Footy's broadcast featured a nickname), heightens the perceived 'Otherness' of Indigenous culture, and connotes the broad range of racial myths attached to Aboriginal footballers (Ibid., p. 875).

Furthermore, commentators' use of infantile nicknames subjugates Indigenous players by portraying them as child-like. The application of diminutives (like "Eddie", "Chrissy" and "Jeffy") (Green 2012) and the term "boy" (*Geelong vs. Hawthorn* 2008) or "junior boy" (*Rush Hour* 2012) depicts Aboriginal

players as infantile, and therefore cognitively immature, leading to the boyish characterisation of Indigenous footballers ["fair dinkum, it was like a yo-yo" (*Geelong vs. Hawthorn* 2008); "the three of them spend the whole interview grinning and looking for a chance to poke fun at each other" (Green 2012)]. Interestingly, by simultaneously "lionising" Aboriginal players (Coram 2007, p. 396) and identifying them with infantile terms of address, mediated AFL demonstrates Hall's notion of binary representation, where minorities are seen to encompass polar-opposite, dual qualities: one dominant (hyper-masculine physicality) and one subordinate (child-like intellect) (Hall 1997, p. 229). Calling Franklin "Buddy" is akin to dressing Carl Lewis in red stilettos (Ibid., p. 233): it simultaneously amplifies Franklin's hyper-masculinity, while reinforcing racial hegemony by infantilising his identity. By 'Othering' Aborigines, unequal naming practices normalise the historical racial hierarchy.

Consistency

Consistency for Cyril: he is one of the Hawks' most electrifying players, let's hope he turns on a big one today.
Gerard Healy on Cyril Rioli, *Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012

DR: *That was undisciplined.*

JD: *That was silly. Very, very silly.*

Dwayne Russell and Jason Dunstall on Lance Franklin, *Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012

He kicked it to the advantage of David Hale, he didn't blaze away like I think a lot of people were expecting, just to let the big left foot fly.

Jason Dunstall on Lance Franklin, *Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012

I said, 'would Hawthorn be better off in six years, five years, their premiership window, if they offloaded a Cyril Rioli', whose best is absolutely magnificent - I mean, he's just wonderful to watch - but he's very inconsistent.

Wayne Carey on Cyril Rioli, *The Sunday Rub* May 20 2012

I think he will be prone to rough talk, I think he will be prone to inattention, I think he will be prone to lack of concentration, and I think he will be prone to disrupting the flow of Melbourne, if that's possible, on the ground.

Sam Newman on Liam Jurrah, *The Friday Rub* May 18 2012

That is just woeful and it's in his head. He wants to have shots from everywhere.

Jason Dunstall on Lance Franklin, *Hawthorn vs. Melbourne* 2012

Like the repetition of infantile nicknames, the media's focus on the perceived inconsistency of Indigenous AFL players propagates the common sense myth that Aborigines' are intellectually primitive and psychologically vulnerable (Hall 1980, p. 134; Hallinan et al. 1999, p. 70). Their portrayal as physically savage, non-rational and playfully infantile reaffirms the belief that Indigenous

players are unreliable, untrustworthy, unsuitable for responsibility and "prone to inattention" (*The Friday Rub* May 2012). The Hawthorn vs. Fremantle broadcast presented several instances where the commentators criticised Aboriginal players' lack of mental application ["undisciplined"; "very, very silly" (*Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012)], which is perceived as an innate flaw that undermines their supposedly abundant talent ["That is just woeful and it's in his head" (*Hawthorn vs. Melbourne* 2012)]. In Fox Footy's pre-game analysis, two of the three 'keys' to a Hawthorn victory related to Indigenous players' cognitive skills: Franklin's ability to cope with pressure while kicking for goal, and Rioli's "consistency". Mediated AFL's characterisation of Black players as erratic and temperamental reflects deeply ingrained racial stereotypes of Aborigines as intellectually crude.

Spectacularisation

Rioli, outside of the boot, spectacular!

Loads up long, that's a spectacular kick.

Rioli! Spectacular tackle.

Dwayne Russell on Cyril Rioli and Lance Franklin, *Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012

GH: *He could almost go the distance here, big Buddy.*

DR: *The crowd want him to.*

Gerard Healy and Dwayne Russell on Lance Franklin, *Hawthorn vs Fremantle* 2012

Feeling freaky? Itching to see something completely out of the box?

There is no hotter show in Melbourne tonight than at Telstra Dome, the venue for what promises to be a Buddy spectacular.

Franklin provides reason to flick on a television and gather the family for an act compelling because of its capacity to flow fluidly from fantastic to flawed, usually as a result of his famously inaccurate kicking.

Courtney Walsh on Lance Franklin, *The Australian* 2008

Buddy is certainly the most exciting big man in the game at the moment ... He's a delight to watch, I love watching him play. Cyril Rioli is the other one, you pay your money just to come and watch those two.

Wayne Carey on Lance Franklin and Cyril Rioli, *The Sunday Rub* April 1 2012

Melbourne captain Brad Green said Jurrah played pure "instinct" football that made him as unpredictable as he was spectacular.

"We don't know what Liam is going to do sometimes. He is a freakishly talented footballer. He just goes on instinct," Green said yesterday before yesterday's closed training session at the Gabba.

"Liam is a player people love to watch."

Greg Davis on Liam Jurrah, *The Herald Sun* 2011

It was a stark reminder that when the "Cyril and Buddy Show" clicks into gear, the Hawks are as devastating as anybody.

Mark Stevens on Cyril Rioli and Lance Franklin, *The Herald Sun* 2012

BT: *From 45 out ...*

LD: *... gee whizz ...*

BT: *Cyril, you are a marvel!*

Brian Taylor and Luke Darcy on Cyril Rioli, *Hawthorn vs. St Kilda* 2012

By legitimising a series of racial myths - specifically, natural ability, infantile character and mental crudeness - mediated AFL has the overall effect of 'spectacularising' the Aborigine. These various connoted meanings combine to form a "meta-message" about race and 'Otherness' (Hall 1980, p. 136; Hall 1997, p. 229). Here, the dominant hegemonic code is the expectation of a spectacle - a "show" (Walsh 2008, Stevens 2012) - from Aboriginal footballers. The entrenched regime of representation portrays Indigenous players as naturally gifted but intellectually flawed; two dual qualities that combine to form a brilliant spectacle for the Anglo-Australian audience to "marvel" over (*Hawthorn vs. St Kilda* 2012). Even their perceived unpredictability contributes to the entertainment value of the Aboriginal performance ["We don't know what Liam is going to do sometimes ... Liam is a player people love to watch" (Davis 2011); "an act compelling because of its capacity to flow fluidly from fantastic to flawed" (Walsh 2008)].

This deep-seated stereotype of Aboriginal players limits their role to the "clown" of the AFL arena (Barthes 1972, p. 152), the court jester that entertains the masses with his non-rational party tricks and seductive exoticism. The sense of spectacle is heightened by ubiquitous references to the "Buddy and Cyril Show" (Walsh 2008, Stevens 2012), a mercurial display prone to inconsistency but laden with "freakish talent" (Davis 2011), "spectacular" ability (*Hawthorn vs. Fremantle* 2012) and infantile cravings for attention (Coram 2007, p. 405). The AFL media normalises the racial myths that confine the Indigenous footballer to his role as the performer, reinforcing imagined biological and psychological differences between Whites and Blacks (Judd 2010, p. 4). Mediated AFL perpetuates 19th Century colonial race logics, which stereotype Aborigines as the primitive 'Other' and widen the gap between 'us' and 'them' (Ibid.). The Indigenous footballer becomes a spectacle for the entertainment of mainstream Australia, "a pure object" (Barthes 1972, p. 152), a curiosity in "the human zoo" (Judd 2010, p. 6).

Conclusion

The media's racial stereotyping of Indigenous AFL players is particularly worrying, because mediated sport's adherence to the news values of balance and fairness (Bruce 2004, p. 864), as well as the White audience's limited personal experience of Aborigines (McCarthy et al. 2003, p. 230; Judd 2010, p. 5), enhances the perceived legitimacy of the discourses presented. Furthermore, these common sense racial myths are likely to be unthinkingly recycled, due to untrained commentators resorting to cliché and stereotype in the pressurised atmosphere of live broadcasting (Bruce 2004, p. 864-866), coupled with a lack of Indigenous voices in the media. Of the 79 commentators employed by the two TV broadcasters Channel Seven and Fox Footy, and the two dominant radio stations 3AW and Triple M, 3AW's Chris Johnson is the sole Aboriginal pundit. This reflects broader discrimination against Aborigines in the AFL; only two out of 150 coaches and five out of 1300 club employees are Indigenous, despite making up 10% of the playing population (Mifsud 2012).

The media's unconscious 'brawn not brains' portrayal of Indigenous footballers (Coram 2007, p. 396) 'spectacularises' the racial 'Other', entrenches the distance between 'us' and 'them', and reinforces outdated colonial race logics that stereotype Aborigines as intellectually primitive. The mediation of Aboriginal AFL players has the overall effect of upholding the dominant racial hegemony (Hallinan et al. 1999, Hallinan et al. 2005, Coram 2007, Judd 2010). However, the recent appeals of Mifsud (2012), Gorman (*Breakfast* 2011), Cockatoo-Collins (2012) and Goodes (2010) have drawn attention to the issue of racial stereotyping, and there are signs of a newfound consciousness within the media (Roos 2011, Schwarz 2011, *The Tuesday Rub* 2011, *The Rush Hour* March 2012). Mifsud summarises poignantly when he says, "we all need to focus on the solutions and deal with the facts and realities, not myths, assumptions and stereotypes" (Mifsud 2012). Hopefully a more self-critical media culture can emerge from this growing scrutiny, placing equal emphasis on the mental capacity and natural talent of Indigenous players.

Word count: 3083 (excluding references and raw examples).

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