One Country, One Sport, Endless Knowledge: The Anthropological Study of Sports in South Africa

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Abstract: Sport was one of the most important venues for the construction of difference and inequality in apartheid South Africa. The construction of the body and the boundaries maintaining difference between the defined groups in South Africa are described in this paper, as well as the use of sports talk to define and seek national unity and to construct national character. Soccer was set aside as the sport most suited to non-Whites, thus becoming available as one of the most important venues for statements of Black identity, organizational competence, pride and excellence. Despite the exaggeration of difference and segmentation of the population into ostensibly independent geographic regions in the past, despite continuing attempts to maintain the boundaries of White ethnicity, despite tremendous, racialized differences in wealth, the discourse of sport in South Africa supports the new nation, from the President to the poorest fan watching games through holes in the fence.

Keywords: sport, South Africa, reconciliation

Résumé : Le sport a été un des lieux les plus important pour la construction des différences et de inégalités dans l'apartheid sud-africaine. La construction du corps et de la différence qui maintient les frontières entre les groupes en présence en Afrique du Sud sont décrits dans cet article, aussi bien que l'utilisation du langage sportif pour définir et atteindre l'unité nationale et construire le caractère national. Le football a été choisi comme le sport le mieux adapté aux non-blancs, devenant ainsi accessible comme le lieu le plus important pour l'affirmation de l'identité, de la compétence organisationnelle, de la fierté et de l'excellence des «Noirs». En dépit de l'exagération de la différence et de la segmentation de la population entre régions géographiques visiblement indépendantes dans le passé, en dépit des tentatives continuelles pour maintenir les frontières de l'identité blanche, en dépit d'immenses différences à teinte raciale quant aux richesses, le discours sportif en Afrique du Sud supporte la nouvelle nation, à partir du Président jusqu'aux plus pauvres amateurs qui suivent les parties à travers les trous dans la clôture.

Mots-clés : sport, Afrique du Sud, réconciliation

Introduction

This paper describes some of the many ways that sport allows anthropologists to experience and to analyze South African society. Throughout the decades of apartheid, sports served both to define and to defy White superiority. Sport continues to serve as one of the most accessible avenues for the conscious refashioning of South African society. While focussing on soccer, the paper includes cricket and rugby, the other two sports that have been most important in reflecting and determining White identity, and in celebrating the nation. We aim to demonstrate both the many ways in which sport has reflected the most important issues of South African history, and the ways in which the performance of sport changes that history.

When men familiar with South Africa find out that we study sports there, they invariably respond with some variation on "You know, sport is a religion in South Africa." Several scholars, too, have observed that "South Africa is the most sports-mad country in the world" (e.g., Farred, 1997; Nauright, 1997). Why (or if) this is unique to South Africa is beyond the scope of the present paper, or whether this belief is the result or the cause of the way sports have been used to state and debate the most important issues in South African society. White rule was celebrated through international sport, particularly through rugby, which has been conceptualized as the defining demonstration of White Afrikaner strength and determination. When South African rugby teams won at the international level, their victory was quite consciously hailed as a justification of White rule: "Countries that allow mixing of races can never field a strong enough team to beat an all-White team from a White-run country."

Many fine anthropological ethnographies and analyses of sport have appeared in the last decade. Three areas of concern to anthropology in general have been brilliantly

discussed as aspects of sporting practice in one or more countries: the generation of bodily meaning, the construction, maintenance, destruction and reconstruction of identity processes, and the celebration of groups and ideologies.

Bodily practice has been analyzed among poor boxers in the U.S. by Wacquant (1995a, 1995b), who described their use of their bodies as a resource as an honourable way to achieve money and success, in contrast to criminal or semi-criminal activity. Archetti (e.g., 1996) studied the meanings given to different styles of play in Argentinian soccer, as Leite Lopes (1997) has done in Brazil, demonstrating the ways in which ideals thought to constitute less-valorized social classes can be read into and then derived from bodily performance. The role of the referee as director or conductor of action has been described by Dyck (2000) in his review of studies of body performance in sports.

Perhaps more anthropologists have been concerned to describe identity and boundary generation, maintenance and redefinition in sport than any other area of recent interest in the discipline. Notable among these are studies of struggles in British soccer (there and elsewhere also called "football") to define a particular team or style of play as characteristic of one race, social class, ethnicity, or even religion in contrast to others (e.g., Armstrong, 1998; Giulianotti and Armstrong, 1997). In Africa, conflict that centered on whether soccer should represent European or African values, traditional or modern practices, local or global discourse has been described by Stuart (1996), by Anderson (e.g., Anderson, Clarke and Perzigan, 2001), and by Farred (2000); Nauright (1997) has described the way in which rugby has been used to assert Afrikaner identity in South Africa.

The celebration of state or subcultural values, of hegemony and resistance, the generation and affirmation of alternative societies and relations through sport is the third area of concern to anthropologists of sport for which we will provide data from current practice in South Africa. As the Olympic Games were created to try to establish a system for uniting nations worldwide through shared values and practice (MacAloon, 1981), nations extolling the extent to which they have been re-made anew, as in "The New South Africa," attempt to demonstrate and promote national unity through sport. Often concurrently with the nationalizing mission come local or subordinate alternatives that are proclaimed through the medium of particular players, styles and events (e.g., Anderson, Clarke and Perzigan, 1999). New values are read into old games, as fans and players use "new" nations to talk about sport, and politicians use sport to talk about the nation that they wish to renew.

The Racialization of South African Sport

From early in the 19th century, White residents of South Africa identified themselves as either "English" or "Afrikaner," based on language, religion, location, racial ideology, and preferred sport. Self-designated Afrikaners are a very diverse amalgam of Dutch, French, German, Portuguese and other European settlers, indigenous Khoisan- and Bantu-speaking peoples, and Malaysian, Indonesian and Madagascarene slaves (Le May, 1995). This genealogical diversity makes the cultural signifiers of Afrikaner identity as important as skin color in categorizing individuals. "Afrikaner" identifies individuals who speak Afrikaans, a Creole of Dutch; who identify with the mythic history of the Dutch and Huguenot settlers; and who believe that winning at rugby, a vastly superior sport to either soccer or cricket, is one of the most important of life's endeavors (van der Merwe, 1990).

"The English" in South African parlance are Whites who do not self-identify as Afrikaner and whose home language is English, no matter how long ago their ancestors immigrated to South Africa. Most Afrikaners reject cricket as an effete symbol of English imperialism, so that in the past most cricket players have been categorized as "English" regardless of surname. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, however, some Afrikaners, including the late Hansie Cronje, have been rather reluctantly admired for their success in cricket, at least as long as the national cricket team achieved international success.

"Indian" in South Africa is applied to persons who appear to have originated in the Indian subcontinent, regardless of religion. "Coloured" means a person of mixed race, but especially of Dutch and Indonesian or Khoisan origins. Both categories were often included with indigenous Bantu-speaking "Africans" under the label "Black."

Each of the three most important South African sports has been conceptualized as the cultural property of one of its three most influential populations. An Afrikaner follows the fortunes of local and especially national rugby sides with the kind of passion usually aroused by charismatic religious movements (Anderson, Clarke and Perzigian, 1999). Although "the English" play all three sports, cricket is especially associated with them; and soccer has always been characterized as a Black sport, so much so that apparently White individuals who play soccer are said by many Whites to be coloured.

The processes that first maintained and now blur the boundaries between White and non-White have been particularly transparent in the embodied practice of South African sport.

Soccer began to be played by Black, White, Indian and coloured in South Africa in the 1870s, when it was introduced to Africans because of its association with the lowest classes in Britain (Holt, 1986). Only the few Westernized, affluent Black Africans played cricket or rugby, but soccer was played by all Black Africans, both rural and urban, of all language groups, as well as by English-speaking working-class Whites, by recent European immigrants, by mixed race "Coloureds," and by Indians. In race, class, ethnicity and religion, soccer players, and therefore the game itself, belonged to the least valorized categories recognized by dominant Afrikaners. To Afrikaners, the fact that a few recent immigrants from Britain were willing to join racially mixed teams in order to play soccer (Couzens, 1981) defined both soccer and lower-class English-speakers as inferior. Their acceptance of Black teammates soon led to the designation of soccer as "the Black sport." Few White South Africans even today can conceive of Afrikaner soccer players or teams, so strong is this association. We have often been told that soccer players with Dutch surnames are "known" to be "really" mixed race Coloureds. Among class-conscious non-Whites today, this identification is strong enough for many to abandon soccer in favour of rugby or cricket.

After an Afrikaner government came to power in 1948 on a platform of apartheid, a barrage of laws completely separated all recognized racial and ethnic groups (Archer and Bouillon, 1982). The government deemed it necessary to overdetermine separate racial identities to maintain the boundaries separating Afrikaner "Whites," virtually all of whom had some African and/or Indonesian ancestry, from "non-Whites," and to complete and maintain the subjugation of all non-Whites by dividing the non-White population into dozens of separate categories, each with its own set of privileges, to prevent them from uniting against the White minority. All social spaces in which multiracial performances had ever occurred were to become the exclusive property of one race only, including sports arenas, playing fields and spectators' seats alike.

The Black, Coloured, and Indian soccer associations opposed this new legislation by federating in 1950, but the government forced them to split into three separate organizations again by 1960 (Booth, 1997). Any association or team that resisted race apartheid was banned from using, and even watching play on, all public playing fields (Archer, 1987). When South Africa left the British Commonwealth in 1960, the government imposed even more restrictive laws that soon resulted in the removal of South African teams from international competition.

FIFA (Federation of International Football Associations), the international soccer body, suspended the Whites-only national soccer team immediately, finally expelling them in 1976. The International Rugby Board and the International Cricket Council, both dominated by English Commonwealth countries, were reluctant to take similar action until some 15 years of blatantly unsportsmanlike behaviour shamed them into following suit. As only one example, South Africa was banned from the Olympic Games in 1964 for the following events: in accordance with its policy of recognizing the citizenship of Whites alone, the South African government insisted that only Whites could represent the nation. Any non-White South Africans who participated had to travel to the Games in a separate airplane from the White sportsmen, had to stay at a separate hotel, had to wear a different uniform, and could not enter any event that a White South African had entered (Guelke, 1986). South Africa was not readmitted to international sport until after Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, when he asked the international boards of rugby, cricket and soccer to confirm South Africa's re-entry even though the new laws governing sport in South Africa had not yet been written (Booth, 1996, 1997).

Although the apartheid government recognized that integration in sports would contradict the total system of apartheid, sports were so important that Afrikaner politicians were willing to compromise in order to broadcast their message of the superiority of White-run nations internationally (Farred, 1997: 16). By the mid-1960s, White players and administrators, desperate to play internationally, begged the government to abandon apartheid in sport. Concessions to international principles were made, but in every sport except soccer these consisted of trivial window-dressing. The fact that some White soccer players were allowed to play on Black teams in the 1970s made that sport available as a symbol of non-racialism.

South African public figures frequently propose to increase racial respect and co-operation through sport. If the experience of playing on mixed-race teams changes players' evaluation of other races and cultures in a positive way, schools and other organizations have a simple, easily-accessed tool of great power: to manipulate team membership in order to decrease racism. Although playing on multiracial teams amounted to a renuciation of racism in the past, White players who joined multiracial teams throughout the apartheid decades, at considerable risk to themselves, state that they were motivated primarily by the desire to win. Many of those we interviewed were recent immigrants who rejected practices that they thought characterized Afrikaners, including racially segregated sports, as a way of increasing their own status. Many lower-class English-speaking Whites sought to

escape both ethnic prejudice (directed at them by Afrikaners) and class prejudice (by middle- and upper-class cricket players; Anderson, Clarke and Perzigian, 2001) by playing an "English" sport on a team composed of Black players who never appeared to raise the question of their relative rank. In this paper we concentrate on the first decade following Nelson Mandela's release from prison, which has been a transitional period from apartheid to an unseen future. We cannot claim that our findings will characterize South African sport into this future.

The Anthropology of South African Soccer

Can sports unify a country? The claim is often made by representatives of various sporting bodies, and it was also made by virtually all leaders of newly independent African states. In most cases, subsequent research has indicated that sports are as likely to divide as to unify a country. In the particular circumstances that obtained in this particular country from 1990, however, we believe that we have found that the particular sport of soccer did serve to help unify certain segments of the population. Whether this will continue into the future, much less spread to the rest of the population, remains doubtful; but during the decade following Nelson Mandela's release from prison, soccer allowed for reconciliation between Black South Africans and those Whites who sought to use it in this way.

The heavy weight of White cultural oppression paradoxically created sites of freedom in those areas assigned to Africans, especially in sport. Both English and Afrikaner Whites agreed that rugby was the ideal game for the demonstration of White superiority (Nauright, 1997; Van der Merwe, 1990). The playing fields were ideal sites for the maintenance of boundaries between Black and White, and between Afrikaner and English. The authorities were concerned to maintain the boundary and not concerned with the internal content of the "Black sports" so categorized; dismissed by Whites as beneath their notice (Farred, 2000: 104), the soccer field, as a result, was free to be an arena for the creation, performance and celebration of African identity. The remainder of this paper presents some of the exciting ways in which the study of sports can help in the attempt to understand and to effect change in South Africa.

Soccer uniquely allowed Africans to assert, even celebrate, equality with Whites, locally if not internationally, in at least one area of endeavour *that was of importance to Whites*. White South Africans were willing to concede Black superiority in soccer during apartheid, since that sport hardly mattered to the ruling Afrikaners. Ironically, this is being contested today, more than a decade after the release of Mandela, as more and more Whites play soccer and follow the activities of the racially-mixed national team. Playing soccer no longer requires that White players set aside any racist beliefs they might have held. For example, one informant, mother of a White player, insisted that although Black players appeared to be faster and more agile on average than White players, this was not due to innate qualities of speed, strength or agility, but to the constant practice by Black boys who did nothing else but play while the White boys were spending most of their time toiling away in school or at jobs.

Soccer has been a vehicle for assimilating European culture. Even more so, it has eased the entry of migrants from rural hinterlands into the White-dominated urban areas. Young men who had been forced off the land and into the vast mining compounds of the Witwatersrand by taxation and seizures of land and livestock were deliberately selected by the mining recruiters to be as unfamiliar with urban conditions as possible, as it was believed that they would be easier to control politically if they were totally lost in their new surroundings. But new arrivals on the urban scene already had some knowledge of urban Black culture: the Johannesburg soccer teams, which neighbors who had been to the Rand and returned described at length, and whose games themselves could be heard on transistor radios in the remotest areas. Their knowledge of the Johannesburg soccer teams provided them with an entrée on arrival, into conversations among sophisticated long-time urban residents, among South Africans from different areas who spoke different languages, and from migrants from foreign countries. As Dyck (2000: 30) indicates, such knowledge provides "supporters, regardless of discrepancies of class, ethnicity, citizenship, age and even gender that might otherwise serve as barriers to conversation" with cultural capital to buy themselves into urban life. New immigrants (constantly generated by apartheid until 1994 and by continuing systems of economic dominance since then) were able to join huge supporters' clubs that provided them with instant communities and networks through which they gained information and support of many kinds (Couzens, 81; Stuart, 96).

These clubs have local branches in the smallest neighbourhoods and sponsor many purely social activities; they pass on information about available jobs and housing, and many other services of importance to rural migrants. At every game, banners are hung along the fences declaring the presence of supporters' clubs from the smallest and most distant parts of the country. Anyone who has worn a replica jersey of a local team to a public place in South Africa has discovered that other fans, regardless of colour,

language, gender or ethnicity, will greet another supporter on sight as a long-lost friend; most will approach and talk with their fellow-supporter, and offer various kinds of useful information. When we have carelessly forgotten and worn such a jersey although we were in a rush, we regretted it bitterly, as everything takes two or three times as long to complete when one is constantly being greeted by passers-by, security guards, tellers, vendors and the like and forced to stop for a brief conversation about the team with each one of them.

The emotional arousal, release of tension, and bonding with thousands of other fans temporarily released from the gaze of White supervision made Black labourers' fragmented, dangerous and degraded ordinary lives whole and their individual lives valued (Anderson, Bielert and Jones, 2001). "Re-creation" occurs quite literally in sport, as fans recreate themselves in their idols' image (e.g., Hendricks, 1989: 9). As Bernard Magubane said, at the height of apartheid, soccer was an escape from the White world and its drudgery and repression; soccer made life worth living:

> Momentarily their emotional life which is often subdued and repressed during the week...is allowed to break through.... The drudgery which their life imposes on them is temporarily forgotten.... This pre-occupation with football matches makes life worth living despite its frustrations. (1963: 53)

Forty years later, we hear similar statements, always uttered with the greatest sincerity: "Soccer, this beautiful game that is our life," "Soccer is life," "Soccer gives us our life."

Pan-South African identity was constructed, maintained and transformed in the soccer stadium by both fans and players. By 1930, soccer had become *the* Black urban sport. Rural and urban Africans from all backgrounds and regions, speaking dozens of different languages, come together at soccer matches and perform and produce urban Black popular culture. African dress, songs, dances, ornaments and other material and behavioral productions of African culture are overwhelmingly in evidence at soccer games. Individual freedom of expression is allowed and rewarded, yet subsumed in a glorious group production, a celebration of both individuality and unity (Anderson, Clarke and Perzigian, 2001).

This infinite elaboration on a few common themes can become a path to fame, even greatness, for fans as well as for players. Some fans become nationally known, featured in the media, and sponsors have sent a few of them to the World Cup in France and in Korea/Japan. Similarly, men and women of wealth are expected to demonstrate their importance by supporting soccer teams. These avenues of influence were especially important under apartheid, when no opportunities for investment existed outside of the circumscribed Black townships.

Soccer was a highly valued, relatively safe arena to demonstrate Black resistance to apartheid, partly because at least a few White players have always resisted the regulations prohibiting mixed teams, mixed matches, and mixed spectators (Archer and Bouillon; 1982, Blades, 1998). Resistance to local White cultural domination continues still, as fans embrace and ridicule those institutions which have most intruded on their lives. Choir robes in the team colours, inscribed with team slogans and players' names, acknowledge while ridiculing and, especially, Africanizing Christianity, proclaiming traditional African beliefs in ancestral influence and the efficacy of spirit mediums at the same time as they insult the European administration of Christianity. A mind-boggling and eye-dazzling array of African-transformed hard hats, overalls, protective goggles, lunch buckets, spades, and other labourers' paraphernalia appear at all soccer games. The hard-hats blend with 19th-century Zulu warriors' headdresses in visionary spectacles that bring to mind the "transformed shamans" of Bushman rock paintings, in an analogous depiction of images of power. "Cheerleaders" with giant sunglasses and underwear in the team colours exhort the crowd. Fans construct and enact resistance to European attempts to control or eliminate African spiritual and secular life, ridiculing technology, industrialization and capitalism.

Soccer is available to those Whites who seek such a voice as an ideal medium for demonstrating acceptance of Africans and repentance for apartheid. Africans literally embrace White fans with open arms. At the match itself, Whites are invariably greeted with handshakes, hugs, praise, and great quantities of helpful advice to young players. Anywhere else, a White person wearing the jersey of one of the local teams will be repeatedly engaged in friendly, enthusiastic conversation by Black and mixed-race passersby eager to discuss their favorite teams, proud of soccer's 40-year record of striving for interracial cooperation on the field. Juggling a ball in public brings fervent invitations to join local, mostly Black teams, as well as to socialize at local restaurants and bars. Lost on foot after midnight in one of the Black townships internationally famed for murder, rape and robbery, White Hartwick College students who interviewed fans and players accidentally discovered that they had nothing to fear if they were identified with soccer. While in ordinary clothes they were ignored, when they wore soccer jer-

seys, especially those of South African teams, they were repeatedly stopped and given help and advice by passers-by, including rides out of the township to their lodgings, for which payment was refused.

The "nation playing itself into oneness" (Farred, 2000) was initiated publicly by then-President Mandela at the 1995 Rugby World Cup final when he urged the entire nation to support "our children" on the national team, and appeared at the championship game itself in the Springboks' jersey and cap (Booth, 1996: 70). When Black sportsmen and women win, White South Africans claim their successes as their own (though this probably continues to reflect White assumption that Blacks can only succeed with White guidance) (Anderson, Heffernan, Lewis and Nicolarsen, 1999).

As difference and inequality were constructed through sport, similarity and equality are intentionally being constructed at soccer stadiums today. As one of us was told at a Kaizer Chiefs game in January 2002, "color doesn't matter, we're all Chiefs here." A similar quote came from the journal of one of our American students in 2001: "I threw on the Chiefs jersey and I was no longer seen as a White American, but as a Chiefs fan, just like everyone else.... We shared liquor and cigarettes with everyone around us and for those two hours we were truly brothers with our fellow man." The discourse of celebration of national unity and reconciliation through sport exceeds the exhortations of church and political leaders. Soccer thus provides Whites with a unique entrée into Black urban life. Good relations with White fans and players are a significant source of identity and pride for Black fans and players—one of the ways in which Black South Africans now construct difference between themselves and Whites: Blacks see themselves as more generous, forgiving and accepting than most Whites.

At the club level, a majority of the current teams for teenagers are either all-Black or all-White, but with a significant number of mixed teams as well. Even the emphasis on boundary maintenance that continually occurs in this situation produces unity as much as disunity, because White members of mixed teams support Black teammates who are taunted by members of all-White teams. During the instances we observed on which such taunting was reported, the White teammates rallied around the Black players in opposition to the Whites on the other team, continuing to complain about their opponents' boorishness for the following week or two. White players on mixed teams are also often asked by members of all-White teams why they play with Blacks, but the usual answer, "because I want to *win*," is accepted by the all-White teams without further comment.

Future Problems, Future Research Opportunities

We do not claim that the racial reconciliation that we observed at soccer games during the decade of transition will continue to characterize South African soccer. Indeed, there are many indications, some of which we have presented here, of increasing racial conflict in soccer as White attendance and White diversity increase. If White presence in soccer becomes naturalized, soccer will no longer be a venue whereby Whites can demonstrate acceptance of equality with Blacks or their (urban) culture. This is a question to be addressed as the "New" South Africa becomes just South Africa.

A second question to be pursued, using the avenue of sports to investigate ethnicity, is the extent of African difference and assimilation. Although teams at all levels are composed of all colours and ethnic groups, and fans and players claim to be unaware of any ethnic biases in soccer, some fans do claim that, for instance, Zulu referees are "bad" because they are "the most biased." What can this mean, when neither team has a preponderance of Zulu players? Black fans have also "explained," "you'll never see an Indian player" because Indians are "too afraid, too small, too weak; an Indian would walk out and break his leg before the first half." In most countries, the sports field is an appropriate stage on which to literally play out ethnic rivalries. While the appearance of unity in South Africa is unanimously celebrated on the field itself, perhaps it is an error, or a temporary manifestation of Black unity following the demise of apartheid, given the expression of such differences and the obvious values that are attached to them. We do not mean to minimize the importance of the expression of unity and equality in sport, however; we too believe that "saying is doing" (Archetti, 1998), that "discourse is what is" (MacAloon, 1987), and that the nation can thus "play itself into oneness" (Farred, 2000) in the imagination of the fans and the bodies of the teams. Within soccer itself, boundaries between Black and White are being eroded by the gold-and-black choir robes, by the hard hats with horns worn over gorilla masks, by all the other hybridities of Black and White, "primitive" and modern culture that fans fashion to display at and en route to the games.

What images will come to define the new nation? In South Africa as in Cameroon (Nkwi and Vidacs, 1997: 138), "When people talk about football, they're talking about their own lives." Rural populations identify with urban Premier League stars as though they play out their own lives. The source of this identification may be investigated by questioning rural fans about the sport, partic-

ularly among those who have never seen a professional game, even on television. At the national level, questions concerning how participation in the international community will change the way the game, particular styles of play, and individual star players are regarded in South Africa are important. The rural/urban, European/African dichotomies are experienced through soccer as continua rather than clearly-bounded opposites, fortifying the impression of a discourse of unity and reconciliation. Similarly, the embodiment of soccer is that of the mixed-race coloureds, as the percentage of coloured players is much higher than their percentage in the national population.

Much of the construction of the current meanings of Black, White, coloured and Indian in South Africa today continues to be through sports. "White," for example, is constructed slightly differently in each sport. It means strength, tactics, and relatively slow speed, in South African soccer (for a complete list of characteristics attributed to Black and White soccer players, see Anderson, Clarke and Perzigian, 2001). In rugby, however, White stands, above all, for strength, size and resolute control (Nauright, 1997). White soccer players emulate the style of play characteristic of England, Black players that characteristic of Brazil, a style increasingly thought to characterize play by Africans from any country (e.g., Kuper, 1994; Motloung, 1997). When the mostly Black national soccer team loses, the White public condemns African soccer in general for its disorganization and lack of control. Most White South Africans with whom we have spoken believe that no African team will ever be able to overcome the "discipline and concentration" of a European team, and that Cameroon in 1990 was a "fluke"—as was Nigeria's victory over Spain in 1998, and Senegal's over France, the world champions, in 2002. When the almost all-White rugby team loses, the White public likewise condemns supposed African interference in player selection in order to integrate the sport (by the African National Congress party, though it includes many White members, that holds a majority of parliamentary seats). Any researcher seeking to understand the attributes of the different populations today, self- and other-ascribed, will find them readily at hand on the sports fields, in the stands, and in the media coverage and advertisement of the different sports.

Future research must consider the ongoing re-construction of gender in the New South Africa. White definitions of "Black patriarchy" are giving way to renegotiations of relationships between men and women in all areas of society. There is a national women's soccer team, with members of all races; there is no national women's rugby or cricket team. This may occur in soccer because of its long history of inclusiveness, but it may be due, as well, to White and upper-class Black labelling of soccer as less masculine than rugby or cricket. Which is the true demonstration of masculinity, soccer or rugby, and why? Whereas Bernard Magubane (1963: 12) said "real men, fit and strong," played soccer, Steve Tshwete, minister of sports at the time (1996-99), often claimed that soccer was for "sissies," as "real" men play rugby (Nauright, 1997: 57).

Conclusion

These few examples show that reconciliation continues to be seen as a successful mission in at least one arena of South African society, perhaps despite all evidence to the contrary, and that that arena is still described as one of the most important areas of South African existence. The discourse of the united, multiracial, New South Africa of equals continues to be celebrated on the field even as resistance to a single dominant culture continues to be celebrated through outlandish caricatures of once White, now upper-class Black culture. The nation is talking about its new search for unity through soccer, while also expressing *and accepting* disunity and divergence.

We wish to stress that it is a *nation* that is being constructed and celebrated, not a fragmentable entity with parts capable of secession. However much Whites complain of imagined Black preferences, corruption or inefficiency, however much Blacks complain of White hegemony, wealth and racism, whether or not Zulu referees or White cricket captains are corruptible or Indians are weak and cowardly, not one member of the spectator base or players claimed that the country should be divided or even significantly re-fashioned. Different fans celebrate different constructions of the nation to promote different constituencies, but all those we met fully accepted the concept of the South African nation, at least on the field and in discussions with fellow devotees.

The *meaning* of the South African nation is constructed and contested among fans and administrators of sports. Long-established soccer nations like Brazil, England and Germany view their style of play as a demonstration of national character (MacClancy, 1996). One can read the different imagined forms of nationhood from the dress, flags and songs of fans at soccer, rugby and cricket matches more easily than in any other context. In every African country, sports have been touted as a road to national unity and pride. Steve Tshwete again, in a 1999 interview (Jayiya, 1999), claimed the following achievements for the national soccer team: national unity, nation-building, reconciliation, national pride and international recognition; national health and fitness; and reduction in juvenile crime. Politicians in virtually all the newly-independent African countries believed, with Kuper (1994:

110), "Football is the one chance Africa has to beat the world." Although South Africa's team failed to reach the second round of the 2002 World Cup, the team was praised by Black politicians, White reporters, schoolchildren and crowds in the street for having "represented the nation with honor." The "unity" of the team was repeatedly cited, as well as their courage, perseverance, and creativity. Of these attributions, only creativity has traditionally been granted Africans in the past, and that rarely. The other praiseworthy qualities are those characteristically associated with Whites, almost exclusively so.

Our work shows that the ethnographic study of South African sport can be fruitful for identifying statements of reconciliation and of difference, for maintaining, destroying and substituting boundaries, in order to judge the state of the nation along some continuum of co-operation and resentment, resistance and release.

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