The (in)visibility of Hobson's Pledge: A struggle for survival in the socio-political environment of Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Abstract

This study explores the emergence of Hobson's Pledge, as an alt-right group that attempts to influence government policy towards a state of 'ethnic unity'. It explores how the group manages ideological contradictions so as to prevent unanticipated (political) consequences, and what the future might hold for the groups as a consequence of those strategies. Three methods are utilised to interpret the situation of Hobson's Pledge: semi-structure face-to-face interviews; content analysis of internet text; and observations gathered from conversations with group members. Three themes emerge from the data. The first of these is: a true face of 'whiteness' - the dislocation of 'coherence'. The second is: maintaining a 'colour-blind' New Zealand for all. With this second theme, four strategies are identified by which Hobson's Pledge manages the contradictions that come to be revealed publically in its ideology. These strategies are: the promotion of an abstract subjectivity - the 'New Zealand' citizen; the issuing of a political demand for national 'unity'; the presentation of Hobson's Pledge as a broker of Māori rights against patronization; and the advocacy of a liberal democratic defence of fragility. The third theme is: moving into the future – a post-racial Aotearoa/New Zealand?. Within this latter theme, three moments are revealed in which the operation of Hobson's Pledge reinforces perceptions of a 'post-racial' New Zealand. These moments are: reducing perceived racism to a small fraction of society; a democratic right to 'free-speech'; and an intensification of covertness – a democratic right to oppose Māori wards. Public conversations are recommended as a mechanism by which the socially-divisive effects of Hobson's Pledge could be engaged with, to progressive effect.

Preface

I was born in the Republic of South Africa. I recall the moment when Nelson Mandela was released from incarceration — I was nine years old at the time. This moment provided a sense of hope for a new South Africa; from here on in, South Africans would refer to the nation as the 'rainbow nation'. Yet lingering sentiments from fellow white South Africans centred upon a sense of fear as to what the future might hold; for example, my parents felt 'this is the end of us'.

An accompaniment to a sense of fear — as to what the future might hold — was a widely shared sense of unfairness amongst white South Africans associated with the implementation of affirmative action policies. These policies brought about the commonly referred to idea of 'reverse racism'. I recall my father, most notably, referring to this term to describe the way in which he had to work to get to where he was, whereas black people appeared to be handed opportunities without putting in the work. Resulting from such sentiments, growing up, I found it hard to articulate the rationale behind the implementation of affirmative action policies.

In 1996, when I was 14 years old, my mother decided to immigrate to Aotearoa/New Zealand with my siblings and I. I recall what I perceived to be similar sentiments held by Pākehā regarding the unfairness associated with affirmative action policies that benefit Māori. For example, my step father, who my mother met and married in Aotearoa/New Zealand, explained to me that Māori are never satisfied with the money and land that they are compensated — 'all we do is give, and all they do it take'.

I could never articulate the rationale that lay behind affirmative action policies until I undertook tertiary education. Sociology has provided me with the means though which to articulate the historical factors that shape social forces. Within these environments, certain people are thereby able to prevail while others are repressed. That is, within Aotearoa/New Zealand

society, the effects of colonisation still see Māori struggling to break out of repression. Affirmative action policies are subsequently put in place to ameliorate the historical effects of colonisation.

My life experiences have inspired me to articulate the relationship between affirmative action and the perceived unfairness thereof. I take this thesis as the first step in a research trajectory in which I hope to continue.

Acknowledgements

Foremost, my thanks go to the participants of this study. I am grateful to Don Brash and Larry Wood for inviting me into their homes. In addition, I admire their ability in seeing the value of the research, and, most notably, for their willingness to express their own personal system of belief.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Why now? Because I think increasingly, in the last decade or two, successive governments have been taking us further and further away from the starting point of the Treaty of Waitangi. We're conceding different political rights to those who chance to have a Māori ancestor — always with other ancestors too of course"

Research participant, Don Brash.

The fundamentals of Hobson's Pledge

Hobson's Pledge is a lobby group founded in 2016, and fronted by Don Brash and Casey Costello. Other members include Andy Oakley, David Round, Fiona Mackenzie, John Bell, Kevin Moratti, Larry Wood, Mike Butler, Mike McVicker, Peter Shirtcliffe, and Sarah Taylor. While Hobson's Pledge is largely cyber-based, it gains public attention also through text produced for other media. It appears that the group's website serves as the main space through which its ideological worldview is presented; with that viewpoint grounded in issues that are thought to concern ordinary New Zealanders (opposition to Māori wards in city councils, Māori Parliamentary seats, and so on). The group's goal "is to remove from law and practice any race-based discrimination in governance and property rights" (Hobson's Pledge, 2018). Emanating from this goal is the potential for social divisiveness: Hobson's Pledge opposes affirmative action policies that compensate Māori for current and historical effects of colonisation. It is because of this overt stance that Hobson's Pledge can be categorised as an alt-right group.

Hobson's Pledge as an alt-right group

The alt-right (an abbreviation for alternative right) played a vital role in the 2016 American election. Its development can be attributed to Richard Spencer, who created the original AlternativeRight.com website in 2010 (Nagle, 2017). The alt-right in America refers to

informal cyber-based groups, such as 4chan, and 8chan; these groups proved pivotal in the success of Donald Trump's campaign to become President — the activism included white nationalism, misogyny, and authoritarianism (Nagle, 2017).

In creating a working definition of the alt-right in the context of Hobson's Pledge, the specific style and ideology of group is considered. Hobson's Pledge will thereby be identified as an 'extreme right-wing group'. The style includes a position of monism — opposition to socio-cultural pluralism, that being a worldview that recognises the validity of more than one ethnic group in society (Spoonley 1987). Ideology includes an adherence to pro market-forces, which inevitably refers to the notion of 'free market' whereby an interventionist State is opposed (Spoonley, 1987). As such, rewards are only fairly attained though the competitive forces of the marketplace (Spoonley, 1987). Moreover, extreme right-wing ideologies also include nationalism; that is, the foregrounding of a single identity that fits within a geographical boundary (Spoonley, 1987).

Bio-politics: A definition

A key aspect of the activism of Hobson's Pledge lies in the will to regulate the security and welfare of the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Such a position is referred to as bio-politics; that is, an administration of life (Žižek, 2008b). Chapter 3 explains how Hobson's Pledge seeks to administer the lives of the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, which makes their approach bio-political in kind. This includes a process whereby subjects' identities are emptied of the existing content — of who they think they are — and are, subsequently, re-filled with a new subjectivity according to the requirements of, in this case, Hobson's Pledge. A categorical imperative of 'believe!', directed to the subject, is included in this process; that is, if people do not believe in the subjectivized requirements placed upon them, then this conservative process of emancipation cannot take place.

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Thesis outline

The general aim of the research is to produce an understanding of Hobson's Pledge, as an alt-right pressure group that tries to influence the State toward social policies which normalise ethnic divisions. Emanating from the aim are three specific questions that are asked of Hobson's Pledge: Under what circumstances are ideological contradictions in the group revealed? How do ideological contradictions come to be managed within the group? What does the future hold for Hobson's Pledge as a consequence of the strategies used?

Chapter 2 discusses literature on the historical progression of extreme right-wing groups that try to influence State policies associated with the promotion of affirmative action. The chapter identifies that extreme right-wing activism has capitalised on the Western liberal democratic de-regulations of the 1980s. Within this context, racism could be justified by neo-liberal notions of the 'free market' and individualism, by which the 'free market' was promoted as the legitimate source of social reward. Any State intervention that provided rewards exclusively to a particular group (affirmative action provided to indigenous groups, for example) would thereby be in breach of individually conceived rights. Furthermore, the most recent literature on extreme right-wing groups identified the emergence of a cyber-networked formation of the alt-right — the internet was, for example, a significant means through which the promotion of Trump occurred during his Presidential campaign trail. The chapter places these matters in the local context of a continuing overrepresentation of Māori in official statistical rates of unemployment, prison, and suicide. These statistics indicate the continual (re)production of racism at a systemic level. As such, the kind of opposition mounted to affirmative action policies by alt-right movements, to seemingly ameliorate (indigenous) ethic inequality, can be seen as being misplaced and indicative of a 'hidden agenda' within those movements.

Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Concepts from Slavoj Žižek's political psychoanalytical perspective are drawn on, and supplemented with, the concepts of

'colour-bind' racism and 'whiteness'. The chapter describes how this framework can usefully interpret expressions of racism that seemingly present a 'moral cause' and that, in the process, prevent an underlying divisive (racist) intent from being revealed. This moral articulation is created through the pursuit of an imagined socio-political condition that cannot exist (for example, the nationalist pursuit of 'unity'), with the effect that a divisive (racist) intent is veiled. The chapter also indicates the possibility that these expressions of racism can be implemented within and justified by a particular feature of Western liberal democracy. This feature is a perception of discrimination, circulating around the notion of human rights, whereby racist ideologues have the ability to mount opposition on the basis of a prevailing socio-cultural belief in the inherent value of political expression, irrespective of its content. In the context of this situation (of an intrinsic value accorded to 'free speech') arguments mounted in this manner can propose with moral legitimation the eradication of affirmative action policies that otherwise serve to address the wrongs of a colonial past.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology of the research: the data collection methods as well as the challenges and justifications thereof. The research utilised the data collection methods of semi-structured face-to-face interviews, observation, and content analysis of internet text. A challenge of the recruitment process was to find participants willing to answer questions in a formal interview setting regarding the ideologies of Hobson's Pledge. These interviews drew upon a constructionist epistemology. The rationale for this kind of interview was justified by the need to understanding how participants got to their specific socio-political worldviews. This understanding is in contrast to the sorts of romantic responses that allow participants to portray their 'lived experiences'. The chapter also explains the links between research questions, data, and theory.

Chapter 5 discusses the link between Don Brash's 2004 'Orewa Speech' and the underlying ideas of Hobson's Pledge. The speech presented affirmative action policies as a threat to the

basic human rights of ordinary New Zealanders — a position justified by the Western liberal belief that the market should provide rewards instead of the State. The speech was a key to the production of a moral articulation that would eventually be invigorated through the ideologies of Hobson's Pledge. This articulation is aided by a conspiracy-type narrative, that the affirmative action policies benefitting Māori prevent New Zealand from entering a condition of national 'unity' (something that, ironically, cannot exist). Subsequently, there are certain moments when the moral articulation is breached. Under such circumstances, an unintended consequence emerges, whereby the group appears to promote, rather than oppose, a separation between ethnic groups. The chapter discusses this dynamic in relation to one such moment, of the opposition of Hobson's Pledge to Te Reo Māori.

Chapter 6 discusses four strategies through which Hobson's Pledge attempts to maintain a state of coherence amidst situations of ideological contradiction. The group claims to have a central concern of attaining 'unity' in society. However, the group's concern appears to be directed towards the opposition of affirmative action policies. Since affirmative action policies are put in place to ameliorate the historical and present effects of colonisation, such an opposition may prove to be socially-divisive. As such, in their opposition to affirmative action policies, the group appears to manage their ideological contradictions through four strategies:

- The first of these is advocacy of *an abstract subjectivity: the New Zealand citizen*. This is a fundamental strategy whereby the group provides, for the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, a 'unifying' subjectivity of 'New Zealander'. People are obligated to foreground this identity regardless of whether they identify with other subjectivities or not.

- A second strategy, *a political demand for 'unity': casting affirmative action as racist*, enables the group to presume that affirmative action policies, created by the State, are racist. In this way, the group avoids blaming a specific ethnic group for the situation

as Hobson's Pledge see it, thereby, maintaining a sense of 'unity' as the underlying platform of their activism.

- A third strategy, *defending Māori against patronization*, is a political argument through which the group assumes a *de facto* brokerage role for Māori rights. Emanating from this role, the group presumes that Māori feel patronized in being recipients of affirmative action policies.

- A final strategy, the promotion of *a liberal democratic defence of fragility*, compensates for a fear that the group seemingly exhibits in the process of expressing their ideological worldview. That fear manifests as a state of victimisation. Their approach is to normalise that state. This strategy is used at specific nodal points at which the group's ideologies may prove to be socially-divisive.

Chapter 7 discusses what the future holds for the ideologies of Hobson's Pledge. The chapter considers the ever increasing covertness of racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand — public discourses create a sense that racism is only sought by a small, select group of people, in spite of the overwhelming evidence indicating the (re)production of racism at a systemic level (the overrepresentation of Māori in statistical rates such as unemployment, suicide, and incarceration). The chapter discusses an attempt to push the group further to the fringes of society, by which the groups ideologies are compared to those of 'hate speech'. However, prominent political figures overturn this attempt by delineating the group's ideologies within the category of 'free speech'. Finally, the chapter also discusses group's attempts to adapt to the social climate; for example, the group appears to minimise public knowledge of the fact that they funded the campaign against Māori ward petitions.

Chapter 8 summarises the research. It contemplates the possible implications of removing extreme right-wing groups' ability to express 'free speech'. The chapter also takes into consideration the limitations of the research, as well as future research that could address these

limitations. In particular, it suggests that an international analytical comparison of Western liberal democratic extreme right-wing groups would provide a fuller and richer understanding of the increasing covertness/overtness of these groups.

Chapter 2: Background

Introduction

Extreme right-wing groups have emerged from long-held traditions of ethnic discrimination. This chapter explores the academic literature on this phenomenon. In the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the work of Paul Spoonley from the early 1980s provides the definitive — though, now, historical — overview. International literature on the New Right provides more insight into the way in which the social and economic reforms of the 1980s, and the reduction of the role of the State in particular, created new ways in which racism could be justified. The present study contributes to the understanding of right-wing activism as it emerged, locally, in that neoliberal era. Two dimensions of that activism will become apparent from the existing literature: attempts to directly influence government policies; and the cyber-networked character of political organisation. These developments sit, locally, in the context of a socio-cultural situation made up of countervailing tendencies. On the one hand, the general situation of traditionally discriminated communities — particularly of Māori as a consequence of colonisation — requires further improvement. Despite the need for improvement, right-wing demands for the reversal of political cultures of affirmative action continue: affirmative action is held to account for the perpetuation of 'racial-divisions'. Further exploration of official statistical rates in key areas of social disadvantage — including unemployment, incarceration, and suicide-rates — indicates, however, a continuing state of overrepresentation of Māori. This situation suggests that arguments regarding the emergence of the 'unfairness' of affirmative action — that 'affirmative action is racist' — are misplaced and that they, themselves, are symptomatic of a potential social-divisiveness.

Extreme right-wing traditions here and abroad

Paul Spoonley's work has identified how extreme right-wing groups practice their activism. Historically, groups in Aotearoa/New Zealand gained most of their momentum during economic crises in the periods of the 1880s, 1930s, and 1970s (Spoonley, 1987). Central to Spoonley's commentary are concerns about the ability of extreme right-wing groups to reproduce their (racist) norms and beliefs, and maintain group membership, while not actually having much chance of gaining effective power (Spoonley, 1987). A point of consideration is that class relations are an important part of the activism of extreme right-wing groups.

As the post-war class block of small-scale family businesses (shopkeepers and farmers, for example) — the old 'petty bourgeoisie' — suffered under the conditions of economic decline, extreme right-wing groups re-emerged through the encouragement of revolt by groups within the class. The economic struggle encouraged the old petty bourgeoisie to contemplate radical alternatives, all of which contributed to the growth of extreme right-wing groups. That struggle extended to attempts by these class-groupings to influence political parties. In terms of the particular traditions of social struggle from which the revolt drew inspiration, the movement reflected a "petty-bourgeoisie Jacobanism" (Spoonley, 1987, p. 14). The term Jacobanism, was drawn from the work of Ernest Laclau. It supports, as its central premise, opposition to monopoly capitalism, to the intervention of the State, and to social democratic collectivism. It does all this within a worldview antagonistically orientated towards the concepts of gender and 'race' (Spoonley, 1987).

The economic reforms around the 1980s resolved half the problems for the extreme right, focusing their work productive on the notions of 'race' and nation (Spoonley, 1987). Nevertheless, another issue remained about the (unpopular) representation of racist views. Movement towards resolution of that issue took the form of a relationship between the League

of Rights (a right-wing pressure group) and the old petty bourgeoisie. The manner in which that relationship formed provides useful insight into how the marginalised political positions of the extreme right emerges, as well as, an insight into how they come to (re)justify the fact of their activism. The economic decline that members of the old petty bourgeoisie experienced in the 1970s resulted in the rekindling of a traditional relationship which members of that class had held with the Social Credit Party. Given, however, that Social Credit wished to distance themselves from racist ideologies, members of the old petty bourgeoisie started participating in, and were thereby increasingly influenced by, groups such as the League of Rights. Although the League shared ideological beliefs with Social Credit, by the 1970s the latter no longer expressed their 1930s attitude to issues of 'race', and, instead, overtly started "attacking the racism of the League" (Spoonley, 1987, p. 108). Social Credit confirmed their move away from their previously held attitude, by, in 1985, re-labelling themselves as the New Zealand Democratic Party. As such, the League became, by default, the main representatives of the old petty bourgeoisie.

While facing general public criticism for their views, the League still played a crucial role in public debates by providing conspiracy theories that explained social, political or economic phenomena. For instance, during the 1981 Springbok tour, a conspiracy that anti-tour groups had a secondary goal of undermining law and order, was promoted. Similarly, in public debates about Māori language and land, the League argued that a European worldview represents civilization; Māori values and practices infringe on basic, individual human rights, and as a result, a Māori worldview is divisive and backward. The public promulgation of conspiracy theories represented something of a holding-pattern for the extreme right, as they awaited a more opportune time for overt action.

Indeed, extreme right-wing groups had a tendency to be patient. As noted, it was only in the periods of economic crises during the 1880s, 1930s, and 1970s that extreme right-wing groups were provided with situations that could come close to justifying their activism. In the intermittent periods, the activists went underground, where they practiced their ideological arguments in small groups until those arguments could re-gain currency (Spoonley, 1987, p.258). It goes to say that extreme right-wing groups are willing to wait for the right political environment to practice their activism in. This, it will be argued, here, is key to understanding the contemporary emergence of Hobson's Pledge.

Just as in New Zealand, Britain experienced economic crises during the periods of the 1930s and 1970s. In Britain, however, "the dominant extreme right-wing expression was working class in its primary class link" (Spoonley, 1987, p. 212). While the activism still had a class link, there are some important ideological differences. Working class activism was neo-fascist in that its ideologies promote a certain kind of State (a corporate State) that values collectivism and unionism; the opposite to that of the reduced role of the State, to individualism, to the predominance of free-market relations, and so on, that local extreme right, old petty bourgeoisie ideologies express. One of the main figures of the British tradition was A.K. Chasterton, who formed, amongst other groups, the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s, and who helped found the British National Front in 1967. Indeed, neo-fascist ideologies dominated the extreme right-wing arguments in Britain until 1980, when paramilitary-style political activism was almost rejected entirely (Husbands, 1988). It is within this same time-period that the phenomenon now known as the New Right emerged.

The New Right

The literature on the New Right in Britain highlights the relationship between the economic and social reforms around the 1980s and the emergence of a new form of racism. The New

Right provided a medium for racism to be expressed in a covert manner — concealing the 'racial' aspects of the economic and social reforms of the Thatcher Government (Gordon & Klug, 1986). The 'hidden agenda' of the New Right in Britain had negative outcomes for the Black community, immigrants and immigration, and for British society as a whole (Gordon & Klug, 1986). State attempts to reverse the effects of discrimination were held to interfere with rights to freedom as expressed by the logic of the 'free market': intervention by the State was thereby contested because of its potential to create 'special' or 'privileged' groups, that were protected by the law (Gordon & Klug, 1986). As a result, State intervention, rather than achieving equality, inadvertently intensified 'race' relations by providing the ideological conditions wherein any assistance provided to minority groups (affirmative action) could be recoded as an infringement of the rights of the majority group.

One pressure group that had political influence of this kind was the Monday Club, which lobbied on the themes of law and order, family values, and anti-immigration. While formally detached from the Conservative Party of the time, the two institutions were closely aligned with 17 Conservative MPs associating with the Monday Club (Gordon and Klug, 1986, p. 10). The Monday Club's activism followed a general strategy found amongst the New Right of the time, in the use of panic-inspiring symbols, most of which were very subtle, with only some directed to public anxieties about 'race' (Ansell, 1997). For example, the most common inspiring symbol was 'our'. It would explain how immigrants are taking 'our' women; or, of the Japanese takeover of 'our' cities (Ansell, 1997, p. 148). The predominance of symbols which spoke to a generalised sense of public angst, in conjunction with a deflection of attention away from questions about ethnic inequalities, enabled a very particular outcome to be achieved by the New Right. Its groups came to be seen as the defenders of everything 'good and pure' (Ansell, 1997).

Another effect of the New Right as a medium for justifying racism is that it contributed to other forms of inequality including a demonization of sexual identity — of homosexuality in particular. Racism and homophobia thereby became aligned, within New Right discourse, in that the degree of demonization expressed towards homosexuality correlated with the degree to which the individuals thereby stigmatized were held to also be either criminals and/or Black immigrants (Smith, 1995).

The New Right also provided proponents of 'racializing' arguments with means by which their messages could become politically acceptable, as compared to the overtly violent racism of the Nazi era. In particular, the Nazi era had created an environment that made the extreme right increasingly unacceptable (Hainsworth, 2008). Since the emergence of the New Right, however, nationalist and populist movements were able to re-emerge, providing solutions to problems such as immigration and law and order. Along with an increased covertness of their activism, the more strident — and potentially violent — nationalist and populist sentiments were held in reserve. Although the panoply of the movement was thereby out of the public eye most of the time, the reality was that "there has always been a group of social authoritarians waiting on the sidelines" (Gordon & Klug, 1986, p.9).

Importantly, the effects of the extreme right more broadly and of the New Right in particular, differ throughout history and between countries; it would, otherwise, be arbitrary to assume that the New Right has had uniform effects — as is comparatively evident between the New Right in Britain and in the USA. While the British New Right was dominated by social authoritarian concerns about so-called cultural decline, about immigration from former colonies, and about law and order, American movements were characterised by moral authoritarian concerns about the declining fortunes of family values and the need for Christian ethics, and concerns about cultural shifts toward sexual permissiveness (King, 1987). The

Moral Majority was a key pressure group which emerged in this time, lobbying in support of Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign (King, 1987). A recurring argument from the Moral Majority was that welfare services do not provide an escape from poverty and that the only escape is family, work, and faith (King, 1987). The New Right have been particular to time and space.

The New Right in Aotearoa/New Zealand

With regard to the situation in New Zealand, the effects of the New Right appear not to have been as substantive as was the case in the USA and Britain. The comparatively small literature on the New Zealand New Right provides a partial set of insights into how the neoliberal economic and social reforms during the 1980s contributed to the meagre influence that extreme right-wing groups were able to develop with the government in the development of social and public policies. The extreme right-wing group, the League of Rights remained through this time on the periphery of the political spectrum and made racist and nationalist arguments that rarely appeared in public debates (Spoonley, 1987). As a consequence, they were always marginalised — far from gaining any influence in the area of policy.

An important feature of the local New Right in the period following the 1980's transition to neoliberalism has been the ability of extreme right-wing groups to bridge two forms of conservativism: the monetarism associated with libertarian conservatism; and social authoritarianism (as recurrently associated with the advocacy of law and order ideology). In particular, such groups have used an economic argument to justify a seemingly principled opposition to the policies of affirmative action (that they are unjust) — the intervention of the State in economic situations is held to subvert the natural mechanisms of 'market demand' (Spoonley, 1988; Spoonley, 1993). In addition, affirmative action is contrary to belief in the naturalness of individualism, as gained currency with the shift from Keynesian economics

(social democracy) to monetarism (neo-liberalism) (Spoonley, 1988; Spoonley, 1993). As a result, it became possible to posit that affirmative action is 'racist to white people'. According to this position it is 'market forces' that provide resources and rewards and, in this context, ethnic 'privilege' infringes on the rights that have been provided by the marketplace (Spoonley, 1988; Spoonley, 1993). The idea that affirmative action 'is racist against white people' emerged most powerfully when the two forms of conservatism were bridged with notions of national unity. This merger led to the production of a phenomenon known as colour-blind racism.

Rather than accord blame to ethnic minorities, the racism post-1980s has increasingly functioned through the privileging of discourses around national unity that produce, in themselves, social segregation. These discourses have a notable 'economic' character to them. They include the advocacy of public sector deregulation and a growing association of national identity with participation in global 'market forces' (McLennan, McManus, & Spoonley, 2010). 'Citizens' become individuals with 'freedoms and rights' who participate in the economic arena as micro-entrepreneurs (McLennan, McManus, & Spoonley, 2010). All of this is accorded to individuals through their socio-political participation (McLennan, McManus, & Spoonley, 2010). Indeed, "the 2004 speech in Orewa by the then leader of the National Party, Don Brash reflected these sentiments …. The speech stressed the importance of treating everyone as New Zealanders" (McLennan, McManus, & Spoonley, 2010, p. 224).

Alt-right

A further innovation to emerge in the post-1980s has been the employment by extreme right-wing groups of the internet as a medium for their activism. As we will see, this characterises also the public face of Hobson's Pledge and justifies the group's location, here, within the 'alt-right'.

The alt-right has recently been associated with internet-based groups that mobilised in support of Donald Trump's election campaign; a key ideological feature of the alt-right, apart from the features of white-nationalism and misogyny, is the deployment of conspiracy theories that justify political action. Particularly during Trump's election campaign, a relationship between the 'hashtag' activism of the alt-right (for example, on Twitter: '#whitegenocide') and the tendencies to draw on conspiracy theories emerged (Wilson, 2018). The indistinct nature of the enemies, upon which these conspiracy theories pivot, promoted a sense that a generalised state of injustice prevails that threatens existing ways of life (Wilson, 2018). In a similar way, the general mass media has been identified by the alt-right as holding a left-wing bias. For example, Rush Limbaugh, a radio host, digital and print author (see, https://www.rushlimbaugh.com/), saw the ideas of political correctness, positive representation of women, and of 'racialized' minorities as contributing elements to a movement borne within liberal university campuses during the 1960s (Flisfeder, 2018). Breitbart News also held similar conspiracies that 'uncover' liberal falsehoods and cover-ups. The conspiracy theories were nothing new in themselves (Nagle, 2017): the public reach attained by cyber-network dissemination of those theories has, however, revolutionised extreme right activism in the USA.

The above developments of extreme right-wing groups — of their attempts to influence government policies; and of their cyber-networked formation — sit, locally, in a socio-cultural environment that has potential to oppose affirmative action. That is, despite affirmative action being put in place so as to ameliorated the historical effects of discrimination of Māori communities associated colonisation, right-wing demands claim that these policies have the effect of nothing other than creating 'social divisions'.

Context

Recent official statistics indicate that Māori remain overrepresented in the rates of unemployment, incarceration, and suicide. Those indicate that while there is some improvement in Māori overrepresentation in unemployment, Māori are anything but close to that of their European counterparts when regarding their overrepresentation in incarceration and suicide. Any arguments by the extreme right-wing, regarding the denouncement of policies of affirmative action in fields such as health, education, and housings are thereby misplaced — and should be discarded.

While unemployment-rates for Māori have hit a nine-year low, the rates still lags significantly behind the rest of the population. Findings from the December 2017 Quarterly Labour Market Report, published by the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE) (2018) demonstrate this (figure 2.1). Those findings identified that 19,000 more Māori became employed over the previous year, raising the employment rate to 64.4 percent. That upward trend has been operating from around 2013.

Further observations are presented in figure 2.1. In 2008, Asian, Māori, and Pacific rates were within 3 percent of each other; around 2010, the three ethnicities began to split. The Pacific rate is the most volatile, exhibiting numerous — and substantial — dips and rises between 2010 and 2014 — to almost re-align with the, somewhat, stable Māori rates. Whereas, Asian rates exhibit a steady incline, from being aligned with Māori and Pacific, to eventually aligning with the European rate. In this sense, Māori (including Pacific) might have improved on their overrepresentation in unemployment, however, there still remains a notable distance from that of the European and Asian ethnic groups.
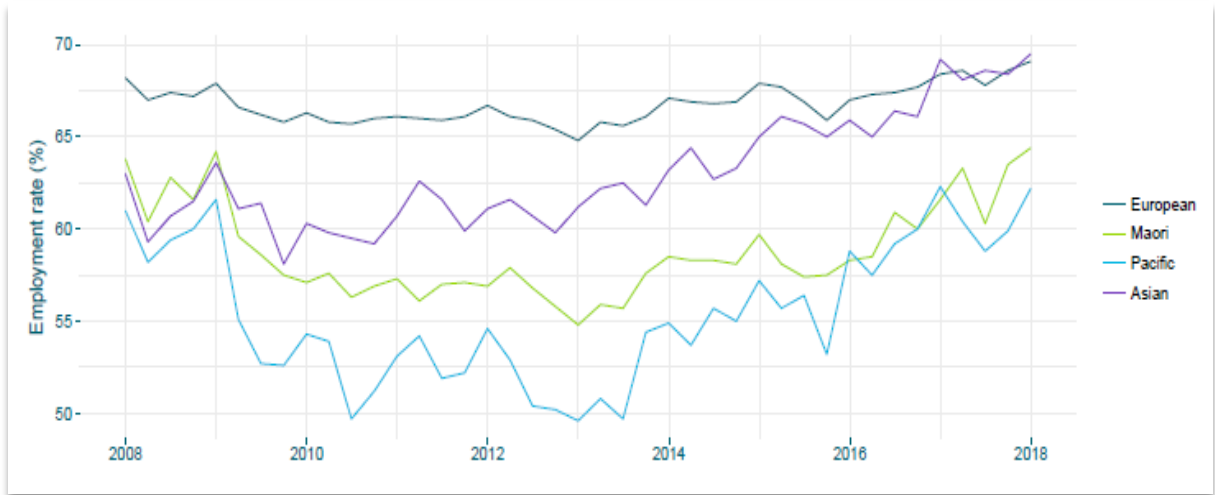
Figure 2. 1. Employment rates by ethnicity. (MBIE, 2018, p. 9)

The incarceration-rates for Māori are noticeably high compared to other ethnic groups. December quarterly statistics were provided by the Department of Corrections (2018), covering the periods of 2009, 2014, and 2017, all of which identify that Māori consistently represent 50 percent of those incarcerated (figure 2.2). In comparison, Europeans represent 33 percent, Pacific Islanders are 19 percent, and Asians only about two percent. The consideration of incarceration rates in comparison with the New Zealand population by ethnicity offers a different perspective.
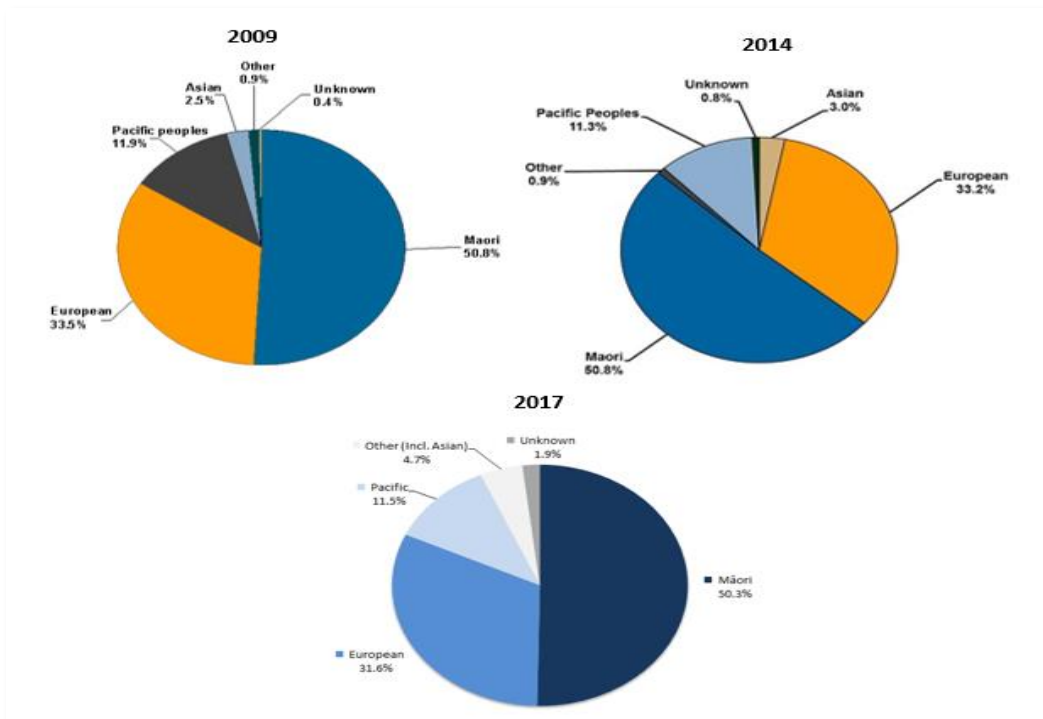
Figure 2. 2. Prison population by ethnicity in 2017. (Department of Corrections, 2018)
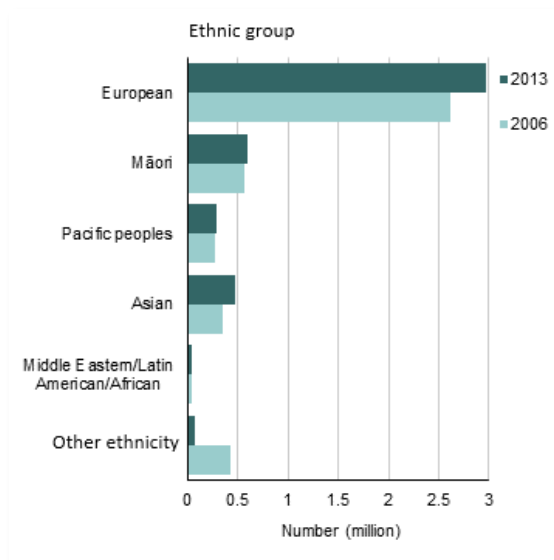
Figure 2. 3. Population of major ethnic groups from 2006 and 2013 censuses. (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, p.6)

The available census data on ethnicity by population (figure 2.3) compared to incarceration-rates identifies the degree of Māori overrepresentation in prisons. Of the census data on ethnicity (whereby people are able to self-identify themselves with the available ethnicities

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from which to choose — creating a limitation of the data, in that the percentage of various ethnic groups can vary from census to census), Māori, Pacific, and Asian people were approximately take within five percent of each other, on their representation, within the population. Alternatively, Europeans represent 70 percent of the population (figure 2.3). In regards to incarceration-rates (figure 2.2), Māori make up 15 percent of the population while representing around 50 percent of those incarcerated. Of the other ethnicities, Pacific Islanders represent seven and 12 percent respectively, Asians represent 12 and three percent respectively, and Europeans represent 70 and 30 percent respectively (see, Statistics New Zealand, 2014, p.6).

The challenge for Corrections has been to reduce re-offending of Māori, which, in turn, would reduce the overall prison population. Between March and December 2014, the prison population started to climb above the forecasted population of 8,500 (figure 2.4); and between July 2016 and December 2017, the population spiked to sit just below 10,500 — largely within the forecast numbers (figure, 2.5). Taking into consideration the degree to which Māori remain overrepresented in the prison population, it not surprising that the Chief Executive of Corrections, Ray Smith, set a goal of reducing Māori re-offending by 25 percent, by 2025 (Department of Corrections, 2017).
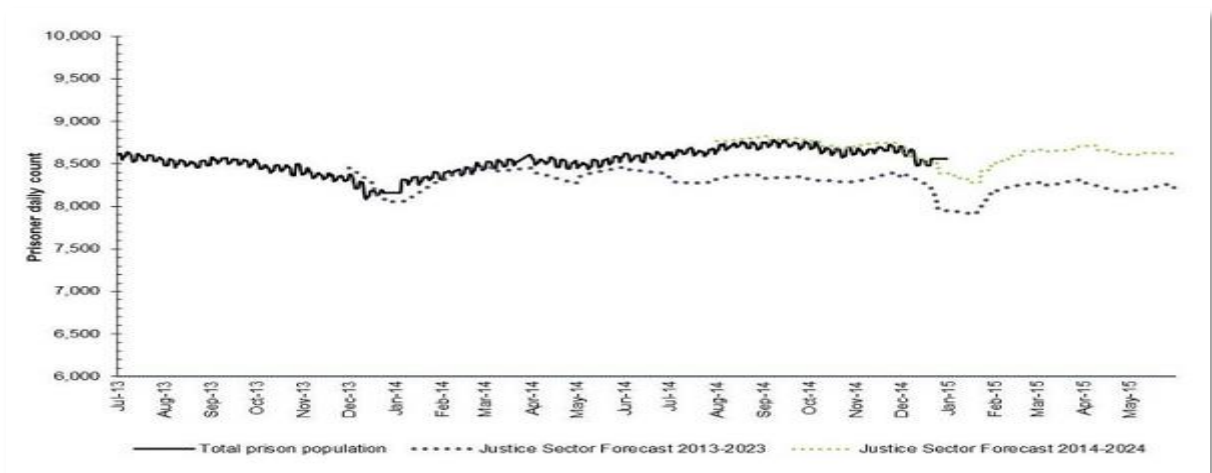
Figure 2. 4. Total prison population (including forecast), July 2013 — May 2015.

(Department of Correction, 2014)
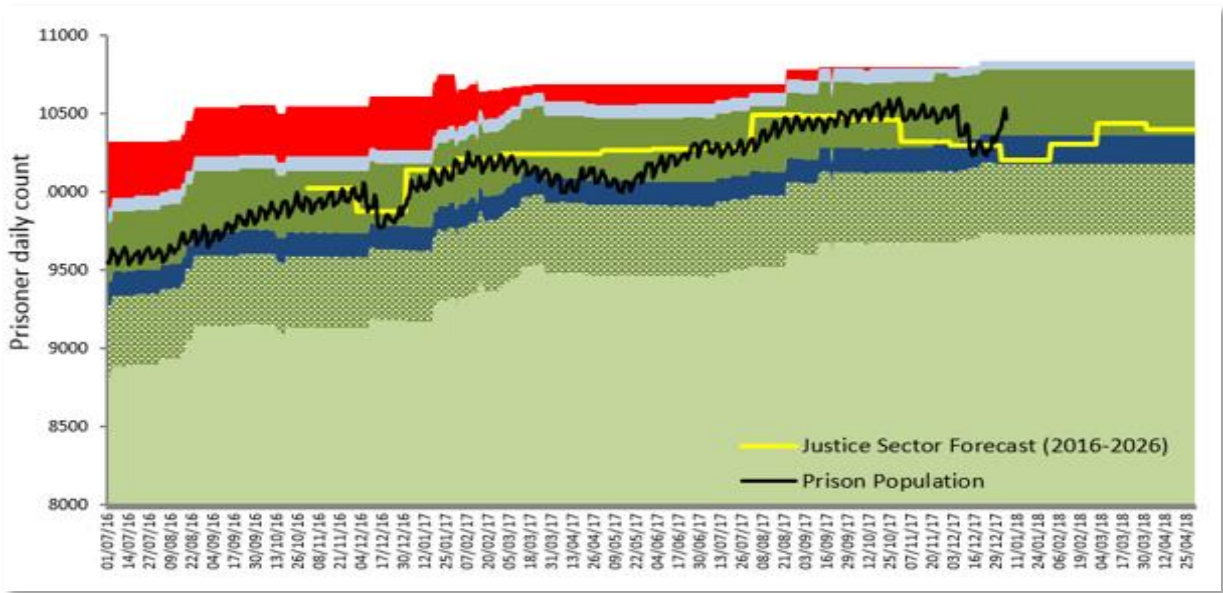
Figure 2. 5. Total prison population (including forecast), July 2016 — April 2018.

(Department of Corrections, 2018a)

Another area of New Zealand society in which Māori are overrepresented is suicide. Suicides

between 2007 and 2017, against the ethnic populations captured from the 2006 and 2013 census

data, indicate that Māori have had a higher rate than other ethnicities during this time (figure

2.6). For instance, New Zealand Europeans (and other Europeans) were within a rate of 2 per

100,000 of Māori in 2007; and were half that of the Māori rate in 2011. Moreover, European

rates were relatively static compared to Māori rates. Asian and Pacific ethnic groups show

signs of volatility; however, it is also not to the same extent as for Māori.
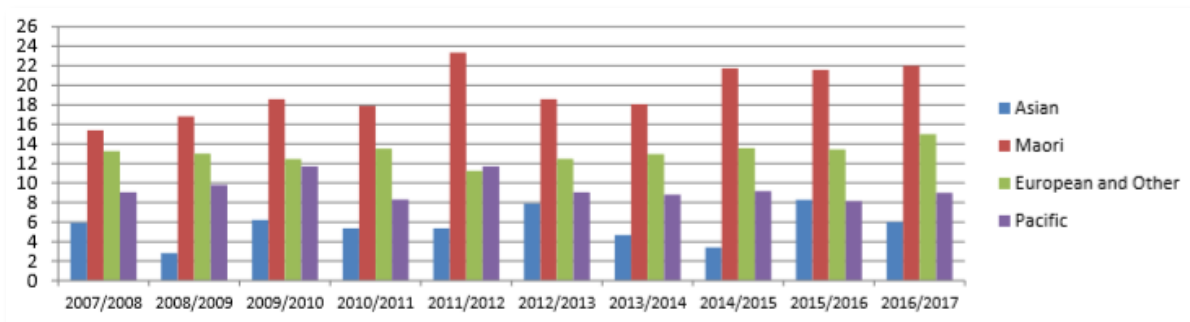
Figure 2. 6. Provisional Suicide rates by ethnicity per 100,000 population between July 2007
and June 2017 (n=5536). (Coronial Services, 2017, p. 3)

Overall, the above recent official statistics of employment-rates is one area in which overrepresentation of Māori is improving. By and large, other areas of such as incarceration- and suicide-rates are indicators of an increase in overrepresentation. Most importantly, these findings indicate situations that could benefit from affirmative action policies, and are far removed from the pictures drawn by the extreme right regarding a divisiveness underlying these policies. The presentation of such pictures are, on the other hand, symptomatic of a potential social-divisiveness on their part.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a series of moments in right-wing racism. The first was the extreme-right that organised, in the case of Aotearoa/New Zealand around issues of social class. When the old petty bourgeoisie experienced periods of economic decline, the creation of (racist) conspiracy theories became a strategy by which to explain economic decline in a way that did not question the economic system. The second moment was the emergence of the New Right. This intervention allowed conservatism to be articulated in a new way; it mirrored the shift from a social democracy that valued collectivism (Keynesian economics) to a neo-liberal project that valued individualism and the 'free market'. This shift enabled economic arguments to be made that justified racism. That is, State intervention (affirmative action) went against the principles of the 'free market' forces because the 'free market' is what provides rewards; those who receive rewards from the State are undeserving. The third moment was the emergence of the alt-right, and of its utilisation of cyber-technologies to organise and distribute its messages. This chapter also questions the underlying assumptions of the New/alt-Right, concerning the injustice of affirmative action policies. It does so by demonstrating that there have been improvements in social standing, locally, of Māori in unemployment-rates, however, rates do not translate to improvements relative to those experienced by the advantaged sectors of New Zealand society; worse still, incarceration-, and suicide-rates, generally, identify an

increase in overrepresentation. The discussion, which now follows, presents a theoretical framework capable of detailing the points gestured to, here, in relation to the historical emergence, and prospects of, the alt-right group Hobson's Pledge.

Chapter 3: Right-wing extremism and Western liberal democracies: A moral justification for racism?

Introduction

An analysis of bio-politics (the 'administration of life') provides an analytically useful lens though which to explain the perpetuation of racism in Western liberal democracies. Slavoj Žižek's political psychoanalytical perspective provides such an optic. A central element of Zizek's political psychoanalysis is a framework Lacan called the 'four discourses' (Lacan, 1998). These discourses go by the names of 'Master', 'University', 'Hysteria', and 'Analyst'. The word 'discourse' differs from its normative definition (speech, or written communication) (Žižek, 1998). Instead, the 'four discourses' relate to four kinds of *social bonds*, each of them founded in and operating through language. A key analytic value of the four discourses is the way in which they explain the connections between inter-subjective tensions and the social contexts in which such conflicts occur. For the intents and purposes of this study, only two of the discourses feature here: that of 'the University' (the social bond which enables the bio-political administration of life) and 'Hysteria' (the social bond through which subjects are enabled to express personal agency within social settings that otherwise deny agency).

Central to the operation of discourses as the inter-subjective connections through which social settings form, is a dynamic that obscures the conflicts that the discourses nevertheless reveal. That dynamic is 'fetishistic disavowal' (Žižek, 2008a). Fetishistic disavowal is the socio-psychological mechanism through which a social setting — in this instance, one that pushes a set of (racist) divisive tendencies — presents an enticingly-likeable, yet illusionary, image that naturalises a misrecognition of the (racist) dynamics that underpin a social setting. This state of fetishized disavowal assists the political administration of collective life, doing so by intervening with the domain of belief. Disavowal enables the simultaneous adherence to, and denial of, beliefs circulating within a population. This enables contradictory positions to be

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held without the occurrence of cognitive dissonance. With regard to racism, for example, affirmative positions can be adopted towards both the (contrary) ideas of 'colour-blindness' ('we don't see colours, we just see people') and of 'whiteness' ('white people are superior'). In order to avoid any revelation of such a contradiction, a 'fantasy' fills in the inconsistency that enables the subject to act 'as if' an illusionary image will gain positive form and a missing state thereby again becomes available (for example, with regard to racism, that an originary state of 'colour blindness' will display itself as being readily available). That is, the fantasy provides a sort of 'promise', that for example, 'all cultures can unite as one' to retrieve what is missing. In this way, a complex ideological situation arises: a social situation takes on the appearance of supporting a moral cause (that cause becoming a fetishized object — 'the fetish' — here, 'national unity'). Under the shroud of the moral cause, however, disavowed motives could be revealed (as an accidental 'slip-of-the-tongue', for example), oft-times through normative claims about how society should be structured (for example, that 'white people should be the ones making the choices'). As will become evident, disavowal, when operating to political effect, appears always in a 'fetishized' form: fetishes sustain 'hidden agendas' by providing normatively agreeable images around which identities and subject positions can knit. To reframe the point, the operation of disavowal creates a state of obsessional attachment to the assemblage of objects and ideas that provide positive content to the subject positions from which, in this instance, racism is simultaneously enacted and disavowed.

The racism inherent to Western Liberal democracies

Western political ideologies are able to 'capture' their public's imaginations by catering to (or exploiting) people's needs, through the infusion of ideologies with popular meaning. For Lacan, the exploitation of peoples' imaginations occurs through the operation of signifiers. Signifiers (which can be words, phrases, sentences, or objects) are the fundamental means by which a social setting can incorporate a 'hidden agenda'. The perpetuation of racism occurs

via the operation of two kinds of signifiers in particular. The first of these Lacan called a 'master-signifier' and for which he used the sign (S1). It also goes by the name of *point de capiton* (quilting-point). The second comprises the whole field of signification, that Lacan called 'knowledge' and for which he used the sign (S2). The master-signifier provides a 'unifying' quality by which the identity of a social setting gains its meaning. Drawing from the previous chapter, we could say that the master-signifiers of the New Right included 'social authoritarianism' and 'moral authoritarianism'. All other meanings within a social setting then come to circulate around the field of possible meaning with which the master-signifier (S1) has placed upon that context. Indeed, as Žižek (2008) maintains, "the *point de capiton* is … [a] word which, *as a word*, on the level of a signifier itself, unifies a given field, constitutes a given identity: it is, so to speak, the word to which 'things' themselves refer to recognise themselves in their unity" (p. 105). In this way, the master-signifier (S1) provides a reference point, guaranteeing the meaning of all other signifiers.

Extreme right-wing activists can blur their ideological appearance with a series of words — that might seem perfectly moral in social sensibility — by superimposing a positive connotation upon an intention that may prove to be socially-divisive. In analytic terms, this occurs where a range of signifiers (S2) become appropriated by a master-signifier (S1). Ideological signifiers that are common to liberal democracies — such as 'equality', 'justice', 'democracy', 'peace', and so on — thereby acquire a repertoire of meaning from the master-signifier. The range of meaning with which they are thereby imbued is pre-supposed by the meaning that the master-signifier has itself come to acquire (Žižek, 2008). That process is itself dialectical insofar as a master-signifier relies on a set of knowledge-signifiers that have positive connotations. In situations where the set of knowledge-signifiers circulates through a network of expertise — such that they become associated with 'expert knowledge' — a divisive message may be instituted, justified by the positive image accruing from that state of expertise

(Žižek, 2008). For example, a master-signifier of 'Communism' might obtain meaning in relation to a pursuit of 'peace' via a socialist revolution. In contrast, a master-signifier of the 'Liberal Democratic' kind, might gain meaning in relation to a pursuit of 'peace' through electoral means. A 'Conservative' master-signifier would, likewise, gain meaning through pathways toward peace related to the resurrection of tradition, nostalgia, and so on. Key to this construction of meaning at the level of the master-signifier is that the particular meaning accruing to each also forms because of their respective differences (Žižek, 2008, p. 113). In this sense, a master-signifier captures the meanings of a word — such as 'peace' — and "stops their sliding and fixes their meaning" (Žižek, 2008, p. 95). Accordingly, master-signifiers provide subjects with pre-supposed mandates.

Political ideology moves through plays upon signifiers. This is particularly so in liberal democracies, wherein ideology effectively gains momentum only through the 'capturing' quality of language. Political extremism also capitalises upon this 'capturing' quality.

The ability of political ideologies to have this effect comes about from the way in which subjectivity is constructed in language. A subject takes on the ideal image of who they are *meant* to be (despite who they might think they are) according to the knowledge (S2) that has been provided to them. The effect is not the production of a seamless sense of self but, rather, a self that is divided (the sign used by Lacan, being $). As Žižek (2008) informs, "to achieve self-identity, the subject must identify himself with the imaginary other, he must alienate himself with the imaginary other, so to speak, into the image of his double" (p. 116). What is noteworthy about this ability of political ideologies is that, under conditions of political repression, a space always thereby exists by which subjects can, in their state of internal division ($), express *agency* against the ideological forces at play.

Across the politico-ideological landscape of the West, from social democracy to social authoritarianism and beyond, there is a constant competition for the 'capture' of subjects. That much is easily seen. An insight that might be missed, however, is the theoretical aspect of such phenomena, namely the destructive pleasure ('enjoyment', in Lacan's terms) that can be gained in the attacking of, and bringing down of opponents. In Lacan, the idea of enjoyment comes from the process whereby the subject ($) is represented by a master-signifier (S1) for continuation in the movement of knowledge (S2). Given the self-denial involved in this for the subject, and of the fact that subjectivation is always already predicated upon — 'subject to' — this process, it is necessarily violent in kind (though not necessarily in a physical way). The experience that the subject gains from being formed in this way is that of 'surplus-enjoyment'. The condition is a paradoxical one insofar as the notion of enjoyment is not the experience of pleasure in a normative sense — that of "the logic of moderation, preventing us from enjoying excessively" (Žižek, 2002, p. xci). Enjoyment is based, rather, on the Freudian concept of a condition 'beyond' the pleasure principle, by which subjects gain pleasure through pain (Žižek, 2002). Freud's insights into this play of pleasure-in-pain are revealed in his account of a patient's dream: "the patient is at the funeral of one of his relatives. The key to the dream [which repeats a real-life event from the previous day] is that, at this funeral, the patient unexpectedly encounters a woman, his love for whom he still has very deep feelings — far from being a masochistic dream, this dream thus simply articulates the patient's joy at meeting his old love again" (Žižek, 2002, p.xcii).

The corner-stone of the 'capturing' present in liberal democracies, lies in the capitalist ability to provide an endless array of goods and services in order to satisfy the public; the understanding that follows is that people become more obligated to desire certain things, than it being their own 'self' that has decided to desire something. To grasp this notion is to grasp the elementary understanding of Lacan's notion of the *objet petit a*: the embodiment in

discourse of the state of surplus-enjoyment (*a*). The concept of *objet petit a* includes two

aspects that each implicate objects in a state of concrete materiality. They derive equally from

Lacan's sense of *object petit a* being the 'object cause of desire'. On the one hand, *objet a*

appears as material objects that cause subjects to desire (rather than the other way around,

whereby desire pre-exists the objects). The second aspect poses the object as an 'unobtainable

object'. This unattainable state arises because *object petit a* sets desire in motion toward a state

which it does not, itself, possess. It can never promise to produce the condition of the

satisfaction that acquisition of a desired object might seemingly promise. The object cause of

desire runs contrary to the 'common sense' notion whereby our desire for an object might be

seen to emanate prior to the pursuit of an object — in that internal self-expressions (rooted in

norms, beliefs, and values, for example, belief in God) guide people to the objects they desire

(Žižek, 2008, p. 31). The Lacanian idea, on the other hand, is that objects appear in the presence

of subjects; subsequently, subjects are obligated to desire those which are made available to

them. In this sense, instead of being an internal self-expression that guides desires, external

forces guide subjects' desires (Žižek, 2008).

An important element of the capitalist appearance of liberal democracy is that it founds most

of its success on the premise that people would keep coming back for more, meaning that it is

not the acquisition of something that gives people satisfaction, rather, it is the continual process

of desiring things. This open quality exhibited by desire is an avenue through which racism

enters. An important aspect of the *objet petit a* is that it is 'unobtainable' (what is also referred

to as void, impossibility, lack, or absence), in that, *objet petit a* is not the set of objects which

subjects desire, but, instead, it is the motion of desire in which the object sets the subject. Žižek

(2002) calls this dynamic "*desire for desire itself*" (p. 144). *Objet petit a* encapsulates a set of

defining features that, when encountered, sparks the subject's desire— as a 'covert', or 'coded'

message (Žižek, 2002). As a result of this, subjects can identify a multitude of related objects

that hold the defining features of *objet petit a*. For example, the act of keeping-up with the latest trends becomes a never-ending cycle of obtaining an object, and never being satisfied, of always wanting to obtain an even 'cooler' item. It is this *cycle of desire* that makes *objet petit a* unobtainable (Žižek, 2002). Importantly, for the present work, the persistence of *objet petit a* can be seen as being especially useful for racist discourse. This can be seen in Western liberal democracies, where explicitly racist discourses cannot now be easily articulated (Žižek, 2002). Nationalist notions such as 'Britain is one' point to an impossible (that is, excusable) ideal but running askew to them are social authoritarian nationalist references to ambiguous pronouns such as 'we' and 'our', under whose seeming innocence is the renewed acquisition of an oppression of immigrants.

University and Hysteria: the justifications and effects of racism

The key feature of Liberal democracies is the ability for subjects to take political action at sites in which oppression of marginalised communities occurs, providing a sort of justification for extreme right-wing groups to appear also at these very sites — paradoxically, now, as the oppressed. Lacan's 'four discourses' provides a lens through which to interpret such phenomena. The four discourses of Master, University, Hysteria, and Analyst (figure 3.3) illustrate the existence and (re)production of ideological power relations, especially under liberal-democratic conditions. They are defined according to their respective arrangements of the four terms of master-signifier (S1), knowledge (S2), surplus-enjoyment (*a*), and subject ($).

There are only four possible social bonds, and this is due to the fact that, while the terms can move in a clockwise or anticlockwise manner, movement is only possible in accordance with a strict order (S1, S2, *a*, $) (Žižek, 1998). There is not, however, a fixed way through which to read a social bond. Each term (master-signifier, knowledge, surplus-enjoyment, and subject) designates specific aspects of intersubjective relations.

The 'University' and 'Hysteric' provide analytic strategies for interpreting the political arrangement of Hobson's Pledge. This will enable us to see where the arrangement has come from, where it is going, what it disavows, and how disavowal occurs.

$$\underline{\text{Master}}$$

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \xrightarrow{\qquad} \frac{S_2}{a}$$

$$\underline{\text{University}}$$

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \xrightarrow{\qquad} \frac{a}{\$}$$

$$\underline{\text{Hysteria}}$$

$$\frac{\$}{a} \xrightarrow{\qquad} \frac{S_1}{S_2}$$

$$\underline{\text{Analyst}}$$

$$\frac{a}{S_2} \xrightarrow{\qquad} \frac{\$}{S_1}$$
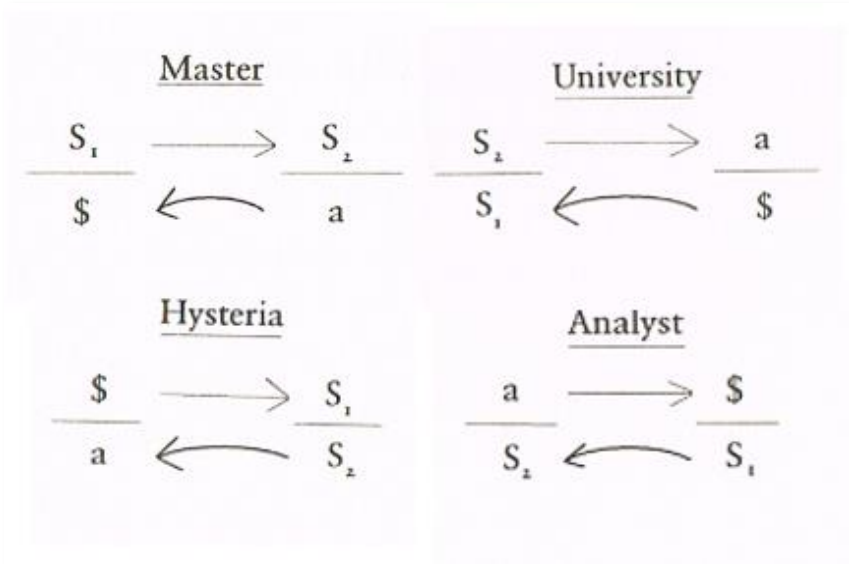
Figure 3. 1. Four discourses. (Žižek, 1998)

The inclusive logic of Western liberal democracy provides a model, ironically, for the practices of right-wing extremism. The University discourse assists the interpretation of this irony. It does so through the same means by which the discourse reveals the logic of administration by which bio-politics functions (Žižek, 2013). Bio-political administration does so by emptying the subject of positive content (*a*), to be filled with the flow of (expert) knowledge, resulting in a divided subject (unable to definitively position itself 'on its own terms'). Two key features are present in this work of bio-political inscription of the self, the first of which is a state of 'fetishist disavowal' (Žižek, 2008a). Disavowal enables a simultaneous acceptance of belief and denial thereof to occur, through which can emerge 'likable' images of discriminatory practices. To reframe the point, fetishistic disavowal sees a power-knowledge structure inaugurated whereby a given appearance of 'knowledge' is fetishized (discriminatory images) in the process of the mastery being disavowed through which its appearance has been enabled (S1). The support for that disavowal comes from the work performed by fantasy: on the basis

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of 'belief', subject act 'as if' the 'likeable' images can be attained through the recouping of that which is missing in society (for example, 'we should be a united nation') (Žižek, 2008a). The discourse produces a subject divided by language ($), depriving the racist of who they might think they are — they become the subject deprived of the autonomous subjectivity assumed to be constitutive of the capacity to racialize. The ideological contradictions are an inevitable and necessary part of the University discourse — the only way for ideological contradictions to survive is if they are put into a constant state of management (Žižek, 2008).

Racism, as it circulates through the university discourse, seemingly projects 'moral' and 'reasonable' messages, such as the bringing of all cultures into 'one' as justified, for example, by the economic forces of Liberal democracies. Such a position of 'oneness' is that of 'colour-blindness', also referred to as 'new-racism': a form of racism with which diversity between ethnic groups, and the socio-political struggles that accompany them, are dissolved though the idea that there is no 'colour' (that 'we are all the same') (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). The inability to see 'colour' is expressed through a number of 'frames'. These are abstract liberalism, cultural racism, naturalisation, and a minimization of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Of these, 'abstract liberalism' is particularly pertinent to the new racism because of the manner in which liberal political and economic ideas are put to work 'in an abstract manner' in order to oppose affirmative action (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). The premise of this is grounded in the fact that the sublimation of conflict into political and economic terms sound like 'moral' and 'reasonable' ways to deal with racial issues (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Examples of this have been given in the previous chapter — of economic arguments as a means by which to oppose affirmative action (see, for example, Gordon & Klug, 1986), or communitarian ideals such as 'unity' ('we are all New Zealanders') are also promoted (see, for example, Spoonley, 1988). Indeed, as Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) indicate: "by using the tenets of the free market ideology in the

abstract, they can oppose affirmative action as a violation of the norm of equal opportunity" (p. 192). Racist effects occur, therefore, regardless of whether the affirmative action is in place to "ameliorate the effects of past and contemporary discrimination", or not (p. 193). Abstract liberalism is a 'moral' and 'reasonable' way to express racist points of view. In this way, 'colour-blindness' serves as a 'fetish'.

Ideas that suggest there are no differences between ethnic groups can potentially have damning effects for indigenous ethnic minorities in particular, where such ideas become increasingly covert. The covert quality of such becomes evident where the concept of 'colour-blindness' enlarges to suggest that a given society has entered a condition beyond ethnic difference and division — that it has become 'post-racial'. 'Post-racialism' is the idea that there is generally no racism in a society, that racism is exclusively restricted to 'small pockets' of the population. The idea of 'Obamerica' provides an example of post-racialism: the election of Obama changed the "nation's racial trajectory" to such an extent that racial tensions are becoming increasingly covert, almost to the point of invisibility — "the election was not a miracle but a deepening of the 'new racism'" (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1366). The problem with the concept of 'post-racialism' is that people may feel that racism does not generally exist in society anymore — because of a shift in the balance of identity politics — and that they thereby overlook the social-economic effects of racism. This shift makes it easier for racist discourses to gain currency, through the mounting of opposition to affirmative action on account of successes won in the arena of identity-politics (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). While racism becomes increasingly covert to the point of near invisibility, people could perceive that there are no racialized structures within a given society, despite the (re)production of racialisation at a systemic level (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). We only need to be reminded of the possible effects thereof in Aotearoa/New Zealand, by considering the statistics canvassed in the previous chapter with regard to the

overrepresentation of Māori in imprisonment, unemployment, and suicide. 'Colour-blindness' thereby presents itself as a type of 'new racism' that operates as a 'fetish', providing an ability to articulate racist positions in a 'moral' or 'reasonable' way — with the appearance of the 'race-talk' being non-racist in character.

The problem facing racists' operations in liberal democracies is that they have to prevent the revelation of their intent in the public arena. The true, or 'hidden', agenda is that of the 'disavowal' of the belief held in 'whiteness': an underlying 'hidden' racist intent. If 'colour-blindness' could be referred to as 'new-racism', belief in the superiority of 'whiteness' could be referred to as 'old-racism'. This is indicative of the fact that racism has no 'trans-historical' essence — the nature of racism shifts over time and space (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 236). The way with which to 'live whiteness' is, thereby, "delimited by the relations of racism *at that moment and in that place*" (Frankenberg, 1993, p.236). As such, a whiteness-oriented racism in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand can only exist through the operation of 'disavowal' — as a 'hidden agenda'. If a 'hidden agenda' exists, it will inadvertently, if not inevitably, present itself within the public arena.

When 'race-talk' is revealed — in the public area of the West, at least — it emerges as an admission to difference between ethnicities accompanied with a sense of superiority from the standpoint of the speaker, over the ethnic identities of others. One such way in which this occurs, and that represents a digression from the 'colour-blind' notion of 'unity' often associated with nationalism is of a 'colourless' position of 'just human'. The notion behind being 'just human' is placed against the backdrop of the 'fact' that "other people are raced, we are just human" (Dyer, 1997, p. 1). This is a sort of role-reversal whereby being 'just human' becomes an absurd claim to be the voice for the commonality of humanity. "Raced people can't do that — they can only speak for their race" (Dyer, 1997, p. 2). In this way, the idea of

'unity' differs from the idea of being 'just human' in that the latter infers a separation of ethnic groups (with divisive intents). Through and through, the power-knowledge structure in which a 'fetish disavowal' presents itself, is by no means an absolute structure — inevitably, that which is disavowed will seep-up through cracks in the network of social relations.

The inconsistency that characterises the expression of a moral intent that has divisive undertones, within liberal democracies, relies upon a particular kind of support. That support can be seen within a second feature of the University discourse as that of a 'fantasy'. An important psychoanalytical understanding is that 'fantasy' runs contrary to the idea that it is separated from reality (that it is strictly fictional). In a Lacanian sense, fantasy "teaches us how to desire" (Žižek, 2008a, p. 7) — doing so through its mediation between the power-knowledge structure of the social setting and subjectivity, such that it becomes logical to desire the objects constitutive of the social setting. Instead of being in a state of separation from reality, fantasy thereby provides support for a given reality by providing a rationale behind the objects to be desired.

The way in which to resolve the paradox of a moral intent, whose logic is divisiveness, is to assert that the moral intent is always in search of an origin. That search occurs through the creation of a story about the cause (behind the moral intent) that is now absent. Fantasy supports reality by creating a fictional story (a conspiracy theory) whereby, miraculously, the '*unobtainable*' object is posed as something that has been stolen by the other or to which that other holds a privileged position. As Žižek (2002) states, "what 'bothers' us in the 'other' … is that he appears to entertain a privileged relationship to the object — the other either possesses the object-treasure, having snatched it away from us [which is why we don't have it], or poses a threat to our possession of the object" (p. xci). In this way, 'fantasy' provides a kind of 'promise' to retrieve an object that is — ironically — structured as 'unobtainable'. The

operation of 'fantasy' in this manner can be discerned, Žižek explains, when a violent person is pressed for reasons for their violence. When a neo-Nazi, for example, is pressed as to his violence, they start speaking in the conspiratorial terms of a social worker or a sociologist, "citing diminished social mobility, rising insecurity, [and] the disintegration of paternal authority" (Žižek, 2002, p. xci). Conspiracy theories of this kind were reviewed briefly in the previous chapter's discussion of racist New Zealand movements. For example, the League of Rights promoted a conspiracy theory that anti-tour groups of 1981 had intended to undermine law and order (Spoonley, 1987). More currently, during Trump's election campaign a 'hash tag' #whitegenocide emerged that portrayed white people as victims of injustice. Conspiracy theories are a sort of holding-pattern through which extreme right-wing groups can express their activism.

Stories about the recuperation of objects that might not even exist require the operation of belief. Indeed, human reality always depends upon fantasy operating through belief; if there is no belief, the texture of social relations would fall apart. Belief is the fabric upon which the central ideas of all prevailing knowledge-power structures are woven into social relationships. Belief brings subjects to act 'as if' ideas (with regard to a liberalist structure, of 'equality', 'justice', 'unity', and 'justice' and so on) are the pathway towards recovery of the 'lost' object of desire. The effects of the 'as if' postulate are captured in the phrase 'I know very well [that ideas in themselves are insufficient], but still [I will hold to them]' (Žižek, 2008, p. 30). An instructive illustration of the 'as if' moment is present in Anderson's tale of the Emperor has no clothes, whereby all the Emperor's people were aware of his non-existing clothes, however, they acted 'as if' the King was clothed (Žižek, 2002). An important characteristic of wide-eyed belief in a given worldview, sustained as each one is through beliefs predicted upon the operation of 'as if' postulates, is that the texture of all such settings can easily fall apart. In the final moment of Anderson's tale, it merely took a child to say 'look the Emperor is naked!' for

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panic to ensue; the texture of the social setting fell apart (Žižek, 2002). Overall, a 'fantasy' is by no means stable, it functions only if subjects believe.

In addition, the subject that 'believes' in a specific ideological worldview may, in some way, feel victimised in holding onto these views. A victimisation of this kind emanates from the aforementioned theme whereby an economic argument is used by which to oppose affirmative action. Such arguments carry with them the idea that the State should not intervene in providing rewards to specific ethnic groups (for example, Māori) as these rewards should be earned through market-forces. However, these arguments may prove to be socially-divisive — in that State intervention assists the reduction of social effects produced by discrimination. Nevertheless, the subject may feel victimised in wanting to express these notions. Faced with this situation, the subject can draw upon the Western notion of 'human rights', specifically, "*the right not to be harassed*" (Žižek, 2013, p. 398). The subject can thereby adopt a fragile posture, the effects of which result in the subject claiming a kind of victimhood when expressing an ideological worldview that may, otherwise, prove to be socially-divisive.

Democracy is, in part, founded upon the notion that political action can be taken against political oppression. Human rights discourse has proven popular in this regard. Ironically, it is through this same assumption that racist ideologies gain traction. The second discourse in Lacan's set of four, that of the 'hysteric's discourse, provides a lens by which to identify how the subject comes to express agency of this oppositional kind (Žižek, 1998). The agency of the subject is expressed by addressing the prevailing power-structure of a given political community (the master-signifier (S1)). The truth underlying the subject's opposition is that the subject refuses to be the object of the power-structure's desire (Žižek, 1998). This is, of course, a recurrent theme here, regarding the role of economic arguments to justify racist practices: people should earn rewards only through their participation in the 'free market' and

State intervention is seen to breach individuals' human rights — especially if interventions benefit only specific groups. A subject enacts agency, which is thereby justified by the underpinnings of liberal democracy — even if it is a racist expression thereof.

Action against oppression accompanies a state of non-satisfaction, based on the subject's rejection of the prevailing forces. The subject takes political action in the form of questioning their mandate by asking sorts of questions such as 'why am I this?' or 'why am I that?' (Žižek, 2008, p. 126). The line of questioning is not about the subject being deprived of the object that causes desire, but, rather against the fact that they, apparently, possess the object desired by the power-structure (Žižek, 1998). Through the expression of agency, the subject thereby declines the mandate ascribed to them. As a result, the un-satisfaction gained through their expression of agency turns into a source of satisfaction.

The oppressed subject can only become satisfied when they can create a language-play of words in order to go some way towards a new definition of identity. To enlarge the point, the subject gains satisfaction though taking political action against subjective experiences of oppression, the result of which is that the subject produces a knowledge (S2) of their own (Žižek, 1998).

The satisfaction gained through the creation of a language-play of words provides the impetus for activism with particular nodal points of the prevailing socio-political order. It is on this basis, for example, that racists might attempt to disturb the texture of liberal political community by countering ideas such as affirmative action. The subject's ability to produce a knowledge of their own is indicative of the fact that, while they might feel 'used' and 'exploited' by the prevailing order, the social setting relies on their (and other's) belief in it (Žižek, 1998). The hysterical subject's suspension of belief has the potential to disrupt the texture of the social setting to which they are opposed. In a sort of 'look the Emperor is naked!'

gesture, or words to that effect, the subject of the hysterical discourse has the ability to make other people notice what they are otherwise simply 'seeing'.

Conclusion

The 'four discourses', of which two prove useful here, are the analytic lens used to interpret the subject material of this research. The so-called 'hysteric's discourse' suggest that a social setting is not absolute, there is always a space for subjects to express their voice — a voice that has the ability to disturb, if not destroy, the texture of society. The expression of agency could also seed the formation of a new social order. The 'University discourse' relies on an instability as a means to survive; the instability which is an ideological contradiction. In a racist formulation, the master-signifier (for example, social authoritarian conservatism) is disavowed — it has to be so, because open expression of racial discrimination is not widely accepted under liberal conditions. However, the increasingly covert forms of racism can, quite easily, be used to express a 'hidden agenda' — in the public arena. Fetishized ideas such as 'one law for all' seem 'moral' and 'reasonable'. Ideas which appear as a consequence of this operation of fetishised disavowal depend upon the support of fantasy. With regard to the basic tenets of liberal political philosophy, for example, it is 'as if' the ideals of 'equality' and 'justice' always already exist and, as such, exist to be achieved; they can only be found, however, through the retrieval of an object that has either been stolen or which someone else is preventing our access. The effects of the ideological contradiction provides a 'promise' to retrieve an object that might or might not have even existed in the first place — the mere anticipation of retrieval sets desire back in motion. This is the framework used here to interpret the extreme right-wing activism of Hobson's Pledge.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

The general aim of the research is to gain an understanding of Hobson's Pledge, as an alt-right pressure group that tries to influence the State toward social policies which normalise ethnic difference, in a manner that effects social divisions. Emanating from the aim, the objectives of the inquiry are to identify the circumstances in which ideological contradictions are revealed within the positions taken by Hobson's Pledge on concrete social issues, how the group manages those contradictions when they manifest, and the implication of these strategies for the direction of Hobson's Pledge into the future. This chapter outlines the means by which these objectives are pursued, justifications for the practices used to generate data, and the challenges the research design poses.

Qualitative multi-methods

The research utilised three methods of data collection. The first of these is a small set of semi-structured face-to-face, interviews that were held with two key members of Hobson's Pledge, Don Brash and Larry Wood. Each of these men provided their own interpretations of the group. An observational method provided an additional source of data, used during the preliminary stages of contact with Hobson's Pledge group members. This approach produced a set of challenges, particularly during the contact phase of the research. Lastly, content analysis enables the interpretation of a range of cyber-based discourse from Hobson's Pledge. The roles that each played in the research design are elaborated upon below.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews provided a first-hand account of the ideal worldview constructed by Hobson's Pledge. This method is consistent with the only substantial New

Zealand literature regarding the political activism of extreme right-wing groups — though which ten people were interviewed (see, Spoonley, 1987). Given the available size and subsequent scope of the research at hand, it would have been ideal to interview more people. However, only two participants, Don Brash and Larry Wood, were interviewed. Attempts to use a snowball technique for enlisting further participants were to no avail.

Verbal agreements were made with each of the participants, through which two conditions of participation were set. The first of these was the use of proper names. With respect to a clause in the information sheet (Appendix A), stipulating that their names would only be used if their permission was given to do so, approval to do so was requested upon the initial contact. Prospective participants were informed that, because of the public environment in which the group operates, their identities would be disclosed — to which they agreed. It would have been counterproductive, otherwise, to use pseudonyms, as their identities would most likely have been identifiable anyway. Secondly, the participants verbally agreed to this condition on a secondary condition that they would only speak in their own individual capacity; that is, as they interpret the ideological structure of Hobson's Pledge rather than that of a 'council' member of Hobson's Pledge. Interestingly, prior to the commencement of the interviews, both participants crossed-out the title on the consent form ('Hobson's Pledge'), and subsequently replaced it with their own names. In doing so, Don Brash asserted that the interview was about his own personal beliefs; Larry Wood said that he followed suit because Don Brash had suggested for him to do so (see, Appendix B).

Any efforts in attempting to recruit participants appear to have been hampered by two members of Hobson's Pledge, Don Brash and Casey Costello, whose advice to other members I contacted for possible inclusion in the research, had a 'gatekeeper' effect. Despite one of the gatekeepers, Don Brash, agreeing to be interviewed, it became apparent through the

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communications with other group members that these two people had influenced other group members' decisions to decline the interview invitations. This dynamic became apparent to me during the initial contact phase whereby participants explicitly confirmed that, indeed, advice from these two had influenced the reasons as to why they declined their invites. Fortuitously, Larry Wood accepted and participated in the research, having felt assured that there were no ulterior motives behind the research at hand; Larry Wood thereby went against the group's decision, by taking the opportunity to express his system of belief. In addition, the influence of these two individuals was apparent in the fact that two other prospective participants had accepted my invitations, however, upon reminding them of the interview (two days prior) — to which they responded amicably — these prospective participants both made contact two hours later to decline their interviews.

The style of interview adopted for the questioning of participants reflected a constructionist epistemology. This style provided a means by which to learn how participants got from one point of view to another — rather than relying upon the deduction of such movements from accounts given by participants of their 'lived experience'. The semi-structured format enabled questions to be formulated in the moment that would probe interviewee's responses to the set questions of 'how' and 'what'. A constructionist approach to interviewing provides an understanding of not only 'what is going on' within the interviewees' social realities, but also 'how' interviewees construct and maintain their reality in getting from 'this' to 'that' in their interpretation of things (see, Silverman, 2013). The difference between a constructionist approach and a naturalist approach is that a constructionist approach is concerned more with how the participants construct their social realities (Silverman, 2014). A naturalist approach, on the other hand, has a tendency to be romantic — concerned with 'lived experience' of social realities. As such, it made more sense to understand 'how' the participants got to their specific,

individual understandings of things — of their opposition to affirmative action, for example — instead of gaining a romanticised account thereof.

The interview schedule, in Appendix C, provides the line of questioning used for the interviews. The general line of these questions spoke to the controversial position that Hobson's Pledge hold, in terms of their call for 'one rule for all', and for their opposition to affirmative action. The interview questions asked about the following: the relevance of the logic of 'one people' to the group; the participants' responses to Hobson's Pledge ideologies being seen to promote racism; the relationship of the group's vision of national 'unity' to policies that have socially divisive effects; the relationship of Hobson's Pledge's policies to the force of law; the status of the UN declaration of Indigenous Rights; and the relationship of indigenous identity to legal rights. The participants remained active and willing participants throughout their answering of this line of questioning — careful consideration was taken in ensuring that participants were treated with respect throughout the interview process.

Indeed, a crucial aspect in the conduct of social research is for the researcher to uphold, on their behalf, the ethical obligations of the institution to which they belong. The participants agreed to be interviewed in the comfort of their own homes thereby reducing any risk of emotional harm that might have been experienced in another setting. In addition, prior to the respective interviews, each of the participants was reminded of the rights that they had during the interview: to ask questions at any time; to refuse any question; to stop the recording of the interview at any time; to stop the interview at any time (see, Appendix C). The participants did not exercise any of these rights during the interviews.

The second element of the research design, that of observation, supplemented the interviews by providing data collected from communications with the group. The observational method

is consistent with Spoonley's (1987) practice of taking notes through overt informal talk, and during the attendance of group meetings. The intention for the research at hand was to attend one of a series of countrywide public meetings held by Hobson's Pledge; however, by the time ethical approval had been given for the research, the tour of public meetings had ended. Nevertheless, observations were gathered though the taking of notes from phone calls made, and from emails received (and saved) from prospective participants. A key contribution of the communications with group members to the research data was a general state of unwillingness to accept interview invitations.

The third element of the research method was that of content analysis, whereby secondary sources of information where gathered from internet sites, which complemented the interview and observation data. Document analysis is consistent with Spoonley's (1987) research, which involved gathering primary sources of information through the attainment of private group documents directly sourced from extreme right-wing groups, and that were not otherwise publically available. In addition, secondary resources included news reports, journal and magazine articles, all of which are available in the public arena. It would have been ideal to collect private, group documents directly from Hobson's Pledge; however, considering the level of internal confidentiality in which the group operates, there was no way of knowing whether such information even existed let alone whether the group would allow access to it for research purposes. On the other hand, secondary sources of internet data in the form of news articles and informative websites provided a valuable accompaniment to the overall collection of data. The website of Hobson's Pledge provides information about the group's ideologies, individual opinion pieces from members and associates, and a series of 'issues' that the group plans to address. 'Google search' was another means though which I collected data; by typing phrases into the search bar, news articles were collected — complementing, and adding to, information gathered about emergent themes.

Data organisation and analysis

The data from interviews, observations, and content analysis of internet text was organised into a thematic form, and analysed through the lens of political psychoanalysis. Thematic analysis of the data involved a process of reviewing material, generating themes, and a reviewing of the themes. This process thereby enabling the data to be presented to the stage of theoretical interpretation (see, Braun & Clark, 2006). Political psychoanalysis, as detailed in the previous chapter, provided a lens by which the data was analysed. Three themes were generated by the data, and framed within the theoretical underpinnings of the research. These themes are: *the true face of 'whiteness - the dislocation of 'coherence'; a 'colour-blind' New Zealand for all* and; *moving into the future - a post-racial New Zealand?*. The overall objective was to link the data to theory so as to answer the research questions that emanate from the aim of the research.

As a means by which to achieve the aims of the research, careful consideration of theoretical approaches was made so as to ensure correspondence would ensue between data and themes. The first theme, *the true face of 'whiteness': the dislocation of a projected image of coherence*, interprets the formation of a 'likeable' image (a 'moral' or 'reasonable' image associated with the nationalist notion of 'unity', for example) in relation to points in the discourse of the participants that mark a digression from the positive image projected of 'whiteness'. Such points can take the form of, for example, 'a-slip-of-the-tongue'. An example is a comment from one of the participants that 'listening to Māori on the radio irritates the hell out of me'. The second theme, *a 'colour-blind' New Zealand for all*, interprets the strategies that sustain the 'likeable' image when contradictions manifest. Positive images of the group are found to be framed in terms of morality or reasonableness, with an effect that the group's opposition to affirmative action policies is predicated upon these same implied qualities ('moral',

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'reasonable'). The third theme, *moving into the future: a post-racial New Zealand?*, interprets the future of racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As racism becomes increasingly covert, it is increasingly presumed to only exist in small pockets of society – despite evidence of the (re)production of racism at a systemic level. These process of analysis allows for a cohesive account to emerge that establish the way in which Hobson's Pledge advocates social policies that normalise ethnic divisions.

Conclusion

The aim of the research required a data set that would garner an understanding of when ideological contradictions within the group are revealed, of how the group manages the contradictions in order to prevent them dislocating the projected image of coherence, and of where the group might be heading in the future as a consequence of the strategies used. The selection of methods — semi-structured face-to-face interviews, observations, and document research — was pertinent to gaining this form of understanding. In particular, the interviews reflected a constructionist epistemology so that deeper understanding could be developed of participants' 'lived experiences' — namely how perspectives came to be held and the ideological tensions which developed in those developments. Careful considerations were also made in selecting a theoretical lens for the interpretation of data, that could differentiate between forms of tension, that could differentiate between strategies used for the management of contradictions, and that could shed light on the prospective future of the group.

Chapter 5: A true face of 'whiteness': the dislocation of 'coherence'

Introduction

Hobson's Pledge ground their activism on the basic politico-economic structure of Western liberal democracy. This chapter examines the link between the political activism implicit within Don Brash's speech to the Orewa Rotary Club in 2004 (the 'Orewa Speech', in Ōrewa) and Hobson's Pledge. The Speech creates a series of claims — for example, that there should be 'one rule for all' — all of which contest the legitimacy of affirmative action. Besides these claims, Brash expresses dissatisfaction with the prevailing power-structure (the Labour Government of the time) that believes in the compensation of Māori for the effects of colonisation. Questions are raised as to the reasons why currently-living New Zealanders should have to pay compensation for that which they are not directly responsible. Overall, Brash attempts to dismantle the prevailing power structure by pointing out what, to him, is obvious; for example, there are no 100 percent Māori left in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The claims that are created during Brash's Speech are, subsequently, appropriated by Hobson's Pledge, and are re-coded less in 'moral' terms than they are in 'legal' terms. In addition, the group denies any racist intent underlying their ideologies. The irony is, however, that these (legal) claims may prove to be socially-divisive. Nevertheless, the group fills in the inconsistencies of their arguments with a promissory story about the retrieval of something that is 'missing' within society: that 'we are now one people':

> Governor Hobson represented Queen Victoria on the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in February 1840. Hobson greeted each Chief who came forward to sign the treaty with the following pledge: '*he iwi tahi tatou'* — *'we are now one people*'. Hobson's pledge

to the chiefs laid the foundation of New Zealand's democracy: One citizen: one vote, regardless of race, colour, religion or gender (Hobson's Pledge, 2018a).

This becomes a prized object compared to the other claims. In this way, people are obligated to act 'as if' the only way to achieve the 'legal' claims ('equality' for example) is to retrieve what is 'missing' (something that might, ironically, not even exist). Through and through, under ideal conditions, the group promotes a positive image of 'coherence'.

An unintentional consequence emerges, however, whereby the effect of the group's activism, rather than promoting a sense of unity within society, promotes a sense of separation between ethnic groups. Such a dislocation from the positive imagery is present in the group's opposition to Te Reo Māori — intimations of irritation circulate amongst members of Hobson's Pledge in response to a perception that they are being forced to learn the language.

The Orewa Speech: towards nationalist unity

A key feature of Western political ideologies is the ability to 'capture' the public's imagination through plays of words. A seemingly endless array of words exist that can perform this 'capturing quality', all of which gain their effectiveness though being imbued with positive connotations. These words are, for Lacan, knowledge signifiers (S2), and are most consistently produced in one of Lacan's 'four discourses': the hysteric's discourse. Knowledge (S2) is produced from the onset of the Orewa Speech, wherein Don Brash addresses the Labour Government as the prevailing power-structure of the political community. A key feature of this structure, for Brash, is the way in which it values affirmative action policies associated with the socio-political status of Māori. A power-structure of this kind is, for Lacan, that of a master-signifier (S1). Speaking from the position of the 'hysteric' ($), against that power-structure,

Brash produces a knowledge-claim to contest the legitimacy of affirmative action —— there should (only) be 'one rule for all':

So let me begin by asking, what sort of nation do we want to build?

Is it to be a modern democratic society embodying the essential notion of one rule for all in a single state?

Or is it the racially divided nation, with two sets of laws, and two standards of citizenship, that the present Labour Government is moving us steadily towards? (Brash, cited in Butler, 2017)

Lacan notes a special relationship between the production of oppositional knowledge-claims and psychical life. The production of oppositional claims is the primary way by which the hysteric subject-position ($) produces emotional satisfaction for the individual. The knowledge-claims are deployed at specific nodal points in the socio-political structure, acting as a series of proposals that — in the case of the Orewa Speech — delineate the possibility of a new definition of national identity. Other knowledge-claims of this kind that have come to be associated with Brash, if not Hobson's Pledge, include that 'we are [now] one people', and that 'we' must 'unite'. Moreover, what is noteworthy, other than the production of knowledge-claims themselves, is that no other sources of satisfaction can seemingly be derived from Brash's expression of political agency, as might be associated with, for example, the presentation of a comprehensive political manifesto. Rather, the political expression of the hysterical subject position ($) is always of an oppositional kind. Such a subject might feel, for example, 'used' or 'exploited' with the effect that their sense of activism pivots upon the expression of dissatisfaction with the prevailing socio-political order. What appears to be central to Brash's expression of agency concerns a situation whereby, because the Treaty of

Waitangi has itself been 'misinterpreted', the installation of 'racial' distinctions in large parts of New Zealand legislation has been able to prevail:

> Treaty of Waitangi was expressed simply by then Lt-Gov Hobson in February 1840. In his halting Maori, he said to each chief as he signed: He iwi tahi tatou. We are [now] one people.

> A number of issues flow from this. They are complex, highly sensitive, even emotionally charged.

> But I believe in plain speaking. So let me be blunt.

> Over the last 20 years, the Treaty has been wrenched out of its 1840s context and become the plaything of those who would divide New Zealanders from one another, not unite us.

> In parallel with the Treaty process and the associated grievance industry, there has been a divisive trend to embody racial distinctions into large parts of our legislation, extending recently to local body politics. In both education and healthcare, government funding is now influenced not just by need — as it should be — but also by the ethnicity of the recipient. (Brash, cited in Butler, 2017)

The state of dissatisfaction with the prevailing socio-political forces — of the Labour Government in particular — is accompanied with a rejection of these very forces. For Lacan, rejection is commonly expressed through political action. Political action is itself often propelled by a questioning of expectations around the expression of self, for example, 'why am I this kind of citizen?' or 'why am I that?'. In terms of the Orewa Speech, these sorts of questions are formulated as a proposal: that responsibility is rejected for the payment of

compensation for which currently-living New Zealanders are not directly answerable. An apparent effect of this statement is that Brash refuses to be the object of the Labour Government's desire to uphold affirmative action policies:

> Let me be quite clear. Many things happened to the Maori people that should not happened. There were injustices, and the Treaty process is an attempt to acknowledge that, and to make a gesture at recompense. But it is only that. It can be no more than that.

> None of us was around at the time of the New Zealand wars. None of us had anything to do with the confiscations. There is a limit to how much any generation can apologise for the sins of its great grandparents.

> … What worries me about the current Treaty debate is that we find ourselves now, at the beginning of the 21st century, still locked into 19th century arguments. (Brash, cited in Butler, 2017)

In addition, the rejection of prevailing socio-political forces includes as a common theme — as argued in the Orewa Speech, and later by Hobson's Pledge — the utilisation of economic argument to legitimate social practices whose effects include the installation of divisions along ethnic lines. That is, rewards should be earned through the 'free market' with the consequence that any State intervention — particularly regarding policies aimed at ameliorating the destructive effects upon Māori of the European colonisation of Aotearoa/New Zealand — is presumed to run contrary to individuals' human rights. Interestingly, an adjunct to this theme is the observation that Māori sit across the socio-economic continuum — despite the acknowledgement of their overrepresented in the lower socio-economic grouping:

Much of the non-Maori tolerance for the Treaty settlement process — where people who weren't around in the 19th century pay compensation to the part-descendants of those who were — is based on a perception of relative Maori poverty. But in fact Maori income distribution is not very different from Pakeha income distribution, as sociologist Simon Chapple pointed out a couple of years ago in a much publicised piece of research.

Maori-ness explains very little about how well one does in life. Ethnicity does not determine one's destiny.

It is the bottom 25 percent of Maori, most of them on welfare, who are conspicuously poor. They are no different to Pacific Islanders or other non-Maori on welfare; it's just that there is a higher percentage of them in that category. (Brash, cited in Butler, 2017)

Western liberal democracies rely on the operation of belief for the promotion of ideological concerns such as those presented in the Orewa Speech. If popular belief in the central power-structure of a given society wanes, the texture of that society, as presently understood, faces serious dislocation. It appears that Brash's belief in the power structure to which he is opposed has, in his mind, already disintegrated; his attempted demolition of the power-structure of social-democratic government is thereby implemented in a kind of 'look, the Emperor is Naked!' gesture. In emulation of the subject position of the hysteric, Brash points out what he is, otherwise, seeing as the simple state of things. He attempts to dismantle the power-structure by pointing out that New Zealand is a multi-ethnic 'melting pot' with no absolute Māori population. Belief in this assumption enables him to deploy a mode of reasoning associated with a 'blood quantum-type':

Let me turn briefly to what we mean by 'Maori'.

The short cut of referring to Maori as one group and Pakeha as another is enormously misleading. There is no homogenous, distinct Maori population — we have been a melting pot since the 19th century — although there is, of course, a highly distinctive Maori culture, which many people see as central to their identity.

Our definition of ethnicity is now a matter of subjective self-definition: if you are part Maori and want to identify as Maori you can do so.

The Maori ethnic group is a very loose one. There has always been considerable intermarriage between Maori and Pakeha. Anthropologists tell us that by 1900 there were no full-blooded Maori left in the South Island. By 2000, the same was true of the North Island. Today, nearly 70 percent of 24 to 34 year old New Zealanders who identify as Maori are married to someone who does not.

And most of the rest are themselves of multi-ethnic identity, itself a consequence of two centuries of intermarriage. As a consequence, a majority of Maori children grow up today with a non-Maori parent.

Many people feel it is somehow impolite to mention these facts. But by ignoring them we create an oppositional picture of race relations in this country, and we overlook the many powerful forces that can promote social cohesion. (Brash, cited in Butler, 2017)

The concluding statements to the Orewa Speech re-emphasise dissatisfaction with the power-structure (Labour Government) that values the use of affirmative action policies. Reiteration of this position has an additional effect: it projects the possibility of a future state of satisfaction with regard to a new, possible, form of national identity — as an expression of a kind of hope for a better future. This identity would resolve the perceived state of oppression imagined of New Zealanders in general. Two new claims are posited toward this end. Firstly, opposition

to affirmative action is re-stated in order to emphasise that these policies are, in fact, also destructive to Māori:

> A culture of dependence and grievance can only be hugely destructive of the Maori people and, if left unchecked, destructive of our ability to build a prosperous nation of one people, living under one set of laws. (Brash, cited in Butler, 2017)

Secondly, the Speech represents a moral cause whose purpose is to overturn 19th century laws and customs that normalised ethnic difference and to usher in a requirement of 21st century society, that of 'one rule for all':

> In many ways, I am deeply saddened to have to make a speech about issues of race. In this country, it should not matter what colour you are, or what your ethnic origin might be. It should not matter whether you have migrated to this country and only recently become a citizen, or whether your ancestors arrived two, five, 10 or 20 generations ago.

> The indigenous culture of New Zealand will always have a special place in our emerging culture, and will be cherished for that reason.

> But we must build a modern, prosperous, democratic nation based on one rule for all. We cannot allow the loose threads of 19th century law and custom to unravel our attempts at nation-building in the 21st century. (Brash, cited in Butler, 2017)

The claims created during the Orewa Speech would eventually re-gain currency, in 2016, upon the formation of the alt-right lobby group called Hobson's Pledge (headed by Don Brash and Casey Costello). The group seeks to counteract what it sees to be the State's provision of Māori with a 'privileged' position in society.

Applying an identity of their own: from Orewa to Hobson's Pledge

A significant ideological movement occurs as Hobson's Pledge adopts positions outlined in the Orewa Speech. Western liberal democracy shows itself to be an ideal host for the expression of right-wing ideas. The discursive circuit that Lacan called 'university discourse' assists in our interpretation of this irony. Its potential for doing so lies with how it frames the seemingly apolitical administration of life as a form of political power.

Hobson's Pledge takes on the claims of the Orewa Speech, presenting them less in moral terms than demands that have a legal basis. The role of 'university discourse' in this re-articulation of claims can be readily seen. The central act in this re-articulation is to unburden subjects of their existing expectations around ethnic relations, such that they can absorb expert (legal) claims on the meaning of central social democratic ideas such as 'equality', and 'fairness'. This move creates what Lacan calls the divided subject — people find themselves obligated by the new authority (expert legal opinion) to take-up a certain identity, despite who they might think they are. This move can be seen in Don Brash's 2017 'return to Orewa' speech, at which Hobson's Pledge is also born:

> I believe my speech here [in 2004] triggered … [an amazing jump in National's] support. I believe the people — not the pundits — knew what I was saying. They knew that it was not — and never will be — racist to call for equality. They knew what they wanted New Zealand to stand for: A fair go, a fair deal. For everyone. Not favouritism for some. And definitely not favouritism based on race. They wanted New Zealand to be a country where everyone shared the same air — which is the meaning of the hongi — the same rights, and the same opportunities. The people knew then — and they know now — that *all* racism is racist, no matter which race benefits. And they didn't want a bar of it! Not then. Not now.

But, 13 years on, racism still rules the roost. The push for privilege persists and our politicians still pander to it. Inch by inch, step by step they have created islands of influence, and positions of power...for one race only. Make no mistake, our Parliament has done this, our politicians. They've been busy passing racist laws while dishonestly branding other people 'racist', using a lie to replace logic. They call the people who disagree with them a fringe. Well, we're not a fringe. We're a throng. They label me a lone voice attacking the Treaty. But I'm not. (Brash, cited in Hobson's Pledge, 2017)

On the one hand, this text fetishizes 'colour-blindness' by foregrounding an enticingly likeable image of the group — 'we're not a fringe. We're a throng'. This image supports the 'moral'/ 'reasonable' claims that are then validated in legal terms, such as the notion of 'legal equality' between citizens, which is nothing other than 'fair', and so on. This position stands in opposition to affirmative action policies that provide recompense to Māori for the colonial past. The political context that frames the 'colour-blind' interpretive lens used in the text is that of 'abstract liberalism'. This is a form of liberalism which functions through the presentation of political and economic ideas 'in an abstract manner' only, as a means by which to oppose affirmative action. As such, the argument is made also at a highly abstract level, that individual human rights are infringed upon when the State provides rewards to a distinct ethnic group rather than those rewards coming through market-based activity ('a fair go, a fair deal'). This is an all too common theme present in the activism of extreme right-wing groups.

The abstract character of opposition to affirmative action becomes evident in a list of principles outlined on the group's website — these principles form the ideological framework of Hobson's Pledge:

- We can find nothing in the Treaty of Waitangi justifying any racial preference under the law.

- Legal equality between citizens is the foundation stone of democracy. It is fair, reasonable and totally inclusive.

- True democracy has proven to be the most enduring and successful system of government. It makes for united and prosperous nations.

- Race-based privilege creates opportunities for corruption, resentment, and unrest (Hobson's Pledge, 2018a).

These principles seemingly now inform positions held by Don Brash and Larry Wood on current matters of governance. The Independent Māori Statutory Board, for example — which identifies problems that are significant to Māori in Auckland (Te Puni Kōkiri, n.d.) — is presented by Brash as existing contrary the principle of 'equality' under the 'law':

> The Independent Maori Statutory Board has no basis in a modern society, where everyone is treated equally under the law. The law has been changed in the last 20 years or so, so there's special legal privileges having created for people who chance to have a Maori ancestor. Some of the privileges go, of course, back to 1867 — Maori electorates for example. There's no basis for that privilege at all, I mean it shouldn't exist at all. The royal commission on the electoral system said that 21 years ago. (Brash)

Larry Wood speaks more generally of these priniples:

> Well, like I said, I have a intransigent sense of fairness. Or that, you know, everybody should be, in the eyes of the State, equal — I mean, in the eyes of the law. People, individually, aren't equal — no way they're equal, either physically, mentally, or whatever. And that's not the question. It's the question of the law, and how the law applies to everybody. (Wood)

Objet a, satisfaction, and the turn to law.

In accordance with their opposition to affirmative action, Brash and Wood vehemently deny any racist intent underlying appeals to the law. Both define what racism means, followed by their denial thereof:

> Racist implies that you want special privilege for some race, I certainly don't. I want the opposite of that. I want no special treatment for anyone. Every citizen whether they are of European ethnicity, Asian ethnicity, Maori ethnicity, Pacific Island ethnicity has the same rights. How can that be bad? How can that be racist? That's the very definition of who is not racist. (Brash)

> Well it's how you define racist. My definition from the dictionary is: it's the degradation or the raising of any race over another race. So you either tear them down or build them up over everyone else, in a political context — in this context I'm definitely not racist. (Wood)

In Lacanian terms, the faming of a position through the mechanism of denial suggests a psychical process of disavowal. This is a process wherein an object whose possession proves difficult for the subject to admit to (for example, an attachment to 'whiteness'), is displaced by a positive, though abstract, element of the posited ideology — for example, of 'unity' presented in legal terms. Emphasis then falls on that abstract element, bringing about a 'fetishisation' of that thing (of 'unity').

Arguments that rest upon the fetishisation of a particular element can be easily compromised. An example of such compromise can be found in the group's 'principle' that 'race-based privilege creates opportunities for corruption, resentment, and unrest'. Such a principle ignores

the historical and present effects of colonisation — affirmative action policies are put in place so as to ameliorate these effects. Such compromises can be addressed, however, through the telling of stories about the possible retrieval of something that has been 'lost', and that remains 'missing' within society. This object that is 'missing' (for Hobson's Pledge, this may be Governor Hobson's notion 'we are now one people') may, in itself, not even exist (at least, in the form being recounted). Stories of this kind are, in a Lacanian sense, always fantasmatic. In keeping with the recurrent nature of such narratives, Lacan coined a particular term for the object that perpetually never shows up: *objet petit a*. In the terms of the political project of Hobson's Pledge, the missing object indicates something that the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand ought to desire (to be 'one people', for example). Ironically, however, such a group can never promise the satisfaction imagined as issuing from the appearance of the desired object. That satisfaction, as Lacan would indicate, is primarily an effect of the discursive circuit in which the object is being formulated (that of 'hysteria'). The closest that can be offered is an 'as if' moment, in which people who would 'believe' in the narrative can act 'as if' we are now one people, through the exercise of demands for 'legal' equality and fairness.

It is through reference to an imagined form of law, then, that a promise is seemingly offered regarding the possible retrieval of this 'missing' object:

> Now is the time to arrest a decline into irreversible separatism. This may be achieved by speaking out wherever local authorities propose race-based structures and where the current government proposes co-governance.

> This may also be achieved in forthcoming elections by supporting and voting for any party that would vote against all laws, regulations and policies that provide for any entitlement based on ancestry or ethnicity.

Ideally, this political party would commit to dismantling the Separation Framework and abolishing the *Race Based Laws.* ***For example:***

- Remove all reference to consultation with any ethnic group from legislation, such as the Mana Whakahono a Rohe iwi participation clauses in the Resource Legislation Amendment Act, which should be repealed.
- Hold a binding referendum on scrapping separate Maori electorates
- Drop the proposal to grant tribal trusts special powers to control the allocation of water – something previously regarded as the exclusive province of local government
- Repealing the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 which has opened up the entire coastal area to 12 nautical miles offshore, to applications by individuals claiming some Maori ancestry. (Hobson's Pledge, 2018a)

While this text makes a promissory gesture toward the possibility that we might again become 'one people', satisfaction comes not from that image. Rather, the emphasis of the text upon the reversal of affirmative action policies suggests that satisfaction comes from participation in contest. At stake is the contestation of current social divisions, seen to result from a 'separation framework':

The Separation Framework is an interconnected set of laws, judicial rulings and institutions creating a mechanism for the development of race based laws. It underpins the legal and ideological foundation for New Zealand's race based laws which privilege Maori tribal entities and individuals politically, culturally and economically.

The Race Based Laws, developed through the Separation Framework …, have resulted in a form of corruption, the undue influence of Maori tribal entities upon New Zealand's governance, economy and society. (Hobson's Pledge, 2018b)

The role that 'as if' moments play in the positing of a position such that the object missing in to that position might be retrieved — that 'we are now one people', for example — can be seen at points where an idea is simultaneously acknowledged as being insufficient and (yet) defended. Larry Wood exhibits such a moment in his approach to the issue of 'one people':

We wouldn't be able to have one people — we don't all have the same interests, same culture, same values. You know, like, I like Bison, I like guns, I like a lot of things a lot of people don't like, you know. But, it doesn't stop them from doing what they like. They might like go to concerts or art — whatever, I mean, that's what freedom means. But, on the other hand, you know, if I was driving along the road, and the cop stopped me, because, well, he didn't like the looks of my car, and yet he lets the other guy go, who has the same car … that's discrimination, or that's not fair. There's no justice there, there's no reason other than fascism — or whatever you want to call it — to do that. (Wood)

A case in point: Te Reo Māori

When members of Hobson's Pledge engage in 'race-based' talk, discussion can depart significantly from the fetishized and colour-blind notion of 'unity', as associated with the goal to resurrect the ideal of being 'one people'. As an unintended consequence, the group's positive image can disperse into an assemblage encompassing the very characteristics it disavowals — including the notion of a 'whiteness' that promotes separation between ethnic groups. Such moments, as with disavowal in general, have an 'unconscious' quality about

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them. This can be seen in the group's stance in relation to Te Reo Māori. Firstly, there is an acknowledgement that taxpayer money should fund Te Reo for those who wish to learn it. This acknowledgement is reported by Newsroom journalist Emma Espiner, when Brash attended a marae to speak to Māori youth on the issues affecting Māori culture:

> [Brash] did say that it was completely appropriate for the Government to fund Te Reo for anyone who wishes to learn it. I'll repeat that for emphasis: Don Brash accepts in 2017 that taxpayer money should fund Te Reo. I'm not here to praise the guy but doesn't that seem remarkable progress? Not for Brash, but for what it suggests about the constituency that he represents? Are we finally inching towards a normalisation of Te Reo in New Zealand such that after years of activism and heartache, the representative of the group which advocates specifically against 'Māori privilege' accepts that it should be a taxpayer-funded right for anyone to learn Te Reo? (Espiner, 2017)

Secondly, while Brash acknowledges some value in the language, his comments regarding the market-value of Te Reo — that learning other languages would make better economic sense — was not as widely accepted. An argument of this sort remains a 'reasonable' means by which to oppose Te Reo:

> His views on Te Reo were not as easy to loathe ... Asked if he supported compulsory Te Reo in the school curriculum he was dead set against it for a variety of unconvincing reasons — something to do with the economics of the education curriculum and that Mandarin was a better option for our trade-savvy youth of tomorrow. (Espiner, 2017)

Brash deploys the same kind of argument when speaking on Radio New Zealand (RNZ) to the reporter Kim Hill:

The Government has a responsibility to deal with social statistics. Which are bad, and Māori are heavily overrepresented in that, in part, because many Māori don't speak English properly. (Brash, cited in Hill, 2017)

Wood's personal perspective on the matter is much the same: abstract economic argument demonstrates that the language is dead and that the discarding of it would make good economic sense:

The language is a dead language. It doesn't speak about science, it doesn't speak to anybody else. And the force for kids to learn it here is sick, because they should be learning Chinese or German or Russian. *It's a dead language*. Look at other smart countries like Norway, or Sweden, or Belgium — they all teach the kids English, because they know that when you're out in the world no one is going to speak Norwegian. So that's what we should do. Okay, I mean, we should say yeah if you're in your house and you want to teach your kids whatever language you want, then go for it — but don't force it on me. (Wood)

Thirdly, as the unintended consequence of such opposition, the desirability of separation between ethnic groups is insinuated in the context of opposition to the use of Te Reo on Radio New Zealand. Brash expresses his emotions, stating his resentment and irritation in having to listen to the language:

I'm not objecting to Maori culture, I think sometimes it's overdone. I resent, for example, the fact that I turn on Radio New Zealand on in the morning, and I've got to listen to several sentences in Maori, I doubt there's one percent of listeners that know what the hell they're talking about. What strikes me about it is that, there would be very few, if any people listening to Radio New Zealand who don't understand English, probably none. People who listen to Radio New Zealand 99.99 percent will understand

English, so the Maori isn't required to communicate to them. And, and by contrast, 98 percent of the people listening percent will not understand the Maori, so they listen to these sentences which are a reflection of political correctness. It just irritates me. (Brash)

Wood feels the same way. Moreover, he draws attention to the absence of choice to which he feels exposed, in the process of having to listen to the language:

We're all part of the world, I mean, again we need to communicate, and I just get really irritated when I hear Maori, because there's no way I'm going to learn it. It's simply an initiation of force — do you not understand how this is an initiation of force? (Wood)

When speaking to Kim Hill on this matter, Brash appears to insinuate a separation between ethnic groups, by stating his irritation in having to listen to the language:

We're talking about where Māori language should be used on English broadcasting. And I'm saying it's an insult to 98 percent of its audience … I try not to listen to it because it irritates the hell out of me, to be honest. (Brash, cited in Hill, 2017)

This sequence of quotations indicates an extraordinarily degree of variation held from within the group on the status of Te Reo, sometimes within the same people. Moreover, the sequence raises a question as to the point at which members might have to participate in an active denial of racist intent — where they disclose that Māori language 'irritates the hell' out of them, for example — with the risk that adherence to a state of denial reveals indefensible states of disavowal. Survival of the group would seemingly, instead, depend upon their abilities to adhere strictly to arguments based upon 'moral' and 'reasonable' justification: for these arguments seem more easily validated by the structure of Western liberal democracy.

Conclusion

Don Brash's Orewa Speech expresses a sense of dissatisfaction with the prevailing power-structure (the Labour Government) that attempts to make amends for the injustices of Aotearoa/New Zealand's colonial past. This includes the questioning of reasons as to why people in the present-age should be compensating for the colonisation that happened more than a century ago. Bash points out the paradoxes of affirmative action policies in Aotearoa/New Zealand — for example, there are no 100 percent Māori.

The only source of satisfaction which the Speech seemingly offers is a series of claims, all of which are imbued with moral connotations (for example, that the must be only 'one rule for all'). These claims would later be fostered by Hobson's Pledge, and developed from a set of morally infused claims to a set of legally based claims. While the group's claims (for example, that there ought to be 'legal equality') provide an enticingly likeable image of themselves, the irony is that these claims may prove to be socially-divisive.

Inconsistencies within the group's arguments appear able to be resolved by promissory stories about, for example, the retrieval of the 'missing' object of 'we are now one people'. The irony is that this object may not even exist in the form posited (that is, as a simple stand-alone statement). The hope in the retrieval of the 'missing' object relies on the 'belief' of people; as such, people are obliged to act 'as if' the only way to achieve, for example, 'legal equality', is to retrieve the 'missing' object of 'we are now one people'. Accordingly, this is the ideal image of the group, though which they expresses their ideologies — this image is essentially an image of 'coherence'.

An unintended consequence arises, however, wherein this image fragments. This is evident in the political opposition expressed by members of the group to Te Reo Māori. That opposition appears to insinuate that a state of separation between ethnic groups, rather than cohesion, is

the norm. Considering the fact that the notion of separation runs contrary to the group's ideologies, such situations would suggest that the group's survival would depend not on political interventions (as these produce inconsistencies) but on the maintenance of positive images of 'coherence' as might be garnered through appeals to morality or to law.

Chapter 6: Maintaining a 'colour-blind' New Zealand for all

Introduction

The prospects for survival of the ideologies of Hobson's Pledge lies with the group's ability to adapt to the social climate. As such, an essential part of the activism of Hobson's Pledge is a maintenance of the image of 'coherence' through which the group acts, 'as if' legal equality and fairness can only be achieved through the retrieval of the desired object of 'we are now one people'. The group sustains this image through four socio-political strategies that could ultimately aid in the satisfaction that the group gains in opposing affirmative action policies. In such situations of opposition, it would thereby appear that the group may be more concerned with opposing affirmative action policies than the retrieval of 'one people'. The first of these strategies suggests that the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand should assume the citizenship subject-position of 'New Zealander' — this would become the subject's foremost identity, despite what the subject thinks their identity might be. A second is to assert that affirmative action policies created by the State are, themselves, racist. Such an assertion thereby enables the group to maintain a sense of 'unity'. A third strategy involves the presentation of a political argument by which the group presumes that Māori feel patronized in being recipients of affirmative action — by this, the group thereby assumes a kind of *de facto* brokerage role for Māori rights. The final strategy is a liberal democratic argument through which the group defends a semblance of fragility in its expression of ideologies that may prove to be socially-divisive.

An abstract subjectivity: the 'New Zealand' citizen

The fundamental strategy of Hobson's Pledge is to advocate a liberal, democratically grounded subjectivity that aligns with the group's image of 'coherence'. This subjectivity is 'New

Zealander'. The group relies upon the possibility of this subjectivity for the retrieval of the desired object of 'we are now one people'. In addition, people of Aotearoa/New Zealand are obligated to adopt the subject position of 'New Zealander' despite who they might otherwise think they are. A subjectivity of this kind is evident in Brash's account of his citizenship status:

> I'm a European. I'm a New Zealander. I'm saying every New Zealand citizen should have the same rights, and that's what the Treaty says. That's what the Treaty says. (Brash)

In Brash's personal account of his own subjectivity, he suggests that all people of Aotearoa/New Zealand should also adopt this identity — since this is the only way in which a sense of social harmony might emerge in Aotearoa/New Zealand:

> For its time in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi was an extraordinarily enlightened document. I don't think that happened anywhere else in the world where British Colonial power advanced societies. Article 3 of the Treaty makes it clear that all New Zealanders should have the rights and privileges of British subjects. And we don't think of ourselves as British subjects today, we think of ourselves as New Zealanders. But really, we're saying all New Zealanders have the same rights and privileges — I think that's the only basis for long term harmony in New Zealand. (Wood)

Indeed, Brash's account on the subject position of 'New Zealander' provides a sense that this identity should be mandatory for each person of Aotearoa/New Zealand. A subject position of this kind — that is constructed through language — is, in Lacanian terms, always a divided subject ($). As such, the group relies on the 'belief' of its 'New Zealand' subjects. In this way, 'New Zealanders' are required to identify with the group's fetishized claims of 'legal' equality and justice. Moreover, this requires subjects to do so, despite whoever they might think they

are. The subject position of 'New Zealander' is promoted, emblematically, by Casey Costello during the group's tour to Tauranga (one of a series of countrywide open meetings):

> There are many challenges that face us in terms of housing, protecting our environment, managing our nation's resources and supporting those in need. These are issues that impact all New Zealanders and are not peculiar to any ethnicity.
>
> Hobson's Pledge seeks to highlight the actions that are being taken by our government that undermine the foundations our country was built on – equality, democracy, and unity.
>
> We have reached a point where we are being asked to identify by ethnicity and not citizenship.
>
> I am a New Zealander, a Maori and a descendant of Anglo/Irish settlers who came here in the 1860s but firstly a New Zealander.
>
> We all have our journey that brought us to this country and our unifying factor is our New Zealander citizenship. Regardless of when we or our ancestors came here we have always known that our citizenship assures us equal recognition and representation before the law. (Costello, 2016)

Costello's speech fills in an inconsistency of an argument that may, otherwise, prove to be socially-divisive — between the group's legal claims to equality and fairness, and their opposition to affirmative action policies. The mandate of 'New Zealander' is complicit in this inconsistency — since the subject is required to sideline any other ethnicity with which they might identify. In this way, it may appear that the group is attempting to ignore, for example, any historical and present grievances to which Māori may lay claim. The inconsistency comes

to be sutured by a fantasy-story. In that story, the Government prevents access by 'New Zealanders' to the condition of 'one people':

> To be clear I am here to speak for Hobson's Pledge as a New Zealander with respect for the Treaty of Waitangi, for all the people that are part of our nation and to protect our legacy of forward thinking inclusive legislation as first demonstrated in the treaty……….
>
> He iwi tahi tatou………..we are now one people.
>
> But our Government, our nation's leaders are NOT allowing us to be one people.
>
> We are being delivered separatism and an erosion of our democracy on the basis that this will redress historical issues and achieve an equality that we are expected to accept has not previously been available to Māori. (Costello, 2016)

While the group makes a solemn promise to recoup the ideal of 'one people', socio-political satisfaction comes not from this object. Instead, the prospect of satisfaction lies with a state of endless circulation around the ideal. In that state of circulation, satisfaction comes not from the production of programmatic visions but through the mounting of opposition to affirmative action policies. The group's lobbying activity against a proposed amendment to the Resource Management Act exemplifies this opposition. This Bill, when implemented, would improve the relationship between Iwi and councils, and elevate Māori participation in the resource management process (see, MFE, 2017). Hobson's Pledge writes a letter to the Prime Minister Bill English voicing their concerns on the matter. In particular, a situation of 'co-governance' between Iwi and councils would seem to result in the latter being subservient to the former:

We respectfully ask you to govern for all New Zealanders — not just the Maori tribal elite — by stopping the *Resource Legislation Amendment Bill* as currently drafted.

We are referring to the concessions you have given to the Maori Party to allow iwi chiefs to sit alongside elected council members and officials and co-govern the private property of others. (Butler, 2017a)

The group suggests that a Māori worldview would be able to influence local governance, and that this is not what most 'New Zealanders' want. This argument is thereby used to oppose affirmative action in an abstract manner. That is, by including the all-inclusive subjectivity of 'New Zealander', the argument seems 'moral' or 'reasonable', on the basis of equal opportunities associated with 'democracy', 'one rule for all', and so on. It thereby seems 'moral' or 'reasonable' to state that Māori should not be able to have a say in Local Government affairs:

Various deals have been done but the most damaging are the sweeping new *'Mana Whakahono a Rohe'* agreements that will permanently force councils to kowtow to iwi – and hapu …

By giving iwi seats at the council table you will embed the Maori world view and spiritualism into the heart of local government. This is not what most New Zealanders want.

What is most galling is that you have not even asked the community what it thinks about the *Mana Whakahono a Rohe* agreements. The reality is there is no community demand for Iwi Leaders to co-govern local authorities, but once the agreements are in place they will be there forever — nothing can change or remove them unless iwi agree. Councillors and the community will have no right to end them — even if 90 percent of

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voters decide they are not working. The fundamental protections of democracy and the rule of law will be forever lost. (Butler, 2017a)

Justified by liberal democratic tenets of 'reason' and 'morality', the subject position of 'New Zealander' adds substance to the group's (legal) claim that a relationship between Iwi and councils would affect 'our' things, 'our rights', 'our properties', and so on. Indeed, as the group concludes their address to Prime Minister Bill English, they state:

> We understand that these agreements were planned before you became Prime Minister. We say it's now time for you to step up and show that you intend to govern for *all* New Zealanders, not just the 1.3 percent that supported the Maori Party.

> They are holding you to ransom because you want to keep power. But in serving Iwi Leaders, you are paying for their demands with *our* rights, *our* properties, and, no doubt, *our* cost.

> Please stop this Resource Legislation Amendment Bill now – for the sake of *all* New Zealanders. (Butler, 2017a)

A political demand for 'unity': casting affirmative action as racist

A key aspect of the activism of Hobson's Pledge is its promotion of 'colour-blind' notions of political community, such as 'unity'. Since such notions can carry with them a potential to be socially divisive — such that they get expressed in opposition to affirmative action policies, for example — it is imperative for the group to maintain a sense of 'unity' in relation to who it is that creates 'racial divisions' in Aotearoa/New Zealand. For example, Spoonley (1988; 1993) has identified that the de-regulations of the 1980s allowed for the extreme right-wing

groups to argue that affirmative action is 'racist to white people'. However, such a notion is accompanied by the emergence of an unintended consequence: a state of separation is seen to naturally exist between ethnic groups. McLennan, McManus, and Spoonley (2010) identify aversion to unintended consequences of this kind, whereby arguments that privilege discourses around national unity themselves produce social segregation. That is, the State, or affirmative action policies themselves, may be seen to be racist. A strategy of this kind supplements the group's general state of disavowal concerning the existence of racist intent in their ideologies. In this way, affirmative action policies could be seen as racist — something that the State should be working to remove instead of implement. The denunciation of affirmative action, as being the cause of 'racial divisions' in Aotearoa/New Zealand, is presented in the group's cyber-active mode whereby affirmative action is presumed to perpetuate the low socio-economic status of Māori:

 [Affirmative action policies are intended to lift] the incomes of Maori New Zealanders, which on average lagged those of other New Zealanders. But they have now come to be regarded by a great many Maori as privileges to which they are entitled by virtue of landing in New Zealand prior to European and other settlers.

And who benefits from these race-based entitlements? Assuredly not most ordinary Maori. The benefits appear to have gone overwhelmingly to:

- the minority of Maori who have been able to get into med school,
- those who have been appointed as directors of the Maori businesses which have arisen from Treaty settlements,
- those who have been retained as legal advisers in the long-drawn out, and perhaps interminable, process of determining how much 'compensation' is due for real and imagined misbehavior by governments and people long since gone.

Not only have most Maori not benefited at all from this growing affirmative action cancer, most have been positively harmed by it.

Why? Because it has led a great many Maori to assume that other taxpayers owe them a living, and that in due course other taxpayers will have to discharge that obligation. (Brash, 2017)

The definition of racism at work here casts affirmation action of all kinds – the existence of Māori seats, iwi consultation, and Māori boards – as being implicitly racist. In this way, the group, in an abstract manner, is able to promote a 'moral' and 'reasonable' argument to dispense with the recompense paid to Māori. An effect of this is to enable the group's 'legal' claims to equality to be bolstered by an image that such claims are 'non-racist':

Racism, as you know, is prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.

Record levels of migration to New Zealand have placed pressure on infrastructure and society, and competition for work and accommodation can boil over in racial antagonism.

Dame Susan, who prefers to call New Zealand 'Aotearoa', appears to target whites as racist although the evidence shows just as much brown or other-coloured racial prejudice alive and kicking in New Zealand.

How about built-in racism? … Politicians have built this sort of racism into the political structure by way of separate seats, iwi consultation and Maori boards.

A non-racist country would have laws and policies applying equally to us all. Welfare and support would be dispensed according to need, not ethnicity. (Butler, 2017b)

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The group also endorses the personal perspective of Western Bay of Plenty Councillor Mike Lilly — specifically regarding Māori wards (the pre-assigned number of specifically Māori seats on regional councils). Lilly's perspective is particularly concerned with what he infers to be the racist intent of a proposal for the implementation of Māori wards. Lilly encourages people to be proactive, to sign petitions and vote at subsequent referendums to overturn any possibility for the implementation of Māori wards. Interestingly, included in Lilly's account of things, is a clear reflection of Hobson's Pledge's preferred subject position of 'New Zealander'— he wants nothing other than the 'same rules for everyone':

We were inundated with people wanting to sign and we quickly collected more than 4,500 signatures – significantly more than required to force the Council to listen to the people. It is noteworthy that supporters included Maori residents who also had no desire for such racist policies or structures. It makes you wonder if anybody in Council is listening to them?

It was heartening for me to see democracy at work. Most New Zealanders undoubtedly want a level playing field with one set of rules for everyone, regardless of who our ancestors were …

Western Bay residents are not alone in fighting this scourge. New Plymouth rejected Maori wards in 2015. Other regions with residents recently achieving successful petitions against racist councils are Manawatu, Whakatane, Palmerston North and Kaikoura.

In the resulting referendums, all voters can send a clear message to their Councils that establishing racist wards is wrong and totally unacceptable. (Lilly cited in Butler, 2018)

The same sort of sentiments — that Māori wards are racist — are expressed by Brash in the public sphere. As reported by RNZ journalist Te Aniwa Hurihanganui, Brash states that:

> The proposal to set up wards is itself racist. I mean why on earth would you set up racially distinctive wards in 2018? It just seems totally contrary to what we should stand for as a country (Brash, cited in Hurihanganui, 2018).

Brash's subjective experience also speaks to the idea that affirmative action is racist — in particular, 'legally enforced privileges' create a racist situation within society. The problem that Brash sees is that Māori are more than happy to be the recipients of 'special privilege':

> Well, affirmative action is, in the New Zealand context, racist. The law is forcing us now to be racist. *The law is forcing us now to be racist.* For example, the independent Māori statutory board is created by law. It's creating a racist situation by creating special, legally enforced privilege to people who chance to have a Māori ancestor. Māori are taking advantage of a situation that parliament has created, and are happy to claim a special legal entitlement which parliament has created. If, parliament created a special privilege for me I might be happy to take it as well, but they haven't. (Brash)

Larry Wood's personal perspective digresses from that of Brash's. In particular, rather than affirmative action being seen as racist, Wood asserts that 'Māori are racist against Whites'. This indicates a dislocation of the unintended consequence of digressing from the group's positive image of 'unity', whereby he assumes a kind of 'reverse racism'. This position implies the existence of a natural separation between ethnic groups; compared to the 'unity' Brash implies, whereby the socio-legal structure of society, rather than an ethic group, creates 'racial-divisions:

We've got to quit trying to make these divisions. That's what the Māori want to do, they want to make this division and say 'well we're special' or 'we got screwed in the past', but you know they don't know what they're doing of course, because that's *racist*. Māori are racist against Whites. Look at all the times they beat up people, they beat up John Key up there at Waitangi day one day, and you know what it's like? And nothing happened to him. I mean, imagine if I punched John Key do you know what would happen? (Wood)

Defending Māori against patronization

A third strategy that appears to aid in the maintenance of the group's image of 'coherence' is the expression of concern for the patronization that Māori might feel in relation to being recipients of affirmative action. The idea that Māori feel patronized by claiming recompense for the effects of colonisation also fits within the frame of a liberal economic and political argument, used in an abstract manner. An argument of this kind, grounded in the language of morality and reasonability, supports opposition to affirmative action on the grounds that it violates the principle of 'legal' equality and fairness. With respect to Māori rights, this strategy could be thought of a sort of *de facto* brokerage role that Hobson's Pledge play. Western Bay councillor Lilly seemingly plays this role in the above-mentioned piece endorsed by Hobson's Pledge. In particular, the liberal democratic structure of Aotearoa/New Zealand provides a means by which Māori have the ability to run for council on their own accord — it is otherwise divisive to suggest that Māori are incapable of doing so:

In my time as a Western Bay Councillor, there were two people of Maori ancestry who were also voted onto Council. They did not require any system of apartheid to get elected. They won their seats because they worked to convince voters that they had

ability, enthusiasm and the interests of their communities and district at heart. They did not get there because of their bloodlines or the colour of their skin.

But Western Bay Council chooses to ignore this. Their obsession with granting special privileges to one section of the community over all others is divisive. It is also insulting to all Maori, suggesting that they are incapable of achieving without patronage. This thinking has no place in our egalitarian society. (Lilly cited by Butler, 2018)

Similarly, Costello, in her address to the Tauranga audience at one of the group's public meetings, speaks of her own life-chances whereby she achieved what she has without any compensation. Costello asserts that the rationale behind affirmative action is flawed — affirmative action, for example, insults, patronizes, and aids in depriving Māori of belief in the fact that 'anything is possible':

Never in my lifetime have I seen an instance where being a Maori has been a disadvantage. It has also never been an excuse for lack of achievement.

We are so frequently told that there is a need to make special allowance and extra compensation to those with Maori ancestry because without this we will not see Maori succeed.

This rationale is flawed and any special allowance that is based upon when your ancestors arrived in New Zealand is, at its core, racist and separatist. For those who try to tell me that this special allowance is needed for Maori to achieve equality then I stand here today to tell you that you insult me, you patronize my heritage and MOST importantly you deprive the generations ahead of us of an inherent belief that anything is possible (Costello, 2016).

Brash's thoughts correspond with the group's *de facto* role in asserting that Māori feel patronized in receiving recompense for the effects of colonisation. Brash particularly speaks of a Māori man who feels patronized:

It's patronizing. It's patronizing. What you're saying to Māori is, because you're not quite up to it, we have to give you some special break. Some of them feel intensely patronized. Well, I speak of the one particular Māori guy that I know well, 30 years of age, who is extremely angry about the current regime, because he said it's patronizing. He said, I'm as good as any other bastard, don't treat me as if I need some special kettle of treatment. (Brash)

Wood's views also assume that there is some kind of patronization at play. In his account of things, that vary as we shall see from Brash's account, Wood tries to interpret the reasons as to why he turns on the television to see Māori complaining about colonisation when he knows a Māori guy who has done well for himself, on his own accord:

Well when I moved here, the first Māori I ever met was a nice guy. He was a carpenter, he built that drive for me over there all by himself. He was contracted with Versatile, and his wife came out, and they helped me. I had bison then, they helped keep the bison off the trees. So then what happened? I'm watching TV one night and I see this woman with a Moko, and they're trying to ask her, I can see she's upset, and she's saying — well, Māori are saying everything's a problem: 170 years of colonisation. And I go wait a minute why didn't this guy have a problem with colonisation? I don't think that he had affirmative action to learn how to be a carpenter, I mean, I think he went through the process like everyone else. (Wood)

The above three strategies complement the group's positive image of 'coherence' in ways that ensure its underlying ideologies. The reason as to why Hobson's Pledge requires such strategies stems from the group having made a promissory gesture to reinstate General Hobson's notion of 'we are now one people'. No socio-political satisfaction exists to be had from that image in itself, however. In making a promise to attain 'one people', the group's bid for satisfaction is, rather, directed towards the reversal of affirmative action policies. Indeed, the irony is that these two dimensions — 'we are now one people', and the reversal of affirmative action policies — cannot be consummated, since opposition to affirmative action policies has the potential to be, in itself, socially-divisive. As such, a consummation between these two dimensions is hampered by the fact that affirmative action policies are put in place to ameliorate the historical and current effects of colonisation. The final strategy aids in the disavowal of racist intent that underpins this irony, whereby the group exercises the Western liberal democratic human *right not to be harassed* — when the group, out of fear, does not want to promote its ideologies (for example, a fear of being labelled racist).

A liberal democratic defence of fragility

Central to the group's use of abstract liberal political and economic argument to reverse affirmative action policies, is a sense of fear or victimization that can be experienced in the expression of such views. In this way, the subject takes on a fragile posture; in doing so, the subject assumes a kind of *the right not to be harassed*. For Hobson's Pledge, fragility of this kind is present in the group's — as well as its individual subjects' — unwillingness to speak-out on the ideologies they promote. On the surface, the group provided a practical reason as to why they chose to decline participating in the research — this was particularly due to a full-schedule. Included in this this reason, was something along the lines of, while the group fully endorses the benefits of research, it is not the type of project that they want to be involved in.

One prospective participant repeats this practical reason to decline participating by stating that their daughter goes to university. They thereby understand the value of research; however, with the upcoming election, they were too busy working for Hobson's Pledge to commit to an interview.

However, another person was not as courteous when responding to the invite. In a sort of *right not to be harassed*, they made a statement to the effect that I have no reason to be interested in his political beliefs. This response speaks to a sense of victimization, or fragility, that the subject may feel in relation to the ideological worldview that they attempt to promote.

A fragility of this kind is also presented in the conversations with two people that had accepted the invite. However, after amicable conversations with these two, they both (within the same timeframe) retract from their decision to participate in the research. Their reasoning stems from reading sociological papers that, to them, were contrary to the beliefs of the group — the fear, in this sense, is that these two people felt that their perspective would not be taken into account.

Most noticeably, the group's assertion of something akin to the right not to be harassed is exhibited through Brash and Wood's inability to speak of the group's ideological worldview. That is, Brash and Wood, as 'believers' of the ideologies of Hobson's Pledge, can only express their belief in a personal capacity — as explained by Brash:

> I'm sympathetic to your need to do an interview. I'd be willing to be interviewed in a private capacity as long as you are clear that I would not be acting as a spokesperson for Hobson's Pledge, and that only Casey Costello and I are authorised to speak for Hobson's Pledge. In other words, none of our council members are available for an interview in their capacity as Hobson's Pledge council members, and the names and contact details of those who have supported the Trust are confidential. (Brash)

A sense of fragility is also presented in Wood's account, by which he assumes that his point of view will not be taken into consideration:

> I'm convinced from what Don said and reading your professor's papers that you people are progressive, you know, liberal, or whatever. I mean, you don't even begin to consider the other side. (Wood)

Fragility is also expressed in Costello's Tauranga speech, at one of the group's countrywide public meetings. Costello expresses concern about voicing an opinion in opposition to affirmative action — because such a position is, in the public eye, perceived to be racist. A fear of this type is broadly felt 'by New Zealanders', and more narrowly by Costello — who subsequently feels that her Māori credentials come into question:

> When I became involved with Hobson's Pledge I was aware of an increasing level of concern and frustration that exists broadly among New Zealanders in regard to separatist policies that were creating racial division.

> Unfortunately this was a subject difficult to discuss for fear of being labelled racist and anti-Maori.

> Even when I speak out on this divisive and separatist platform that our government has created it has been suggested that I am a 'token'. I have had my ancestry and credentials as a Maori challenged. It has even become an issue as to how much Maori I am, apparently percentages count. (Costello, 2016)

Brash, in his experience, also explains a sense of victimisation that Māori feel. In his account, Brash states that Māori do not want to be treated any differently; however, in the same way as

'other people', Māori feel victimised when they promote the idea that there 'should be no racial distinction in law':

> Some Māori do agree with me. Some of them are terrified to say so. I was having a meal in a restaurant in Tauranga a month or two ago and a Māori guy came up to me. I didn't know what he was going to say, and he looked around furtively and said 'I agree with you'. He wants to be treated just like everyone else. One of our co-spokespeople is Māori herself, and she doesn't want to be treated differently either. What I'm saying is there should be no racial distinction in law. A number of Māori already support this principle but none of them want to talk about — it's not only Māori, there are people that just feel victimized by the media who accuse them of racism. (Brash)

Conclusion

The structure of Western liberal democracy provides the ideal conditions for Hobson's Pledge to practice its activism. While the group draws upon the liberal structure of society to create a positive image of 'coherence', the survival of its ideologies requires the group to maintain the conditions of this image through four strategies. These strategies prevent unintended consequences whereby the group may be seen to promote rather than oppose a separation between ethnic groups (for example, listening to Te Reo Māori 'irritates the hell' out of them). The first strategy, the promotion of a subject position of 'New Zealander', is imbued with the notion of 'unity' — subjects become 'New Zealanders' first and foremost, regardless of who they might think they are. The second strategy is to adhere to the group's notions of 'unity' when laying the blame in relation to whom responsibility can be laid for the 'racial divisions' in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As such, the group states that affirmative action is racist because it is not available to all New Zealanders — the State should remove rather than regulate these policies. Thirdly, the group becomes a sort of *de facto* broker for Māori rights, by assuming

that Māori feel patronized in being compensated for the effects of colonisation. Finally, a sense of victimization is defended when members of the group feel that their belief system may be perceived as racist. At such points, discourse tends to become characterised by fragility.

Chapter 7: Moving into the future: a post-racial Aotearoa/New Zealand?

Introduction

The liberal democratic structure of Aotearoa/New Zealand provides the ideal conditions for Hobson's Pledge to practice its activism. However, the group's increasingly covert character means that its involvement in the opposition of government policies related to affirmative action becomes almost invisible. The group appears to be driven to such a position by public discourses that perceive its activism as being racist. A problem with such an outcome, for transformative political struggle, is that it can then appear as if racialized structures no longer exist in society — the public can overlook the socio-economic effects of racism, for example, of the overrepresentation of Māori in national rates of imprisonment, suicide, unemployment, and so on. This effect creates an impression that the society is beyond racism, that is it 'post-racial'. This chapter identifies three instances that contribute to this phenomenon. The first is an identity created and deployed in public discourses: 'old white males'. Consequently, a public perception grows that only a small fraction of society is responsible for potentially socially-divisive practices. The second instance revolves around an attempt by Massey University's Vice-Chancellor, Jan Thomas, to push the group further to the fringes of society by banning Brash from the campus, on the grounds that his worldview is contrary to that of 'free speech'. Prominent political figures subsequently denounce her decision because of the group's apparent ability to stay within the bounds of 'free speech'. Lastly, the group is able to gain and win a notable identity-related political struggle, through a strategy that includes a failure to indicate clearly its role in a campaign to oppose the existence of special representation for Māori within local government. This failure correlates with the public's overwhelming

support in overturning the implementation of Māori wards in the Palmerston North City Council.

Reducing perceived racists to a small fraction of society

The first indicator of post-racialism lies with the groups' adherence to an identity centred on its population by 'old white males'. An outcome of this identity – that in effect stigmatises the group – is a public perception that only a small fraction of society hold racist beliefs or, at least, beliefs that may prove to be socially divisive. Brash, in his personal account, describes the stigmatisation that first emerges during the group's inception, in which a Radio New Zealand reporter makes contact with group members:

> When Hobson's Pledge was launched, the Māori affairs correspondent of Radio New Zealand was so intent on portraying us as racist. She contacted every male white member of the group for comment. The press statement was put out in Casey's name — she made no contact with Casey at all, the bitch! I mean that was grossly distorted reporting, she wanted to portray us as white elderly male racists! (Brash)

The group's cyber-active mode provides further details of the group's first encounter with the media. In particular, the group identifies a number of leading questions that assume the members are 'elderly whites':

> Reporter Mihi Forbes phoned around a number of people listed on the Hobson's Pledge 'Who we are' page, which has no contact details. No list of contact details was supplied. Those she phoned referred her to the two spokespersons, Don Brash and Casey Costello.

Not to be deterred, Forbes said she wanted to ask all members five questions. For those who kept talking to her, the questions were:

Q 1. 'What is the single worst example of Maori privilege that you can think of?'

Q 2. 'What is your group doing for your people?'

Q 3. 'What is your group doing about white collar crime?'

Q 4. 'What do you think of Maori inequalities in life expectance, health, and education?'

Q 5. 'What percentage Pākehā are you?'

It appeared that Forbes assumed that Hobson's Pledge members were elderly and white, and questions 2, 3, and 5, looked like an attempt to ask the sort of questions these elderly whities would ask of people with Māori ancestry. She did not contact Hobson's Pledge members who do have Māori ancestry. (Butler, 2016)

The stigmatised identity of 'elderly white man' becomes something of a defining feature of members of Hobson's Pledge; in one way or the other, public discourses repeatedly refer to this feature. For instance, when interviewed by the Newshub agency, Labour MP Kiritapu Allan takes a more subtle approach — than that used by Radio New Zealand — when denouncing the group's opposition to Māori wards. In a manner that reflects the condition of post-racialism, Allan implies that opposition to affirmative action policies is not a widely held aspiration of the public — that both Māori and non-Māori support wards. In addition, opinions such as those of Hobson's Pledge are seen to denote a 'redundant voice':

Ms Allan says a Hobson's Pledge petition against the Māori ward is unlikely to have much impact. Hobson's Pledge, which counts former National Party leader Don Brash amongst its backers, has organised a petition calling for a referendum …

'Those Māori wards are supported by Māori as much as they are by non-Māori', Ms Allan told Newshub.

'You've got groups like this, they're redundant voices all running that kind of race rhetoric divide. It's sad to see them still pushing those lines'. (Newshub, 2018)

On the infotainment show *The Project*, host Kanoa Lloyd, also in a subtle way, denounces the worldviews of Brash and his counterparts. In a monologue describing their worldviews, Lloyd implies the post-racial idea that these views are, by and large, not the shared views of the public. That is, Aotearoa/New Zealand has moved beyond discriminative practices. Moreover, Lloyd 'feels sorry' for Brash and his cohort:

Now we've arrived at the point in this piece where I call on everyone to do something, make a change.

But I don't need to — change has already happened, the earth is not flat, climate change is real, vaccines don't cause autism and The Treaty was signed! …

So, after reading about the reckons of Sirs Gallagher, Witherows and Brash, I got up from the floor and felt sorry for them. Sorry, the world is changing too fast for you, my bros.

But the debate, it's over.

So, until you join the rest of us, Ka Kite anō. (Lloyd, 2017)

In an opinion piece for the *Stuff* news agency, Laura McQuillan repeats the post-racial idea that only this small fragment of society adheres to the group's practices. However, not as subtle as Allan and Lloyd, McQuillan asserts that Hobson's Pledge is the type of group that 'white middle-class men' need:

> There's never been a more dangerous time in history to be a white, middle-class man in New Zealand.

> This is a group living in fear of arriving home to find the land under their house has been reclaimed by Maori, a refugee family has moved in, and in any case, they can't afford the mortgage because feminists' demands for 'equal pay' mean there's less available in the company's budget.

> Don Brash and his new support group for white people, the Hobson's Pledge Trust, might be just the hero that the white, middle-class Kiwi man needs.

> Pakeha have been crying out (in internet forums and casually racist watercooler banter) for an organisation to lobby on their behalf, to give white folks a fairer go in Aotearoa. I mean, New Zealand. (McQuillan, 2016)

Also in a less subtle manner, in an opinion piece on the *Stuff* website, Josh Beck responds to Lloyd's perspective that she 'feels sorry' for those who hold Brash's worldview. In particular, Beck identifies Brash and his cohort not only as 'old racist white men', but also as sort of prehistoric 'dinosaurs'. Included in this post-racial perception, Beck adds that — given the 'widespread public condemnation' of Brash's worldviews, coupled with the fact that society has moved well beyond such views — we should deprive them of public attention:

> I enjoyed what Kanoa Lloyd had to say on *The Project* about the opinions of old racist white men, but where I disagree with her sentiment of feeling sorry for them.

Going along with this idea that they're simply relics of a different time who failed to keep up with society downplays the very deliberate actions they have taken in order to be left behind.

This was their decision, and has continued to be for decades. I feel no sympathy for anyone selfish and vindictive enough to hold on to these prehistoric beliefs for such a long time despite widespread public condemnation.

Stop giving these dinosaurs' opinions room to breathe. We are indeed beyond it, and we hold the power to deprive them of the oxygen of publicity they need to survive. (Beck, 2017)

Mana political party leader Hone Harawira also places an emphasis on the denunciation of 'old white guys', on the *Mana News* webpage. However, he takes his argument further, emphasising the socio-political implications of the group's lobbying against affirmative action policies. Nonetheless, this indicates a perceived post-racial Aotearoa/New Zealand, in that, Harawira presumes that only 'old white guys' perpetuate ethnic (Māori) inequality:

Hobson's Pledge is an-anti Māori hate group with a fixation on white supremacy … and they have NO place in Aotearoa society.

I've stood aside to see whether another Māori leader is up to carry this fight, but clearly not … So I am sending a clear message to Don Brash and his crew that MANA will lead the fight against the racist practices espoused by Hobson's Pledge.

This is not just some old white guys ranting against Māori 'gains' … Hobson's Pledge are actively campaigning against the status of tangata whenua, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Reo Māori.

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Hobson's Pledge are actively funding organisations that promote the same messages of race hatred, based on their perceived loss of money and loss of white privilege.

It has taken 177 years for Māori to win small gains and we must never retreat … and for anyone to expect us to be satisfied about being third-class citizens in their own homeland is a joke.

William Hobson's legacy in the Far North is his many mokopuna Māori leading campaigns for Te Reo Māori and health.   Get over yourselves Don Brash. Aotearoa has more important issues to worry about. (Mana News, 2018)

The above quotations exemplify public discourses that identify the ideologies of Hobson's Pledge as not being widely held beliefs within Aotearoa/New Zealand. Such perceptions carry with them identifying traits as to who holds these beliefs. While these traits vary amongst the quotations, the general consensus is that these beliefs are a sort of redundant voice expressed only by older white males. They imply, in a post-racial manner, that Aotearoa/New Zealand has moved into a state whereby racism (or the potential to be socially-divisive), generally, no longer exists.

A democratic right to 'free speech'

The second indication of a post-racial situation in Aotearoa/New Zealand is found in situations where the group's ability to express 'free speech' is revoked. A little-publicised situation occurred where the Nelson library cancelled a talk from Bruce Moon (Moon is in some way associated with the group — particularly, he has published a number of books with the group's members (see, https://www.hobsonspledge.nz/resources)). In its own commentary on the matter, the group indicated that:

When retired computer pioneer Bruce Moon planned to give a talk to the Nelson Institute a week ago on how the Treaty of Waitangi had been twisted he was surprised to have permission to talk at the Nelson City Library suddenly withdrawn.

The library wrote to him saying that they were sorry to cancel the talk but said that after complaints, both the Nelson City Council and the library felt a talk could disturb the peace and become a health and safety issue.

Looks like free speech is no longer so free and that divergent views on the Treaty are being suppressed. (Butler, 2018a)

The revoking of 'free speech' is most noticeably evident in the decision by Massey University's Vice-Chancellor, Jan Thomas, to ban Brash from speaking at one of a series of politics talks held at the university. Thomas likens his actions to those of 'hate speech'. As reported by *Stuff* journalist Janine Rankin, Thomas says:

Mr Brash's leadership of Hobson's Pledge and views he and its supporters espoused in relation to Māori wards on councils was clearly of concern to many staff, particularly Māori staff.

In my opinion, the views expressed by members of Hobson's Pledge come dangerously close to hate speech. They are certainly not conducive with the university's strategy of recognising the values of a Tiriti o Waitangi-led organisation. (Rankin, 2018)

On Massey University's website, Thomas also explains that the cancellation arises from safety concerns:

Our ultimate responsibility is for the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and members of the public on our campuses and under those circumstances cancelling the booking is the right thing to do. (Thomas, cited in Massey University, 2018)

Believing that more might lie behind Thomas' decision, right-wing blogger David Farrah requested the release of her emails under the Official Information Act 1982. In her attempt to push Brash's views further to the fringes of society, the emails identify that Thomas is more concerned with preventing the university being seen as endorsing racist behaviour. As reported by Radio New Zealand journalist Amy Williams:

> Documents obtained under the Official Information Act contain correspondence to and from Professor Thomas in the run-up to the cancellation.
>
> In one email, on 9 July, the vice-chancellor said she did not want a 'te tiriti led university to be seen to be endorsing racist behaviours'.
>
> On 10 July, Professor Thomas emailed to say she would like to know the options for banning the politics club from holding events on campus.
>
> She said the 'racist behaviour of Dr Brash - given te reo is an official language of NZ and we are a tiriti-led university - can't be ignored'. (Williams, 2018)

In a subsequent report by *The New Zealand Herald*, the released emails are shown to indicate that Thomas asked her staff about the possible use of administrative loopholes to hamper Brash's (democratic) right to 'free speech':

> Then on July 11, Thomas receives an email from a staff member saying there was no criteria in the university policy regarding what the university would or would not approve.
>
> 'The ground for me declining it may well be challenged and as per [name omitted] email yesterday I think would present a very real risk of us being accused restricting free speech etc,'

The vice-chancellor then replied, saying she was still 'deeply concerned' about the matter asking if there was any mechanism the university could use to stop the event.

'Do we have any mechanisms that might be able to be used here? The financial agreements with clubs and societies and associations? Use [of] facilities policy? How do the Māori community feel about this might be good to know too? What is the politics club schedule.

Agree is a PR [public relations] problem in all circumstances. But being tiriti led will have huge challenges for us if we are to be brave enough to be authentic'.

The next piece of correspondence is an email sent to Thomas where a staffer says Brash uses 'free speech as a shield which to hide, as do many colonial racists and conservative commentators'. (New Zealand Herald, 2018)

Notwithstanding the controversies that can surround such actions by public institutions, the Western liberal democratic notion of 'free speech' provides a valid avenue for Hobson's Pledge to enter the public sphere. In defence of 'free speech', and in response to a revelation from the release of Thomas's emails, Brash appears to deploy strategies which support the idea of an abstract subjectivity, of 'the New Zealand citizen', and that defend the right to a state of fragility in one's personal identity (of victimisation). The deployment of these strategies suggests support for a 'colour-blind' political environment. This occurs through an appeal to the group's legal conception of social equality. These elements become evident in a report on the Massey University situation by *New Zealand Herald* reporter Ryan Dunlop:

Brash understood she had misled the university council about her concerns about security.

He rejected her claims that he was racist.

'I regard the question as ridiculous and offensive quite frankly. I am one of two spokespeople for Hobson's Pledge. We are very strongly committed to having all New Zealanders treated equally, irrespective of race.

To call us racist is effectively Orwellian, it's the very opposite of what we are'.

He pointed to an article in the [Herald where she was defending her belief in free speech](#) and said it didn't extend to hate speech.

'How anyone can say you are guilty of hate speech for advocating for equal right for all citizens is totally beyond me'. (Dunlop, 2018)

Furthermore, Thomas' banishment of Brash appears to have fortuitously portrayed him as a victim — in that, despite his beliefs in fairness, he has been treated unfairly. In defence of the fragility expressed in Brash's response, National MP Paula Bennett puts pay to Thomas' decision by stating that 'she has got this wrong':

Ms Bennett said Professor Thomas' decision shows she 'hasn't done her homework' and 'doesn't understand the man'.

'She has got this wrong, but what's also sad about it is this affects the whole institution, so it's not just her making a mistake', she told host Duncan Garner.

'I do worry about it in society and I think the University has totally got this one wrong and if they had any courage they would stand up and say they got it wrong'. (Garner, 2018)

As reported by *Newstalk ZB*, Prime Minister Jacinder Adern also suggests that Thomas' decision is an 'overreaction', as the reality is that many political figures have created 'a bit of a stir' at campuses:

This seems to me to be an overreaction on the part of the university …

There'll be a number of examples over the years where politicians and ex-politicians have gone on to campuses and there has been a bit of a stir around their views and people using their voice to either protest or support. (Ardern, cited in Newstalk ZB, 2018)

In addition, as also reported by *Newstalk ZB*, Education Minister Chris Hipkins adds that while people might not agree with Brash's worldviews, he still has the right of 'freedom of speech':

Hipkins said while universities were autonomous, he would not have made the same decision as Thomas.

'I think the universities should be free to make these decisions. I think in this case they've made the wrong decision but that's a matter for the university' …

Hipkins said while he 'completely disagreed' with Brash, he should be free to speak. (Newstalk ZB, 2018)

Throughout this situation, Hobson's Pledge justify their ideological worldview in terms the democratic notion of 'free speech'. They do so against a range of interests they sense would disrupt this right. In response, a range of national figures defends Brash's right to speak. They do so, however, in ways that portray him as a sort of victim. In this manner, underpinned by the notion of 'free speech', Hobson's Pledge is able to justify their socio-political lobbying against affirmative action policies. A post-racializing effect subsequently follows insofar as systemic racism is overlooked — such as the overrepresentation rates of Māori in imprisonment, suicide, unemployment and so on. As such, Hobson's Pledge is provided the democratic right of 'free speech' in order to oppose affirmative action policies which are otherwise put in place to ameliorate the historical and present effects of colonisation.

An intensification of covertness: a democratic right to oppose Māori wards

The final indicator of the contribution of issues around Hobson's Pledge to the image of a post-racial Aotearoa/New Zealand relates to the group's opposition to Māori representation in local government. The particular case concerns the existence within the structure of the Palmerston North City Council, of Māori wards. The position taken by Hobson's Pledge to this campaign obscures their role, despite the principle that is at stake for them in defence of their perception of democracy (the group's 'moral'/'reasonable' image of 'coherence'). That lack of visibility is evident in the flyer produced for the campaign. On neither side is the name 'Hobson's Pledge' evident.

Figure 7. 1. Front of Māori wards petition (Hobson's Pledge, 2018d)

We want a vote on Maori wards

Your councillors have voted to introduce Maori wards.
You can have YOUR say by signing this petition.

If we collect 2,727 signatures and submit them before February 21, 2018, the council must hold a binding poll asking whether Maori wards should be introduced for the 2019 and 2022 local body elections.

We believe that Maori wards are not necessary for council decisions, which are mainly to do with roads, clean drinking water, sewage, drainage, libraries, sports facilities and cultural centres, all of which are for the benefit of everyone irrespective of ethnicity.

The added cost and red tape of a Maori ward is the last thing ratepayers need.

Please sign this petition to trigger a city-wide vote on whether to proceed with Maori wards

In accordance with section 19ZB of the Local Electoral Act 2001, we the undersigned, being currently enrolled electors of Palmerston North City, hereby demand that a poll be held on the question of whether Palmerston North City should be divided into one or more Maori wards.

NAME	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE

Please mail signed forms immediately to Maori Wards Petition, P O Box 84, Feilding 4740.
Further petition forms may be downloaded from the Hobson's Pledge website by going to https://tinyurl.com/ybksk2w6

Petition organised by Don Esslemont, 021 448 769
Advert sponsored by 1Law4All.

Figure 7. 2. Back of Māori wards petition. (One law 4 all, 2018).

In an editorial commentary on the matter, *Stuff* journalist Jimmy Ellingham denounces the ambiguity of Hobson's Pledge's contribution to the petitioning against Māori wards. Ellingham explains:

> Petition supporters have taken to the streets, even going door to door.
>
> However, the information they're giving the public seems questionable, whether by design or ignorance.
>
> The man who came to my door seeking signatures didn't mention Hobson's Pledge. (Ellingham, 2018)

The absence of any acknowledgement on the part of Hobson's Pledge regarding their involvement in the campaign raises again the possible sense of victimisation on the part of the group's membership with regard to the ideologies they hold. The implementation of Māori wards is meant to increase Māori representation in local body politics and activism in opposition to this initiative could prove to be socially-divisive. However, as reported by *Stuff*

journalist Richard Mays, Brash asserts that the intention is not to hide the fact that Hobson's Pledge is behind the petition, rather, the point is for ratepayers to express their own views. The group thereby makes a political argument, grounded in what they believe to be democratic principles, which, interestingly, enables the group to hide any involvement in the petition:

> I don't know why [the petitions] don't refer to us. We weren't trying to hide the fact that we were funding it, Brash said.
>
> We didn't want the issue clouded by someone from outside. It has got to be something local ratepayers express their views on. (Mays, 2018)

In addition, Dan Essolmont, who 'hosted' Hobson's Pledge in Palmerston North, provides the same sort of 'practical' response as to why Hobson's Pledge has not been more publically associated with the petition:

> When asked why the local petitions were not attributed to Hobson's Pledge, Esslemont said 'it never crossed my mind'.
>
> 'We never asked [ourselves] the question whether we should put anything on it'. (Mays, 2018)

Following the group's campaign against Māori wards, a subsequent referendum overturned the Palmerston North City Council's decision to implement Māori wards:

> Last year Councillors in Palmerston North, Kaikoura, Manawatu, Whakatane and Western Bay of Plenty districts decided that ratepayers on the Maori electoral roll would be forced to vote in separate Maori wards.
>
> We challenged the Councillors and voters overwhelmingly voted 'No' to separate Maori wards.

Our sincere thanks to the many volunteers who tirelessly worked on behalf of the cause.

Hobson's Pledge believes:

- Maori wards are not necessary for Council decisions which are mainly to do with roads, drinking water, sewage, parks and venues, which are for the benefit of everyone irrespective of their ancestry.

- We all have the ability to represent our communities through democratic elections on merit. It is demeaning and patronising to suggest that Maori need special assistance.

- Separating us into 'Māori' and the 'rest of us' is divisive and will damage our communities. (Hobson's Pledge, 2018c)

The case of the Māori ward petition suggests an increasing level of covertness in the public persona of Hobson's Pledge. In particular, it would seem that Hobson's Pledge's failure to fully acknowledge their role in the petition contributes to the intensification of the covertness of their ideologies. That is, a perception of a post-racial Aotearoa/New Zealand ensues whereby the group's identity nears invisibility; subsequently, the public are led to believe that they are fulfilling nothing other than a democratic cause. As such, the overturning of the proposed implementation of Māori wards indicates a public perception that Aotearoa/New Zealand has moved beyond racialized structures — that there is no need for Māori wards — despite the overrepresentation rates of Māori in imprisonment, unemployment, suicide, and so on.

Conclusion

While the liberal democratic structure of Aotearoa/New Zealand provides a justification of the activism of Hobson's Pledge, the group appears to intensify the covertness of its ideological

worldview. Such an intensification has the potential to have damning effects to existing and proposed affirmative action policies that enable the amelioration of the past and present effects of colonisation. This chapter identifies three ways through which this situation ensues. The first highlights the problem that occurs whereby public discourses provide a stigmatised identity of 'old white guys'. The problem is that public discourse presumes that racist activity is only practiced by a small fraction of society, all the while, racial discrimination is (re)produced at a systemic level (for example, the overrepresentation of Māori in imprisonment, unemployment, suicide, and so on). Secondly, an attempt is made to push the group further to the fringes of society, by which the group's ideologies are paralleled with that of 'hate speech'. However, this attempt is overturned by political figures who assert that the group should have the democratic right to 'free speech'. Nevertheless, this justifies opposition to affirmative action policies intended to reduce the inequalities experience by Māori. Thirdly, the group's failure to attribute their name to the Māori wards petition — and subsequently allowing the democratic process to run its course — indicates the increasing nature of the group's covertness. Notwithstanding questions that might be raised about this apparently increasing level of covertness, a secretive stance of this kind may be needed if the group is to ensure its survival in the socio-political arena of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Introduction

This research produces insights into Hobson's Pledge as an alt-right pressure group that tries to influence the State toward social policies which would normalise ethnic division. It does so by asking three questions of Hobson's Pledge: Under what circumstances are ideological contradictions in the group revealed? How do ideological contradictions come to be managed within the group? What does the future hold for Hobson's Pledge as a consequence of the strategies used? This chapter provides a summary of the discussions. It also highlights the possible implications of removing extreme right-wing groups' democratic rights to 'free speech'. This implication arises out of the context of Jan Thomas' decision to ban Brash from speaking at Massey University. The chapter considers the currency that Hobson's Pledge, as an alt-right group, has been able to gain as a result of lobbying against affirmative action policies. This chapter also identifies the contributions that this research has made to the existing body of knowledge on the topic. The limitations of this research are explained, as well as how these limitations are, or can be, dealt with. Lastly, this chapter considers the possibility of future research that would extend from this particular project.

Summary of research discussions

The central notion of this thesis has been that the structure of Western liberal democracy provides the ideal conditions for Hobson's Pledge to practice its activism. This study finds a link between Brash's 2004 speech at the Orewa Rotary Club (in Ōrewa) and Hobson's Pledge. The Speech generates a number of notable claims ('one law for all', for example), all of which have a common theme — that of opposing affirmative action. Brash expresses an overall sense of dissatisfaction with the prevailing power structure's values (that is, of the Labour Government), associated with compensating Māori for the current and historical effects of

colonisation. He directly questions why current-living New Zealanders should have to pay compensation for actions for which they are not directly responsible.

The series of claims generated in this Speech are subsequently recoded in legal terms for adoption by Hobson's Pledge. Ironically, these (legal) claims carry with them a potential to be socially divisive. This is because these claims (for example, legal 'equality' and 'fairness') result in the jettisoning of affirmative action policies that otherwise recompense Māori for the effects of colonisation. Despite the potential social-divisiveness, the group fills in the potential inconsistencies within their arguments with a promise to retrieve that which is missing in Aotearoa/New Zealand society: that 'we are now one people'. This object (of being 'one people') is prized above other claims (to 'fairness', for example). People are called on to act as if the only way to achieve the 'legal' claims of equality and fairness is to retrieve the 'missing' object of absolute national unity. Since the group appears to be more concerned with perpetually opposing affirmative action policies, the irony is this object may not even exist. Nevertheless, together, these elements enable the group to promote a coherent image of itself. An unintended consequence arises with that image, however. The group opposes an element of the current national identity – the speaking of Te Reo Māori – and their suggestion that they are being forced to participate in the language proposes that the state of unity expressed in that current identity is somehow false. Behind the criticism sits an abstract sense of unity which is never itself articulated. Nor can it be. Instead the space of explanation is simply, and repeatedly, filled by reference to the motto 'we are now one people'.

As survival mechanisms, the group sustains the positive image of 'coherence' through four strategies. The first involves the promotion of a singular nationalist identity of 'New Zealander'. It is intended to foreground the identity of all people in Aotearoa/New Zealand, despite who they might otherwise think themselves to be. Secondly, the group asserts that affirmative action policies are, in themselves, racist. The assertion implies that the group's

preferred image of 'unity' has a measure of substantive content. Third, the group asserts that Māori feel patronised in being recipients of affirmative action. In so doing, the group assumes a *de facto* broker role for Māori rights. Finally, the group presents a liberal democratic argument that has the effect of justifying a state of fragility. Such an argument follows the logic of market-forces, whereby State intervention in providing rewards to a specific ethnic group (particularly Māori) runs contrary to the notion that these rewards should be earned on the 'free market'. A fragile state of this kind includes a general state of victimisation, and is most notably deployed at specific moments when the group's ideologies may prove to be socially divisive.

The future prospects of Hobson's Pledge hinge upon their ability to constantly adapt to changes in the socio-political environment of Aotearoa/ New Zealand. As such, the group appears to purify the image of 'coherence' to a point that their involvement in lobbying against affirmative action policies becomes almost invisible (for example, against the implementation of Māori wards). The group's need to adapt comes from public perceptions that its message contravenes the now-accepted value of compensating Māori for wrongs committed in the colonial past. That is, Hobson's Pledge can be seen in the public arena as being racist. The problem associated with this situation is that public perception may not register the existence of on-going racialized structures within society, despite the continuing (re)production of racism at a systemic level, for example, in the overrepresentation rates of Māori in imprisonment, unemployment, suicide, and so on. In conjunction with this state of misrecognition, the group is able to gain wins in their opposition to affirmative action policies. This has happened in association with three situations. The first is an image the group has gained of being made up of 'old white men' — this identity contributes to a popular perception that only a small fraction of society is racist, ignoring the (re)production of inequalities at a systemic level. Secondly is the decision by Massey University's Vice-Chancellor, Jan Thomas, to ban Brash from the campus. The result

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of that decision is that, since the group appears able to sustain its message within the moral bounds associated with the notion of free speech, Brash is portrayed as a victim. Lastly, the group gains a win in identity politics in their opposition to Māori wards — interestingly, it appears that they do so as a result of their failure to associate themselves with the campaign.

Implications of removing the ability to express 'free speech'

It is during the course of this research that Jan Thomas sought to prevent Brash from speaking on the campus. As a consequence of that timing, the group's founding liberal democratic principles that appear, in themselves, 'moral' or 'reasonable', come into question. From the findings of this research, a particular implication could be anticipated if the ability to appeal to 'free speech' was removed from extreme right-wing groups. Removal would add to the impression that racism, or, at least, the potential to be socially-divisive no longer exists within our society. As such, the problem of systemic racism would not be resolved. The subsequent problem is that systemic structures continue to provide authoritarian-type groups the impetus for their activism. As the research also suggests, uncertainties about the group's survival reach a point where political action involves an obscuring of their identity (as occurs with the group's campaign against Māori wards).

Public conversations as to why Māori are subject to affirmative action could be a more useful alternative compared to the removal of the ability to express 'free speech'. Having media, celebrity, even political personnel to mediate such conversations, would be a more practical solution. In this way, people of Aotearoa/New Zealand could learn to live together by embracing their ethnic differences.

Contributions of the research

This research contributes to the existing research on extreme right-wing groups' activism by providing an account of the activism of Hobson's Pledge — specific to present day

Aotearoa/New Zealand. This research highlights the increasing covertness associated with opposition to affirmative action — for example, through the group's willingness to absolve themselves from responsibility in campaigning against Māori wards in city councils. In addition, the research also provides a useful theoretical perspective through which to interpret extreme right-wing groups, particularly of how such groups evolve (in this case, from 'Orewa' to 'Hobson's Pledge'). Moreover, it considers the existence of the alt-right in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Limitations

There are two notable limitations of this research. The first relates to the minimal amount of participants who came to be involved in the interviews for the project; it would have been ideal to interview more participants, however, only two participants followed through with the interviews. This limitation is addressed with the inclusion of a textual element to the research design (content analysis of internet resources). This element provides personal accounts from group members on certain aspects of the group's activism, as described on the group's webpage. The second relates to the size and scope of the research. While this research provides a substantive interpretation of the activism of Hobson's Pledge, it would benefit from a comparison with both other local and international extreme right wing-groups.

Future research

Future research could draw and expand upon this research. The analytical underpinnings of this research would provide a useful lens through which to articulate the covertness/overtness of the activism of extreme-right wing groups. That is, as a comparative analysis of extreme right-wing groups in and between countries structured as Western liberal democracies. This would provide a fuller and richer articulation of the ability of these groups in their opposition to affirmative action policies.

Conclusion

Extreme right-wing groups have emerged from a long held tradition of ethnic discrimination. In the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the work of Paul Spoonley provides the definitive literature on this subject. However, taking into consideration the shifting nature of these groups' activism, such a body of work now requires an update. This research contributes to that task. The insight that this research generates into Hobson's Pledge is that it remains in a constant state of maintenance — this is the only way in which the group can survive. In doing so, the group has the ability to present itself as politically progressive under the guise of a democratic cause. This poses a threat to affirmative action policies, in that the increasing covertness of the group contributes to public perceptions that increasingly obscure the existence of systemic racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand. That is, it is perceived that only a small fraction of society is racist and, as a consequence, public perceptions may not be attuned to the (re)production of racism at a systemic level. I suggest that public conversations would enhance public awareness as to why affirmative action policies are put in place in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In this way, ethnic groups might live together through the embrace of differences between them.

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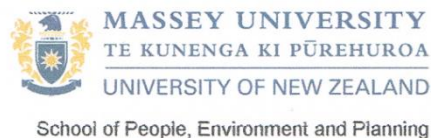
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Appendices

Appendix A: Information sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

School of People, Environment and Planning

Hobson's Pledge

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

My name is Robin Aldrich Barendze. My research topic is cultural nationalism, and the aim is to understand the resilience of Hobson's Pledge as it strives to achieve public recognition. This research is part of my Master's Degree in Sociology.

Project Description and Invitation

- *This research will examine norms, beliefs, and values that Hobson's Pledge endorse. The research will also focus on the prospects that Hobson's Pledge hold for their future.*

- *I am intrigued with the way that Hobson's Pledge get their message out to their target audience, and I would very much like to extend an interview invitation out to the members of Hobson's Pledge.*

Participant Identification and Recruitment

- *Participants will be recruited by initially trying to gain contact with one member of Hobson's Pledge through the internet (Facebook or email, for example). The hope is that once I have successfully contacted one, or some Hobson's Pledge members for interviews that they would pass me on to other members (or Hobson's Pledge associates) that would also want to be interviewed.*

- *The prospective participant's names will be obtained from the Hobson's Pledge 'members' list.*

- *Interview invitations will only be offered to members and associates of Hobson's Pledge.*

- *I will seek a number of at least three, and ideally six interviewees.*

Project Procedures

- *The participant's involvement will include face-to-face, voice-recorded interviews. The interviews will also follow a general structure, which will allow space for the conversation to digress.*

- *The interviews will last about 45 to 60 minutes.*

Data Management

- *The recorded interviews will be transcribed.*

- *The recordings and transcriptions (memory-stick versions, and printed transcriptions) will be stored in a filing cabinet, and will disposed of at the completion of the research (after submission of thesis).*

- *The participants will be offered a summary of the research once it is completed.*

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any particular question;*

- *withdraw from the study at any time;*

- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*

- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*

- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

- *ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.*
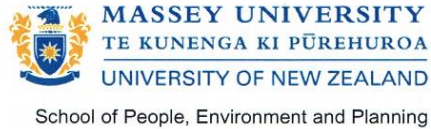
Project Contacts

- *Contact details:*

  o *Robin Aldrich Barendze (Researcher)*

    Ph: █████████

    Email: ███████████████████

  o *Dr Warwick Tie (first supervisor)*

    Email: W.J.Tie@massey.ac.nz

  o *Assoc. Prof. Jeff Sluka (second supervisor)*

    Email: J.Sluka@massey.ac.nz

- *Please feel free to contact the researcher and/or supervisors if you have any questions about the research.*

1.   **LOW RISK NOTIFICATIONS**

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Appendix B: Participant consent forms

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

School of People, Environment and Planning

Hobson's Pledge DON BRASH

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 10/08/17

Full Name - printed   DONALD T. BRASH

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

School of People, Environment and Planning

LARRY WOOD

Hobson's Pledge

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: 15-8-17

Full Name - printed LAWRENCE WOOD

Participant Consent Form (2017)   Page 1 of 1

Appendix C: Interview schedule

Hobson's Pledge

[***Remind participants of their rights during the interview: ask questions at any time; the right to refuse answering a question; stop recording at any time; stop interview at any time***]

Question 1.

The main goal of Hobson's Pledge is that we should 'all be one people'. Why do you believe that is relevant at this moment in time?

Question 2.

A lot of people share your beliefs, but many, particularly Maori, think that your beliefs are racist. What is your response to that?

Question 3.

The Hobson's Pledge website identifies 16 issues. Many people, but again particularly Maori, view the policies you advocate in relation to the issues, such as the abolition of the Maori seats in Parliament, as divisive. How do you think that unity can be achieved through divisive policies?

Follow Up Question: Do you think we can force people to be united 'as one people,' because that seems to be what Hobson's Pledge policies imply?

Question 4, in case there is still time left.

You believe that everyone should have the 'same rights'. What is your view, then, on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which New Zealand has ratified?

Follow Up Question: Do you believe there is any such thing as 'indigenous rights'?