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To cite this article: Brian Penrose (2017) “The right thing to do?” Transformation in South African sport, South African Journal of Philosophy, 36:3, 377-392, DOI: [10.1080/02580136.2017.1295755](https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2017.1295755)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2017.1295755>



Published online: 26 Sep 2017.



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“The right thing to do?” Transformation in South African sport¹

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In this paper I attempt to unpack the current public debate on racial transformation in South African sport, particularly with regard to the demographic make-up of its national cricket and rugby sides. I ask whether the alleged moral imperative to undertake such transformation is, in fact, a moral imperative at all. I discuss five possible such imperatives: (1) the need to compensate non-white South Africans for the injustices in sport’s racist history, (2) the imperative to return the make-up of our national sides to what they would have been in the absence of that history, (3) the requirement that national sides be representative of the country, (4) the need to eliminate ongoing racial bias in selection, and (5) the obligation to provide all South Africans, regardless of their race, the opportunity to compete as equals for places in the national side. I argue that the first three, drawn from talk of “rectifying the injustices of the past”, “achieving demographic proportionality between the sides and the country”, “representivity”, and “transformation” itself, are not compelling. The remaining two are of great moral import, but, I argue, they have little to do with the sorts of phrases just mentioned, and which are frequently used in the debate.

Introduction

One rationale for the rise of interest in applied ethical issues which began in analytic-style philosophy in the early 1970s was the recognition that philosophy has tools, techniques, and ways of thinking that can contribute to matters of public ethical concern. One such matter which has been of interest to me for the past twenty years is the issue of transformation in sport and, in particular, the use of numerical quotas in national sides as a means of bringing about this transformation. Always not far from the surface of public discussion of sport in South Africa, the issue emerges periodically when, for instance, a Springbok or Proteas side is announced with what seems to some to be inadequate non-white representation, or when a new policy is announced by one or other sporting federation or the government. Most recently, on 25 April 2016, the (then) Minister of Sport and Recreation, Fikile Mbalula, announced that four South African sporting codes – rugby, cricket, athletics and netball – will be prohibited from hosting any major international sporting events due to inadequate non-white representation in their national sides (Mbalula 2016).

While the issue of transformation in sport has not gone undiscussed by academics,² and, is, of course, much discussed in official documents, media briefings, and the public press, it has not been much discussed, so far as I can tell, by philosophers. While it is hardly the most pressing transformation issue in contemporary South Africa, it is not without interest nor without some important connections to other transformation issues. Given the generally poor state of public

1 Work on this article was made possible by study leave granted by the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to thank the Faculty for its support. I would also like to thank Dylan Futter for his helpful comments on an earlier draft, and two anonymous reviewers for their input. Finally, I would like to express my thanks to two of my MA students in the Applied Ethics for Professionals Programme at Wits, Craig Johnson and Grant Nash. Their respective interests in this topic is part of what led me to write about it and my interactions with them have helped shape my thinking.

2 I allude to a few such discussions below. But one particularly nice collection of essays dedicated to the topic is Desai (2010).

debates on such matters, I hope, here, to contribute to some clarification of the debate, its terms, what is important to it and what is not.

Preliminary matters

Mbalula's April 2016 announcement involves both a *pragmatic* or *strategic* component and a *moral* component to sport transformation. In his words:

The Transformation Charter, is the loadstar [sic] of the sport movement that draws our attention to the immediate and inevitable necessity for the Sport System to Transform for both Moral and Strategic imperatives:

Morally: Because it is “the right thing to do” considering the grave injustices of the past; and

Strategically; because of the reality that 84% of the country's under 18 year old population grouping is black African and only 16% is white, coloured and Indian. To ignore this strategic reality from sustainability perspective alone would be suicidal. Thus the reasons for sport organisations to transform rapidly have not only become compelling it had become fundamental” (Mbalula 2016).³

There are clearly overwhelmingly strong pragmatic reasons for South Africa to develop the potential non-white talent for participation in its predominantly white national sport sides.⁴ Less than 10% of its population is white. This leaves a massive pool of untapped potential talent in South Africa which could strengthen, for example, the Proteas or the Springboks.⁵ It is competitive madness not to try develop that potential talent pool and insofar as that development would lead to a greater portion of predominantly white sides becoming less white (and possibly substantially so), there is a clear pragmatic incentive to facilitate the resulting racial transformation.

But it is the moral aspect of transformation that I wish to explore here. Mbalula makes reference to the (indisputable) “grave injustices of the past” and, as we will see, there are other morally relevant strands in the transformation debate. But how exactly do they underwrite a moral *imperative* to transform sport? What makes transformation of sport “the right thing to do?” This is the aspect of the “transformation debate” on which I plan to focus here.⁶

Secondly, the phrase “transformation in sport” is extremely broad. To narrow the focus for purposes of discussion, what I want to examine are the moral issues concerning our national sides,

3 All errors are in the original including the *non-sequitur* concerning *rapid* transformation. On the two strands of thinking, cf. the Department of Sport and Recreation (DSRSA) *Transformation Charter for South African Sport*: “There are two primary drivers of empowerment: first, the altruistic driver – those people who believe ‘it’s the right thing to do’ and have brought it onto the national agenda; secondly, those who recognise that it is a strategic imperative understanding that it is a key critical success factor for survival and *long-term* competitiveness and prosperity” (DSRSA 2012, 8, emphasis added). Interestingly, “Part I: Moral and Strategic Reasons for Transformation” (DSRSA 2012, 6–13) gives virtually no clarity on what makes transformation “the right thing to do”, other than quick and unexplained references to “restorative justice and reconciliation”, “restoration of destroyed trust”, and the opportunity to “transcend the divisions, strip off the past and to make things right between those who have been locked into an adversarial relationship” (DSRSA 2012, 9).

4 One might question whether any of South Africa's national sport sides *are* predominantly white. There are a number of non-white players, for example, in its current national rugby and cricket sides. In the 31-person pool chosen for the Springbok tests against Ireland in June 2016, for example, 12 were non-white, and eight black African (Muller 2016d). However, the coaches and selectors have been required to select a certain number of non-white players into those sides for the past several years. The presumption in the public/political debate is that, were it not for such interventions, those sides would continue to be predominantly white. References to “predominantly white” sides or sports are to sports that have been, and (arguably) would continue to be, predominantly white but for those interventions.

5 Cf., for an example of this point, Muller (2016b). Cf. also Cornelius (2002, 8). The report of the Eminent Persons Group on Transformation in Sport (2016, 9) elaborates on this slightly as well. As the *Transformation Charter* puts the point, “[i]f this resource base is not explored, developed and optimally prepared for the competitive arena, SA sport's competitiveness will decline in the medium to long term” (DSRSA 2012, 24).

6 In limiting myself to the morality of sports transformation, I will also not be concerned with the *legal* issues. Some have suggested, for example, that the use of quotas (as distinct from “numerical targets”) is inconsistent with the South African *Employment Equity Act*, which expressly forbids them. See, e.g. Louw (2004b, 239 n.129, 243; 2005, 207, n.46). Louw also mentions SARU's (then SARFU's) “Transformation Incentive Scheme” (Louw 2004b, 244ff.). See also Louw (2005, 194). Other legal or quasi-legal discussions (of which there are many) include Cornelius (2002) and Desai and Ramjetan (2008). These sorts of questions, while interesting, are not my present concern.

and, in particular, the national rugby and cricket sides, the Springboks and Proteas. What moral imperative underwrites the need for these teams to be demographically transformed? The public discussion I want to unpack concerns, particularly, the Springboks and Proteas, and the insistence that a certain number of members of the selected squads be non-white, and (in cricket at least) a certain number “black African”. I want to focus on these issues.

Thirdly, as will be apparent from the foregoing, it is *racial* transformation of sport that will be my concern. Obviously, there are pressing issues concerning *gender* transformation as well, and other areas such as opening access to sport for the disabled and (possibly) other overlooked groups too. But I will put such issues aside in this paper.⁷

A fourth limitation on the scope of my discussion is this: the focus of much of the public debate is the insistence on a particular number of non-white *players* being selected for a side. But, of course, this is only one of a number of comprehensive transformation objectives and steps in the government’s and the sporting federations’ transformation vision. Transformation also involves greater participation of non-whites in coaching, training, and administrative positions of traditionally white sports, at all levels, and includes things like procurement and even of grounds keeping. Indeed, as the *Transformation Charter* (DSRSA 2012) makes clear, sport transformation is meant to be a holistic and radical overhaul of the entire sporting system. So it should be borne in mind that on-field transformation at national level is but one of many aspects of the sought-after racial transformation of South African sport. I focus on national-side player-selection, however, because it is front and centre of the ongoing debate I am hoping to unpack and it is worth investigating why that should be *included* among the variety of other aspects of sport transformation.

Finally, a lot of the public debate concerns not merely transformation, but the use of racial, numerical quotas to bring it about. But in this paper I will not focus on their moral propriety. The reason for this is that their acceptability (or lack thereof) rests, at least in part, on the moral imperative to transform our national sides themselves. More specifically, unless there is a moral imperative to racially transform our national sides, there can be no moral basis for such quotas.⁸ So the question of transformation itself remains logically prior to that of quotas; for reasons of space I will focus on that logically prior issue. That said, however, and insofar as “transformation” refers to a *process*, it inherently involves what Douglas Farland and Ian Jennings have called “affirmative selection policies” (2007, 819), some discussion of such policies cannot be avoided even if their evaluation is not the central issue of the discussion.⁹ To summarise, then, the question I want to examine in what follows is this:

What moral imperative is there, if any, to transform the racial makeup of the on-field Proteas and Springboks?

Before turning to that question, and to set up the discussion of the next two sections, we need to say a bit more about the word “transformation”. I mentioned just above that it sometimes refers to a process, the process of changing the racial make-up of our national sides. But changing them to what, exactly? Consider, for example, this remark by Mbalula: “[The federations banned from hosting international events] committed to [certain] targets, but some of them withheld information because they knew that in those areas they are not transformed” (quoted in Mjikeliso 2016). The

7 Accordingly, “transformation” in what follows will be shorthand for “racial transformation”. And talk of “transforming sport” or “transforming our national sides” will be shorthand for doing so racially.

8 The converse, of course, is false since it could be that transformation is morally required, but that quotas are an illegitimate means of achieving that goal. The most sustained academic critique of racially based selection interventions of which I am aware is that of Andre Louw (Louw 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2005). While much of Louw’s examination is a legal one, he also articulates and argues for some moral objections, including particularly ones that single out *professional* sport, both as a business and as a form of entertainment, as an inappropriate area for the use of quotas. This would obviously include, therefore, national sides. See for example Louw (2004a, 131; 2004b; 2005). Evaluating these, and other objections to a quota system, are beyond the scope of this paper.

9 “Affirmative selection” is a broader, more generic, notion than “quota”. Quotas are just one form that “affirmative selection” could take. It implies a specific number of places set aside for members of a particular group. But, short of that, one could affirmatively select members of that group who meet a minimum standard of competence, in this case, for a place in the national side, even if they are not the best players for their respective positions. This would not necessarily guarantee a certain number of members of that group are selected. More weakly still, one could use group membership as a tie-breaker between two players, one of whom is a member of the to-be-preferred group, if they both equally merit selection on standard selection grounds.

clear implication here is that there is a certain racially demographic way the different aspects of each sporting code should be. And since the demographic profile of national sides is one of those aspects, or “areas”, there is a certain racial demographic profile which they should possess. In the short term, it is the profile that the various codes have set for themselves as part of that process. But these targets are only a stage of the transformation process. What about once that process has been completed (assuming it can be)? What is to count as a national-side “being transformed”?

The answer to that question is not clear. While the word “demographic” appears countless times in the *Transformation Charter*, one of the few hints of an answer is “to reflect the demography of the country’s human capital base” (DSRSA 2012, 24). The “Demographic Profile Dimension” of the transformation process involves “[e]nsuring the establishment of a sustainable pipeline of sport participants and supporters by changing sport’s demographic profile on and off the field of play so that it reflects regional and local population demographics” (DSRSA 2012, 25). The “Equity Undertaking” to which sporting federations commit themselves in committing themselves to the *Charter* is equitable access “with a view to achieving representivity profiles aligned to local, regional and national population demographics on an [sic] off the field of play” (DSRSA 2012, 44).

I will suggest below that the answer to the question of when the end-goal of transformation has been achieved depends on what the supposed moral rationale for transformation *is*. But the main point I want to make here is that “transformation” is not just a process, but is seen by many to also be an *outcome*, or *end-result*. As such, that process is a teleological one, one which there is supposedly a moral imperative to achieve.

I want now to turn to the question of what that moral imperative might be.¹⁰ In the next section I raise two possibilities: (1) the need to compensate non-white South Africans for the injustices in sport’s racist history; and (2) the imperative to return the make-up of our national sides to what they would have been in the absence of that history. In the following section, I consider (3) the supposed requirement that national sides be representative of the country. And finally, in the section after that, I consider (4) the need to eliminate ongoing racial bias in selection, and (5) the obligation to provide all South Africans, regardless of their race, the opportunity to compete as equals for places in the national side.

The injustices of the past

Mbalula’s statement which we cited earlier makes reference to the “grave injustices of the past”. I mention it not to focus on Mbalula’s remarks themselves, but because references to these injustices are utterly representative of the “transformationist” position (if I may coin a term for those who believe there is a moral imperative to transform predominantly white sides like the Springboks and Proteas). Clearly these injustices are seen by many as a central moral linchpin of the transformation undertaking. This history has been well and widely documented; while not technically prohibited by law, interracial sport was permitted only in “private facilities providing no amenities were shared, no spectators attended, and players did not socialise after the game” (Booth 1992, 183). While there were non-white clubs and leagues, the facilities for participation were grossly substandard. What participation occurred by non-whites was driven by woefully underfunded non-white sporting organisations. The details need not concern us; it is an understatement to say that this treatment of non-whites in the sporting sphere was clearly and gravely unjust.¹¹

10 One puzzling question I will not address is why anyone would *want* to transform cricket and rugby, either as a process or as an end goal? There is much talk these days of “de-colonising” various aspects of South Africa, including, for example, the curriculum taught in South African universities. Whatever that means precisely, there is no doubt that cricket and rugby (not to mention soccer which is, of course, hugely popular among non-white, especially black, South Africans) are colonial sports. Their very presence in the country stems from the colonisation of the region by Europeans. Why, then, is there such pressure to have black Africans participating in colonial sports and representing South Africa in such sports at international level? Is not this just a manifestation of an ongoing “colonial mind set” paying inappropriate homage to European and colonial activities? While many call for “African solutions to African problems”, it is puzzling that no analogous call for “African sports for African leisure time” can be heard.

11 And even more so if we also consider the appalling socio-economic injustices inflicted upon non-whites, which, as we will see, is not at all irrelevant to their access to national level participation. I say more about this below. On the racialised history, there are many books and articles. One particularly good one is Booth (1998). Other oft-cited works include Archer and Bouillon (1982), Grundlingh et al. (1995), Black and Nauright (1997), and Nauright (1998).

While it is sometimes alleged that there is ongoing racial bias in team selection (to which I turn later in the paper), and while this is no doubt, and rightly, part of the transformationists' concern, it neither exhausts it, nor is it the salient point of discussion. It is tacitly conceded that, currently, even most of the best non-white players are not as good as their best white counterparts, and that if national cricket and rugby sides were picked purely on merit, they would be largely white (at least currently, until lower-level development has improved for non-white athletes).¹² But because of the racial injustice of the past, they must be in the sides as part of the transformation process.

What is puzzling to me is why we should think this. How do “the grave injustices of the past” give rise to a moral imperative that our teams *now* be less white than they would be if picked purely on merit?¹³ We are seldom, if ever, told. But reference is frequently made to the “rectification” or “redressing” of those “grave injustices”, and we might be able to piece together a moral argument for transformed national sides by examining that notion.

In one sense, of course, those injustices *cannot* be rectified, at least not reasonably. Players who were unfairly excluded pre-1994 have died or are no longer capable, due to their age, of playing (competitively) for the national sides.¹⁴ So *their* exclusion simply *cannot* be rectified.

What has to be meant, then, is that we can rectify the exclusion of non-whites in the past by instituting an affirmative selection policy which now *favours* non-whites. That is, we can favour members of certain racial *groups* at the expense of members of the *white* racial group. The past injustices were in part injustices to particular persons. The famous Basil D'Oliveira, for example, was excluded from playing first-class or international cricket for South Africa despite his brilliance and his selectability on merit. And that was an injustice to him. But he was not excluded from the national cricket side because of anything unique or particular to *him*, say, an unwillingness to pay a bribe to the selectors. He was excluded because of being a member of a particular *group* – viz. “coloureds”. So the injustices of the past were primarily, for purposes of the transformation debate, injustices to *groups* and transformation by *group membership* is needed to rectify those injustices. Perhaps, then, transformation is required as a matter of *compensation*, not to particular players, but to the groups of which they were members – black people, and other non-whites. We can call this the “compensation-transformation” view.

This sort of justification bears a striking resemblance to some of the American literature on affirmative action, particularly from the early days of the American philosophical debate.¹⁵ In

12 Then-president Thabo Mbeki is often quoted as having said, “[f]or two to three years, let's not mind losing international competitions because we are bringing our people into those teams. Let's build a 100 per cent South African team rather than a 30 per cent one” (cited by Louw 2004b, 235, n.110; 2005, 200). Presumably the losing we can anticipate (at least temporarily) is a function of weaker players constituting the sides. In this section, I will assume that this is the case for the sake of argument. If it is not, lack of selection is clearly unjust, but it is a quite distinct injustice, one which has little bearing on the notion of transformation, and one I will discuss later.

13 Here, and elsewhere, I help myself to the notion of “merit” uncritically. I do so, in part, because the position of virtually all opponents of affirmative selection is just that: national teams should be selected solely by merit, i.e. with the best players for their positions being selected for those positions irrespective of their race. But, of course, “merit” is more complicated than that. There is no disputing cricketer Kevin Pietersen's abilities as a cricketer and, in one sense of “merit”, he should have been retained at the time he was dropped from the England national side. But his personality (apparently) was disruptive to the team's unity and morale and thus, in this alternative sense of “merit”, he could not be in the team on “merit”. Or, perhaps better, on “merit-all-things-considered”. There are also considerations about how a particular player, independent of her or his ability, combines with other players, particularly in rugby, or how a particular player's strengths and weaknesses suit the conditions under which a match is to be played. New Zealand left their two “best” bowlers, fast-bowlers Trent Boult and Tim Southee, out of their match XI at the beginning of the 2015 World Cup because the conditions were far more conducive to spin. Over and above that, judgements of “merit” are inherently subjective. That is not to say that there are no correct and incorrect calls on the relative “merit” of two different players, nor that sometimes the correct call is fairly obvious; it is only to allow that there are frequently “grey areas” where two equally reputable selectors could reasonably disagree about who “merits” a place in a side. “Merit”, then, is not straightforward. For a helpful overview of these sorts of complications, see Arneson (2015, 7–12). For the most part I ignore these complications in what follows since they do not materially affect my argument.

14 The injustices, of course, went far and more systemically beyond mere inclusion or exclusion from selection. The entire system of *apartheid*-era sport was geared to the development of whites, and the non-development and denial of opportunity for development of non-whites. By “exclusion”, I mean not merely literal exclusion despite warranting a place on merit, but embeddedness in this broader and deeper racist sporting system which made selection based on merit difficult if not impossible for non-whites, even if they were otherwise eligible for selection.

15 A classic early defence of affirmative action on group-compensation grounds is Thomson (1973). Another potentially promising defence along the same lines is in Taylor (1973). Steven Cahn's excellent anthology of articles on affirmative action through 1995 includes an entire section devoted to this sort of defence of affirmative action (Cahn, 1995, 43–104).

principle, then, it could provide an account of the moral imperative to transform our national sport sides. But for a variety of reasons, over and above space, I will not address this rationale any further here. One reason is that it does not seem to be central to any of the implicit rationales offered by transformationists in the South African sport-transformation debate. No mention of this appears, for example, in the *Transformation Charter*, nor is group *compensation* consonant with the tenor of that document. A second reason is that this rationale has fallen out of favour in the American affirmative action debate. While not necessarily decisive, philosophers have raised myriad difficulties for this line of defence of affirmative action, with obvious implications for its potential to support the transformationists' position.¹⁶ Thirdly, many defences of a group-compensation argument for affirmative action argue for its *permissibility*, often as a response to arguments about its *impermissibility*. Our issue is whether there is a moral *imperative* to transform our national sides – i.e., whether it is *obligatory* to do so – and this requires a heavier burden of argument. Finally, most discussants who offer such a defence have in mind affirmative action as applied in a widespread manner concerning hiring and educational opportunities. The idea is that we can defend affirmative action as compensating *blacks-as-a-group* by affording as many blacks as possible places in universities or in employment, even though many other blacks will not actually benefit from this. Whatever plausibility might be worked out for this kind of view – and I myself do not find it very plausible – it hardly seems to apply to transformation of rugby or cricket. Do we really want to say that South African non-whites-as-a-group are *compensated* by the inclusion of more non-white players in the Springboks or Proteas? This hardly seems plausible.¹⁷ Because I think there is another way of unpacking the notion of rectifying past injustices which is more in line with what transformationists seem to think, and have said, about the issue, I will not consider this kind of argument further.

The other way of thinking of transformation as required by the need to rectify past injustices, is this: there is a demographic way the national side would have been had it not been for the injustices of the past. But because of the injustices of the past, the national sides have not been that way, and are not that way. And because the injustices of the past have profound lingering effects (on which more below), steps must be taken to restore our national sides to the demographic way they would have been if it had not been for those injustices. Thus, in the name of the rectification of past injustices, the national cricket and rugby sides must be transformed to have that sort of demographic make-up. And we can say that they *are* transformed once that demographic make-up is achieved. Let us refer to this as the “counterfactual-transformation” view.

So what would our national cricket and rugby sides have looked like, demographically, if blacks and other non-whites had not been systematically excluded from participation in them (where by “excluded” I mean the more comprehensive systemic sense explicated in a previous footnote)? And what would they, therefore, look like now? The answer, of course, is that we do not have the faintest idea. Part of the problem is that we need to be more specific about what those injustices *were* exactly. We could limit ourselves to injustices like the treatment of Basil D’Oliviera. Despite the socio-economic disadvantages he must have suffered as a coloured person, he was good enough to make the national cricket team on merit. But, as noted above, he was excluded because he was coloured. But, of course, the injustices both during and prior to *apartheid* were much deeper than that. Sport participation was shaped by more widespread and profound socio-economic injustice, which in turn shaped people’s ability or desire to take up sports like cricket and rugby, which in turn shaped whether, like D’Oliviera, they could have been good enough to have been picked on merit. If we were to limit ourselves to the first sort of injustice, we might be able to gain at least a rough idea of what our national sides would have looked like. Sport historians could comb the history of cricket and rugby in South Africa, identify other non-white rugby and cricket players who were selectable on merit (but were not eligible for selection because of their race), see what percentage of the national sides would then have been non-white, and use that as our answer to the question of what demographic, distorted by those injustices, we need to achieve to rectify those injustices.

¹⁶ Several examples appear in Cahn (1995).

¹⁷ Nor does it seem plausible to think that the correct answer to the question, “when has transformation been achieved?” is “when non-whites have been adequately compensated”. This is the answer this account of rectifying the injustices of the past would commit us to.

But that would be an absurdly narrow account of the injustices requiring rectification. When we come to terms with the depth and complexities of the injustices that kept non-whites out of national cricket and rugby sides – as distinct from simply not being selected because of one’s race despite being good enough – we have to say that we simply have no idea what, demographically speaking, our national cricket and rugby sides would have looked like. Thus we simply have no idea of what demographic make-up our national sides *ought* to have, because we have no idea what they *would have had* were it not for the relevant injustices.¹⁸ We thus have no idea how to understand the completeness of the transformation process, the achievement of transformation as an end-result.

It is pretty safe to say they would have been less white than, until recently with the enforcement of affirmative selection, our rugby and cricket teams are or have been since 1994. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that they would have been *predominantly* non-white (in some permutation of “non-white”, which there is no way of estimating, considering that that category of person includes black Africans, coloured people and Indians). But even that is speculative, for reasons I will bring up a little later on. So if the moral imperative to rectify the injustices of the past is to have a national-side demographic make-up that they would have had but for those injustices, the best we can do is guess that they ought not to be all white, maybe predominantly non-white, and possibly almost entirely non-white. But it is really no more than a guess and hardly seems like the sort of firm moral foundation that a transformation policy and affirmative selection ought to have, at least one for which there is a supposed moral imperative.¹⁹

Representivity

There is a second way we could understand the idea of the way our national teams should be demographically, and thus how we are to know when we have successfully transformed them. Here the idea is not that our national teams should be demographically constituted in the way they would have been had it not been for the intervention of gross injustice (other than colonialism itself). Rather, it is that our national cricket and rugby (and other sports) should be *representative* of the country. And because South Africa is multi-racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural, an all-white (or predominantly white) national side is not capable of adequately *representing* South Africa on the international stage. This defect needs to be remedied, and thus the need to demographically transform our all-or-predominantly-white sides. Let us call this the “representivity-transformation” view.

There are a couple of things to be said about this. The first is this: on this account, unlike the previous one, the injustices of the past are largely irrelevant, at least in principle, and thus talk of *rectifying* the injustices of the past is a red-herring. Rather, this view relies on an implicit *theory of representivity*.²⁰ On this view, even if there had been no injustice, representivity of a country requires

18 This gives rise to a certain irony. Even the broader array of socio-economic injustices that are surely relevant to the “exclusion” of non-whites from national sides are themselves embedded in the overarching injustice of colonialism itself. If *that is* among the injustices which we want to rectify, and given that rugby and cricket are colonial sports, the obvious way to rectify the injustice of colonialism would be to eliminate those sports in South Africa, at least as sports in which South Africa is represented in international competition. One could argue that there is something arbitrary about attempting to rectify the injustices during and prior to *apartheid*, but not the injustice of colonialism itself, though I will not pursue that line of argument here.

19 There are deeper problems, as well, with a counterfactual account of rectifying the injustices of the past. One interesting complication is this: past injustices may well have been *responsible*, at least in part, for the current demographic make-up of South Africa. It is well known that as socio-economic status increases, people tend to have fewer children. Since the injustices of the past are responsible for the very low socio-economic status of non-white, and especially black, South Africans, it is not implausible to think that, had such systemic injustice not occurred, the demographic make-up of contemporary South Africa would be much less heavily weighted towards a black citizenry than it currently is. (And the same, *mutatis mutandis*, for coloured people and Indians.) This is speculative, of course, and I do not want to put much argumentative weight on it. But it is but one complicating factor any appeal to a counterfactual understanding of the need to rectify past injustice must contend with. For more detail, see Lippert-Rasmussen (2008).

20 A theory of representivity could be either merely descriptive, or normatively charged. On the former interpretation, a theory of representivity would give an account of what it is for (in this case) a national side to be representative of the country it represents, but leave it open as to whether representivity is normatively desirable or not, and if so, why. Clearly, the accusation that predominantly white teams are not representative of South Africa is meant to be a moral *criticism*. That is, as “representivity” is used in the debate, it is in a normative sense with the presumption that representivity is morally important. In what follows I use “representivity” and “representative” in this normative sense.

demographic representivity.²¹ And thus, if skewed numbers of blacks, coloureds, Indians and whites (relative to their demographic representation in the country as a whole) constituted a national side, for reasons having nothing to do with *injustice*, that side would fail to be representative of South Africa on this view. It is true, of course, that past injustice has, in fact, had a *causal* role to play in our current failure of representivity, thus understood. But as I have said, on the representivity-transformation view that fact is incidental. If for no injustice-related reasons demographic representation in our national sides drifted away from the demographic make-up of the country as a whole, that side would fail to be representative.

The second thing to be said is that if we spell it out a bit more fully, it is not terribly plausible. “Demographic representivity” can be understood in various ways. Numerous ministers of sport, other government politicians, and, as we have seen, the *Transformation Charter* itself, have chosen to understand it in a fashion which is both (a) particularly *demanding* and (b) particularly *selective*.

With regard to demandingness, various officials have stated that our national sides should match the demographic profile of the country *as a whole*, or, less strictly, closely approximate it. But why should that be the benchmark of representivity? Why not, for example, demand that the national sides match the *rugby-active* profile of the country as a whole? Or the *cricket-active* profile of the country as a whole? So, for example, if the percentage of Indian South Africans active in school and club cricket is much greater *per capita* than that of black South Africans (or coloured or white South Africans), that fact could be the basis for determining demographic representivity. In other words, the percentage of Indians required to be in the national side in order to achieve demographic representivity would be greater than their percentage of the total national population. And the percentage of blacks (or coloureds or whites) proportionally less.

An obvious response to this suggestion, of course, is that past injustice is the *reason* that non-whites (or certain ones) are less rugby or cricket-active and thus to take that as a benchmark of representivity is to simply further entrench the results of past injustice. But this response, while certainly having something to be said for it, is not fully satisfactory. In the first place, rugby among non-white (black and coloured in this case) South Africans seems to be particularly popular in the Eastern and Western Cape regions. One can speculate (and perhaps empirical studies have been done) on the reasons for this. But it is *not* that blacks and coloureds in the Eastern and Western Cape were treated less unjustly than blacks and coloureds in the rest of the country when it comes to the various obstacles and outright discrimination which has kept black and coloured people out of rugby at national level. Despite these obstacles and unjust discrimination, palpable throughout South Africa, rugby retains a non-white appeal in those regions to a greater extent than in other regions of the country. So while important, of course, the response will not do *by itself*.

More importantly, though, as indicated above, we are dealing with an implicit theory of representivity. So the question is a theoretical one: why should demographic representivity for a national sport side be based on the demographics of the country as a whole, rather than the demographics of the population in which the sport is popular, is widely participated in, or (if it can be even approximately established) would be if injustice were eliminated? It could be that, as a practical matter, and given the depth and pervasiveness of the past injustice in South African sport (and society), we cannot determine which sub-groups of South Africa would be those in which cricket and rugby are, or would be, popular, and thus cannot establish the benchmark for national representivity. But even if this is true, it is to make a very different point than that about what representivity *amounts to* or *consists in*. The account, then, of representivity as matching national demographics, as opposed to, say, matching national sport-interest demographics, is particularly demanding and requires some sort of defence. To my knowledge, no such argument has been forthcoming from the transformationist camp.

In addition to being demanding, the underlying theory of representivity which we are considering is very *selective*. In this regard, various officials have stated that our national sides should match the

21 Recall the provision in the *Transformation Charter* quoted earlier which commits sporting federations to providing access their respective sports “with a view to achieving representivity profiles aligned to local, regional and national population demographics on an [sic] off the field of play” (DSRSA 2012, 44). Since we are here dealing with national sides, this would appear to require them matching “national population demographics”.

racial demographic profile of the country as a whole, or, less strictly, closely approximate it. They have not insisted, for example, that South Africa's *provinces* be represented proportionally to their respective populations.²² Nor have they insisted that South Africa's *religions* or *official languages* be proportionately represented in our national sides. Nor have they insisted that our national teams match the *class* profile of the country, with the majority of Springboks and Proteas coming from the impoverished and unemployed.²³ It is purely *racial* demographics that are deemed to be essential to the notion of national representation. Why should race be privileged in this way when we aspire to have our national sides be representative of the country?²⁴

The potential counter-argument here is pretty obvious. The counter-argument is that the injustices of the past are *racial* injustices. They are not injustices of repression by one or more provinces over others, one or more religions over others, or (other than Afrikaans and English) of certain official-language groups over others. (I will say something more about class in a moment.) Because the injustices of the past are racial, representivity must focus on race, not on other forms of demographic difference that characterise a very diverse South Africa.

This reply has an obvious intuitive appeal and we can grant for the sake of argument the claims that there was no (relevant) religious, linguistic, or provincial repression resulting in skewed representivity along those dimensions. But it is also deeply confused. Recall that in the context of a theory of representivity, injustices of the past are relevant purely as an explanation of why our current teams are unrepresentative on a demographic account of representivity. The question here, however, is: what *constitutes* a representative team for a country? In this context, there is no reason to privilege race over things like province, religion, language or class. At least not without argument. But the fact that our teams are skewed racially because of past injustice is simply irrelevant, even if we accept for the sake of argument that there was no injustice along the other dimensions mentioned above.

What the counter-argument *is* relevant to is the *counterfactual*-transformation account we discussed above. If our question is what would our teams have looked like without past injustice, the fact that there was racial injustice but not (let us assume) geographical, linguistic, or religious injustice is relevant. We could then say that our teams would look like they do now in terms of provincial, religious, linguistic, or class representation. But because of past injustice, they do not look now how they would have looked were it not for *racial* injustice. Thus the foregrounding of race. But if what I said earlier is correct, there is simply no basis for saying this. We have no idea how to assess such a deeply “counter” counterfactual. But what we are interested in *here* is an account of representivity, and the above response simply conflates the counterfactual and representivity-transformation views. We thus need a principled reason to build in racial representivity to our representivity account, to the exclusion of other sorts of possible dimensions like geography, language, religion and class. None, to my knowledge, has been forthcoming and I am not optimistic that any plausible account is available.²⁵

22 Interestingly, according to Steve Cornelius (2002, 6), some coaches in rugby are sometimes accused of “provincialism”. Obviously, we do not know how justified such accusations are, but if they are justified, they presumably apply to cricket as well. If it is true, then it is clearly an injustice and it clearly undermines demographic representivity. Journalist Hugh Godwin (2015) claims that in some provinces “only one school in 35 plays rugby”.

23 For obvious reasons, I leave out the lack of insistence that *genders* be representatively selected in our national rugby and cricket teams.

24 The equity commitment alluded to a couple of times above does commit federations to providing “[e]quitable access to sporting activities in all areas and all levels irrespective of race, class, gender, religion, physical ability or any other barrier”, but these do not figure in the “population demographic” which is ultimately to be matched. I also put to one side the complaint frequently raised by irate writers of letters to the editor and some sportswriters themselves to the effect that even with regard to race, no attempt is made to apply this idea to predominantly black sports like soccer, or to go “all the way” by, for example, ensuring the proportionate number of Indians, coloured people, and even the Khoi-San people are in each national side. While they have a point, such people are really only attacking the consistency of application of the principle of demographic representivity. Perhaps we could appeal to the idea of what we would have to do to apply it consistently in this regard, and cite that as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the idea. But since there are deeper problems with the goal of demographic representivity, I do not pursue this possibility here.

25 Consider this thought as well. Suppose that the Springboks were demographically “representative” in terms of race, but that all the non-white players came from either the Eastern or Western Cape. Would we not be entitled to ask how such a team could possibly be “representative” of South Africa? The matter of class has also been explicitly raised by some critics of the current understanding of transformation as purely *racial* transformation (though not in the context of a theory of representivity). See, for example, Desai and

If what I have said above is correct, then, the account of representivity put forward as a reason for a supposed moral imperative to *racially* transform our national sides in line with *national* demographics is both arbitrarily demanding and arbitrarily selective.²⁶ The temptation to appeal to past injustices is a strong one, but as I hope I have shown, it is irrelevant here. It is indisputable that there *were* past injustices (to put it mildly). And it is clear that many black and other non-white South Africans *wanted* to play cricket and rugby, *continue* to want to do so and *would be more successful* at those sports were it not for racial injustice.²⁷ Consequently, it is indisputable that, were it not for those injustices, our national sides would be more non-white *on merit* than they currently are. And it is indisputable that this is of serious moral concern. But it is irrelevant to a theory of representivity and, as I will suggest below, talk of “rectifying the injustices of the past” is misleading in any case. What I hope to have shown above, then, is that the quest for demographic representivity, whether for counterfactual or representivity-based reasons, is implausible, or *at best*, inadequately supported.

Injustices of the present

The foregoing possibilities, however, do not exhaust the potential bases for a moral imperative to create transformed national cricket and rugby teams. It is sometimes suggested that the lack of demographic representivity is not so much the absence of something of value, but rather *evidence* of something of great *disvalue* – i.e. ongoing racial injustice, bias or discrimination. This accounts, I think, for some of the anger to which the presence of predominantly white national sides gives rise, particularly (but not entirely) among non-white South Africans. Perhaps, then, the lack of demographic representivity is important, not because it is important in itself, as a goal to be achieved, or as an indicator of successful transformation, but because it is evidence of ongoing racial bias in selection. And perhaps talk of rectifying the injustices of the past is really elliptical for rectifying *current* injustice, in particular the disparities in facilities, coaching and other essentials between whites and non-whites. Let me address these briefly in turn.

When discussing the injustices of the past, we accepted for the sake of argument the tacit transformationist concession that, currently at least, transformed national sides will be weaker than those we would have if chosen purely on merit. But not all transformationists concede this. It is sometimes claimed that racial discrimination in cricket and rugby, at national and lower levels, continues. It is frequently alleged that here have been, and are, non-white rugby and cricket players who should be (or should have been, post 1994) in the national sides on merit, but are/were not selected because of their non-whiteness. Former Springbok coach, Heyneke Meyer, for example, came in for considerable criticism with his World Cup selections in August 2015 after Cosatu claimed it had been approached by seven Springboks (including two whites) complaining about racial bias.²⁸ He was excoriated by numerous writers of letters to the editor, including whites and

Ramjettan (2008), and Desai and Vahed (2010). Among the complaints is that, with respect to cricket, promising black cricketers, even if poor, are parachuted with bursaries or other financial support into elite schools and high-performance programmes for their development. This at the expense of a more thorough overhaul of township and informal settlement facilities which would be more focused on the lower classes *as such*. Similar complaints could, under current practices, be levelled within rugby as well. Can we say that a side consisting either of the well-to-do, or those inserted into schools for the well-to-do, is *representative* of a country with South Africa’s class demographics?

26 I believe there are further doubts about the *moral attractiveness* of this view of representivity as well, but articulating these thoroughly and persuasively would require more space than I have at my disposal. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer who expressed reservations about my attempt to do so in a previous draft of this paper. For a fine and nuanced discussion of representivity in the context of international cricket, and one which is more morally attractive than the one under discussion here, see Farland and Jennings (2007). Among the many valuable features of their essay, they develop what they call a “sporting sense of representivity”, one according to which “genuinely representative national sports teams are the strongest possible combination of players from the pool of those who are qualified to represent that particular nation, regardless of their ethnicity” (Farland and Jennings 2007, 832). This sense of representivity, they argue, is critical to what infuses international sport with its *value* and *integrity* as a kind of undertaking. But, as I say, I will not defend this view here.

27 As an example – one among many – of black interest in cricket, see Muller (2016c). Muller is reporting on an all-black children’s cricket club, The Oaks Cricket Club, in the tiny village of Ga-Sekororo in Limpopo. They play on concrete, have no clubhouse or lights, and use very basic equipment, but the enthusiasm is reportedly very high and they have been supported by people in the community – including local whites – with fund-raising efforts. Ironically, though, this club did not exist during or prior to *apartheid*. According to Muller, the local kids became interested in cricket when they watched black West Indian batsman, Brian Lara – one of the greatest batsmen of all time – demolish the mostly white South African team in the 1996 World Cup.

28 See, for example, Xabanisa (2015), which, while critical of Meyer, is a measured and thoughtful assessment, unlike some of the more shrill critics like Tshdiso Mokhoanate, then “frontman” for the Agency for a New Agenda (ANA) which took legal steps to try to prevent

white business writer, Peter Bruce, for, among other things, selecting Morné Steyn ahead of Elton Jantjies (who is coloured) at fly-half (Bruce 2015).

One need not think Meyer (again, as an example) is overtly racist. Institutional inertia, “old boy networks”, and “old habits dying hard” may well play a role in the ongoing “whiteness” of our national cricket and rugby sides.²⁹ Perhaps it is felt that due to the stark cultural differences between different racial groups, non-white players do not quite “fit in”, thus undermining (due to no fault of their own), the cultural cohesiveness of a team. Whatever the case may be, such ongoing bias, if such bias (or outright racism) persists, is clearly a moral injustice and clearly gives rise to a moral imperative. No thinking participant in the transformation debate supports ongoing racial discrimination. So let us call this the “elimination of ongoing bias” imperative.

I am not in a position to assess the truth of the claims of ongoing racial bias, though I strongly suspect there is more than an element of truth to it. But let us suppose it is true, at least for the sake of argument. On this supposition, a couple of observations might be helpful.

In the first place, the issue in question is not one of *transformation*, at least as “transformation” is typically used in the debate and insofar as transformation is thought to be at odds with merit-only-based selection. Consider again Mbalula’s pronouncement that the four offending sports codes are “not transformed”. We saw that what he meant was that they had not met the numerical targets they had set for themselves, and we saw in conjunction with the *Transformation Charter*, that for national sides to have completed the transformation process, and to “be transformed”, meant to demographically match the national racial demographics. But if eliminating ongoing bias is the moral imperative in question, to “be transformed” *is* for a side to be chosen purely on merit precisely *because* it is chosen without racial bias (overt or systemic). Indeed, if the process of transformation is the process of eliminating such bias, those who are most shrill about merit-based selection ought to be *urging* transformation. *Ex hypothesi*, the best players are not (always) being selected.³⁰

Secondly, to concede that there is ongoing racial bias which is morally in need of elimination, which we have done at least for the sake of argument, is *not* to concede that the evidence for that ongoing bias is the failure of national sides to match national demographics. If that was conceded, there would be a reason to preserve national demographics as an important benchmark. It would not be because our teams would have matched those demographics had there not been past injustice, nor because representivity requires it. It would be because failure to match them was evidence of ongoing bias.

But there is no good reason to accept this “evidence” claim of which I am aware.³¹ Perhaps the fact that our cricket and rugby sides have been as white as they are in the absence of (and even in the presence of) transformationist intervention is *some* evidence of ongoing racial bias. But to insist that failure to match national demographics shows that racial bias is ongoing is, in effect, to accept the counterfactual-transformation claim discussed, and discredited, earlier on. Those who maintain there is this evidentiary link surely owe us an argument for that highly dubious claim. In the absence

the Meyer Springboks from competing in the World Cup. See, for example, Germaner (2015) and, for later developments, Venter (2015) and, on the ANA’s cases being “thrown out of court”, Godwin (2015). Regarding the unhappiness of some black cricketers concerning their role, or lack thereof, in the Proteas around the same time, see, for example, Cramer (2015), Moonda (2015), Roberts (2015) and de Villiers (2015). Williams (2004) also discusses ongoing racism in cricket in the early days post 1994.

29 Cornelius (2002, 5f.) puts it this way: selectors and coaches “tend to favour people with whom they are familiar or with whom they can associate when it comes to selection or appointment. This effectively excludes historically disadvantaged communities from participation at various levels in sport”, a problem which, he rightly points out, “is particularly acute in South Africa”. Cf. in the American context Fullinwider (1997, 166). Even this may not get to the bottom of things. Many feminists, for instance, have argued that an oppressive social structure *itself* blinds its beneficiaries to the “merit” of the oppressed. Laura Purdy, for example, based on some empirical studies on bias, suggests that “women are systematically undervalued with respect to some of the most widely-used indicators of quality” (Purdy 1984, 28ff.). This is controversial, of course, but if it is correct, it is surely applicable to race and might have the additional implication that some non-white players should be selected *on merit* even if they appear to be less qualified than white competitors for their positions. A possible example of this is mentioned (for different purposes) by Desai and Vahed who report that then-coach of the Proteas, Bob Woolmer believed that Makhaya Ntini lacked the requisite skill to be a top-class cricketer. See Desai and Vahed (2010, 190ff.) where they also list some of Ntini’s astonishing achievements with the Proteas.

30 And, we might add, the selected teams fail to be representative of the country in Farland and Jennings’s “sporting sense of representivity” alluded to earlier.

31 It *is* evidence, I believe, of the lack of equal opportunity available to non-white rugby players and cricketers, an issue I turn to below.

of such an argument (and a persuasive one), and in conjunction with what I said in the discussions of injustices of the past and representivity, talk of national demographics is more or less a complete red-herring in the transformation debate and there is no *moral* reason for it to play a role in South Africa's transformation policy.³²

Let me now turn to the suggestion that talk of rectification of past injustices is misleading and that what is really important to the transformation debate are *present* injustices.³³ These injustices are, of course, profound. South African schools, for example, are, by and large, the basic developmental starting point for sport. But the disparity between predominantly black (and other non-white) schools and those predominantly attended by white children is stark, not only in their educational value, but in their value as breeding grounds for future international athletes.³⁴ Currently, and as part of the transformation process initiated since 1994, promising non-white athletes are sometimes assisted to attend, at higher levels, predominantly white schools with well-developed sporting programmes, including rugby and cricket. But as documents like the *Transformation Charter* make clear, transformation has to be centrally concerned, not simply with the demographic make-up of national sides, but with the entire sporting system, and, indeed, the horrendous socio-economic inequality between whites and various non-white groups in South Africa.

Clearly the latter profoundly affects the former, and both are, of course, vestiges of the injustice of the past. But it is important to get clear that the moral obligation to transform our sports is not rectifying the injustices *of the past*, but rather, their *ongoing and present effects*. Another way of putting this point is this: the injustices of the present are profound obstacles to the ability of non-white cricketers and rugby players to *compete as equals* for places in provincial sides and the national side (and, in the case of rugby, for places in Super Rugby sides).³⁵ The real moral issue concerning transformation in sport is the gross lack of *equal opportunity*. Let us refer to this as the "equal-opportunity" imperative.

Equality of opportunity is far from universally accepted by philosophers as the appropriate goal of social rectification policies, or even as something of value at all.³⁶ Indeed, there is considerable debate on just what the idea of "equal opportunity" *is*. Since this is a complex issue requiring much fuller treatment than I can give it here, I will just assume without further argument that providing non-white cricketers and rugby players with equal opportunity *is* morally significant, and *is* a moral imperative, given South Africa's current state of affairs. But this hardly seems controversial (as distinct from the idea that equality of opportunity is sufficient) and is conceded by most people in the sport transformation debate. That is, most people who oppose quotas or other affirmative selection policies, who believe our national (and other) sides should be selected purely on merit, will nevertheless concede, or even *insist*, that non-white players deserve an equal opportunity to develop their talents so as to be selectable on merit, where by "equal opportunity" we mean at least the removal of obstacles beyond players' control such as lack of facilities and equipment, lack of,

32 The *Transformation Charter* concedes "that transformation is not only about demographic representation" (DSRSA 2012, 12). If what I have said above is right, it is not about demographic representation *at all*.

33 This is, of course, not an unfamiliar point in the affirmative action literature. For example, writing in 1997, Alison Jaggar notes a shift in affirmative action rationales from backward-looking ones such as compensation and rectification, to more forward-looking ones (She maintains that neither sort of rationale can suffice exclusively. See Jaggar 1997, 25, 34). Another classic statement of the move I am here making in the text can be found in the work of George Sher. He writes: "the key to an adequate justification of reverse discrimination [is] to see that practice, not as the redressing of *past* privations, but rather as a way of neutralizing the *present* competitive disadvantage *caused* by those past privations and thus as a way of restoring equal access to those goods which society distributes competitively" (Sher 1975, 163). The goods in question here, of course, are places in the national rugby and cricket sides.

34 Antoinette Muller thinks the heavy reliance of Proteas cricketer development on a relatively small number of elite schools is the main lesson to be learned from the disastrous showing of South Africa's U-19 World Cup squad in the most recent U-19 World Cup. See Muller (2016a).

35 Cf. Jaggar in the context of access to education in America: "I contend that affirmative action in admission to higher education should be regarded as one among a number of strategies for...reducing *continuing inequality of opportunity* in the educational system" (Jaggar 1997, 38, emphasis added). Many others in the affirmative action literature have made a comparable point.

36 For an excellent introductory discussion and overview of the idea of equality of opportunity, see Arneson (2015). It is worth noting that the context in which equality of opportunity is found wanting by some critics is as an account of *distributive justice*. But this is not the context within which we are appealing to it.

or inadequate, coaching, and the myriad of other obstacles faced by the majority of non-whites in South Africa.³⁷

But, of course, we will need to mean much more than that. As I have mentioned a couple of times, these inequalities of opportunity are embedded in, and a product of, a much deeper racially unequal and racially unjust society.³⁸ Thus the answer to the question of what it is for our national sides to be transformed, according to the equal-opportunity imperative, is when South African society *itself* becomes racially transformed, and when whatever socio-economic injustice remains is not aligned with race.³⁹ Here, again, demographic representivity in our national sides is irrelevant, and insofar as we think of the transformation of sport as a process, it is really a (quite tiny) part of the broader process of rendering South Africa racially just. This of course raises the question of the importance of having non-white participants in our national side so far as this particular moral imperative is concerned. And it raises a question about what, if any, role affirmative selection has to play in meeting this imperative. But these are questions best left for another day.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with a word or two about what I have *not* done, or attempted to do. First, I have not claimed that the two moral imperatives I have identified exhaust all the possibilities. One widely discussed idea that merits further investigation is the contribution that racially integrated national sides can make to South African “nation-building”.⁴⁰ This is an extraordinarily complicated question, with a major empirical component, that could easily take up an entire article, if not a book. Second, despite my scepticism about certain rationales for demographic representivity in our national sides, I have not said they, nor the affirmative selection policies they involve, are morally *wrong*. I hope to pursue that question in further research. Thirdly, I have not denied that issues about demographic representation, redressing the injustices of the past, or representivity could in principle be important in some or other non-moral way. I have simply tried to show that they do not figure in underwriting a *moral* imperative to transform the Proteas and Springboks. I have left open the question of whether there is some other imperative – strategic or political, for example. Finally, I have not tried to claim that my conclusions are necessarily novel or original. Many sportswriters and letters-to-the-editor writers have drawn similar conclusions to those at which I have arrived. But by applying philosophical rigour to the rough timber of public debates, as I have tried to do here, we can put those conclusions on a firmer argumentative footing, and have an argumentative basis for rejecting some positions that have been prominent in the debate.

My main purpose has been to disentangle the various threads that are salient in the national transformation debate as it concerns the demographic transformation of our national sporting teams. And I have tried to tease out of that debate the sense in which it can plausibly be said that transforming our national teams is “the right thing to do”. In so doing, I have tried to suggest that,

37 This is also Louw’s view. Despite his fierce opposition to “affirmative action” in the context of professional sport, Louw supports “a system of fair access to opportunities at all levels” which involves “eradicating the pervasive inequalities *inherited from* an unjust system in the past in respect of infrastructure, social and economic inequality and lack of opportunities for previously disadvantaged athletes” (Louw 2005, 211, emphasis added). Note, too, that in Mbalula’s remarks which I quoted at the outset he says that it is sports *organisations* that need to transform. The removal of the obstacles which inhibit equality of opportunity to be good enough to play for the Springboks or Proteas is surely part of what he had in mind.

38 Desai and Vahed (among others) discuss oft-overlooked obstacles that socio-economic injustice visits upon black cricketers in their efforts to become selectable on merit. Transportation costs and inadequate diets, which disproportionately affect non-white players, seriously contribute to their development falling short and rendering them far from able to compete as equals with (most) white players. See Desai and Vahed (2010), especially pp. 181–188.

39 Cf. a recent op-ed piece by Desai: “Excellence in [cricket] depends on two things: good infrastructure at schools and good nutrition in homes. These are things that Mbalula’s fellow Cabinet ministers cannot themselves come near to delivering. If cricket is in trouble for not redistributing opportunity in its economy to black people’s [sic], why is the government not in trouble for being so bad at achieving this noble goal in the larger, more meaningful, economy” (Desai 2016). I mention this not so much to agree with Desai’s criticism, but as an instance of an illustration of how meaningful transformation of sport in line with the equal-opportunity imperative is dependent on meaningful socio-economic transformation of the country.

40 The remarks in the *Transformation Charter* about “restorative justice” and undoing distrust would, presumably, be relevant in this context. For the potential for the Springboks to facilitate “nation-building”, see, for example, Farquharson and Marjoribanks (2003) and Höglund and Sundberg (2008). For a more critical stance, at least as the current government is attempting it through numerical quotas, see Merrett et al. (2011).

insofar as transformation in sport is a moral imperative for South Africa, it consists essentially of two distinct (and consistent) imperatives. One is the elimination of ongoing racial bias in team selection, to the extent to which that persists. The other is the provision of genuine equality of opportunity for players of all races to be selected on merit to our national sides. Other aspects of the debate are, I have tried to suggest, either confused, epistemically dubious, insufficiently defended (or even articulated), or not ultimately morally significant. Notions like demographic representivity are, morally speaking, noise rather than signal, and even the term “transformation” suggests, illicitly in my view, that there is a certain end-goal towards which we should be seeking to move. “Rectification” or “redress” of the “injustices of the past” is also misleading or irrelevant. While causally related to ongoing injustice, it is the injustices of the *present* with which we should be concerned. Our moral obligations are to see to it that race is not a determining or contributing factor in the development of talent to meet the demanding requirements of participation in our national sides – to be selectable on “merit” – nor an obstacle to selection once those requirements have been met.

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