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Imagining the South African 'self': post-apartheid constructions of 'nationhood' in South African Sports Illustrated magazine

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Declaration

I James Smurthwaite, student number 0202633V, declare that this dissertation, submitted to the Faculty of Humanities for the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts, is my own original and unaided work. I have explicitly indicated cases where the thoughts and ideas of others have been used and have followed the conventions required for acknowledgement. I understand that plagiarism is wrong and submit myself to the policies and procedures of the University of the Witwatersrand.



12/11/2012

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Signature **Date**

Dedication

To my family, my late grandparents William and Joan Smurthwaite and my grandparents Robert and Barbara Jamieson who have never failed to make me smile.

Abstract

The emergence of South Africa from a minority ruled, racially discriminatory regime to a representative constitutional democracy, necessitated the re-configuration of South African citizenship and 'identity'. Not only was it seen as important for the purposes of negotiating the complex political transition, but also for the purposes of redefining the perception of the South African state within the international community and for South African's themselves.

Sport and its' representation in post-apartheid South Africa became and remains a site of 'identity' re-definition and contestation. Sport was promoted as a cultural, socio-political and economic commodity underpinned by distinct articulations of 'nationhood'. The focus of this study occurs at this critical juncture of commoditisation. It is the analysis of how the central tenets of 'new' South African 'nationhood' and 'identity' have been infused into prominent popular discourse in the form of *South African Sports Illustrated* magazine (SASI) read against and compared to institutionally mediated discourses presented by sport governing organisations.

This study elucidates on the nuances within discursive structures, semiotic modalities and sites of divergent and contested meaning construction. Consideration is given to the manner in which discursive dominance and authority is established within the discourses with further attention being given to prevalent thematic elements within prominent discourses. In the case of SASI this centres on the normalisation of 'whiteness' and masculinity as well as the maintenance of economic and cultural privilege for a rigidly defined 'community. The sport organisation documents highlight transformation, equity, redress, culture and development as critical aspects of post-apartheid South Africa 'identity' while concurrently underpinning this 'identity' construction based on apartheid race categories. The aim is to illustrate how the embryonic, somewhat essentialist, proposition of the 'rainbow nation' pluralism and multiculturalism thesis has been interpreted, developed, re-configured, ignored, challenged and articulated in variable discursive contexts, particularly in the public/popular domain. In conclusion the study examines the possible implications and motivations behind the divergent representation of 'identity' and 'nationhood' in post-apartheid South Africa.

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