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**Title:** *Feminist Intellectual Activism: Within and Beyond the Academy: Constructions of 'Whiteness', Gender and Sexuality in South African magazines.*

**Authors:** Nadia Sanger

**Main disciplinary area:** (e.g. education or psychology): Social Science

**Keywords:** 'whiteness', gender, sexuality, magazine media, democracy

**Select output type from the list below:** (delete inappropriate options)

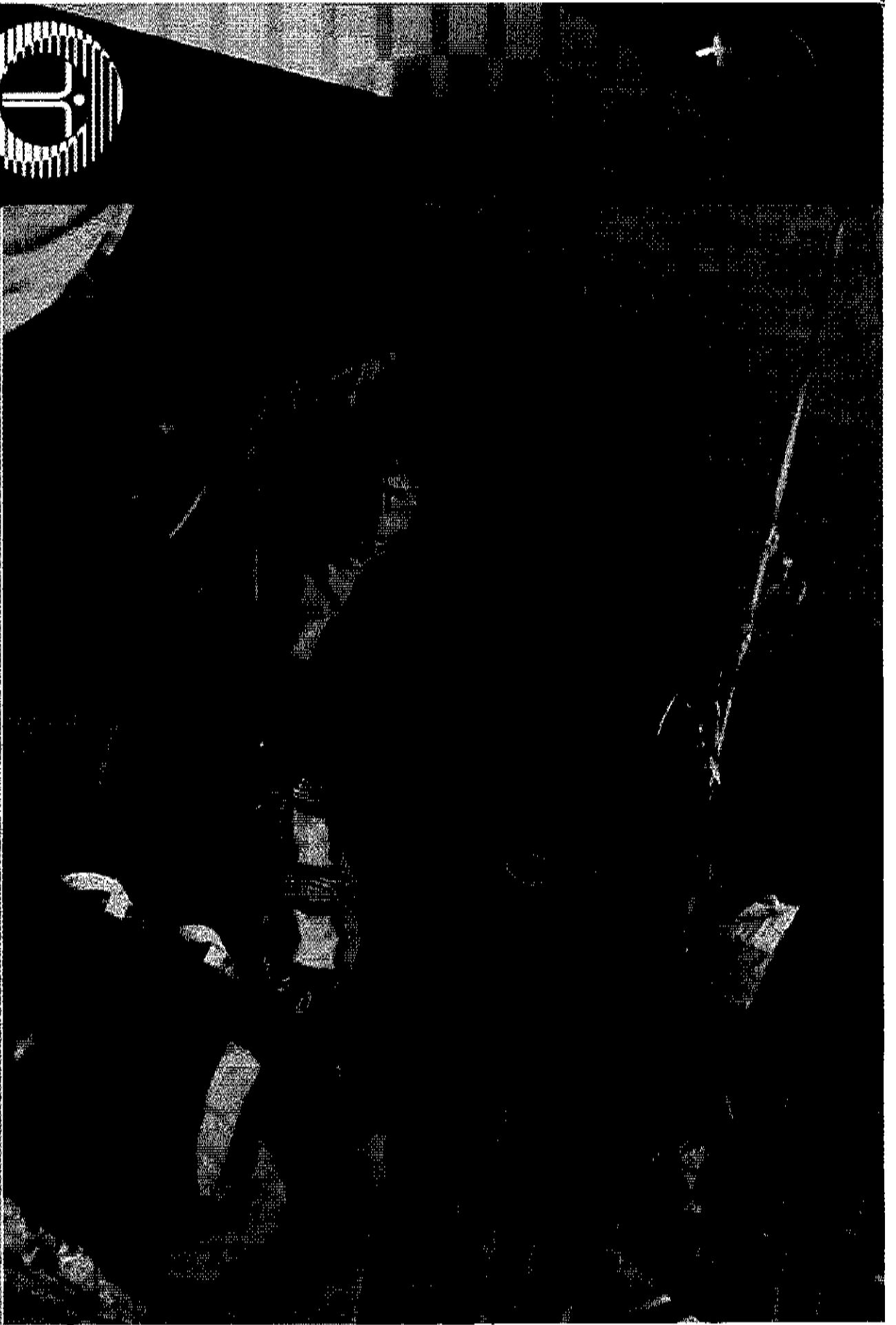
Conference or Seminar Paper

**Confidential:** Yes/No (delete inappropriate option) No

**Website URL:** (where appropriate)

**Abstract (add a descriptive paragraph of Output):** This presentation aims to explore the ways in which whiteness, gender and sexuality are represented through a select group of South African magazines. By looking at magazines such as *Men's Health*, *GQ*, *FHM*, *True Love*, *Femina* and *Fair Lady*, I intend to explore how these magazines as a medium of communication construct whiteness, gender and sexuality to their imagined readerships constituted of various racial, cultural, gendered and sexual identities. Most significantly, I intend to discuss the ways in which whiteness as an identity construction generates norms, ways of understanding history and ways of defining the self and 'other'. Constructed as the core against which all 'other' identities are measured, whiteness occupies a normalised, privileged, deified and raceless space. Identifying whiteness means marking its central place in the social construction of race and disrupting the (in)visible ways whiteness retains power and privilege. In an effort to disrupt existing racial frameworks, it is necessary to identify, name and decentre whiteness as an elitist category. By particularising whiteness in its relativity to gender, class and sexuality in a specific set of magazine media, I hope to expose patterns

securing, reproducing and maintaining white supremacy in a particular social and historical space.

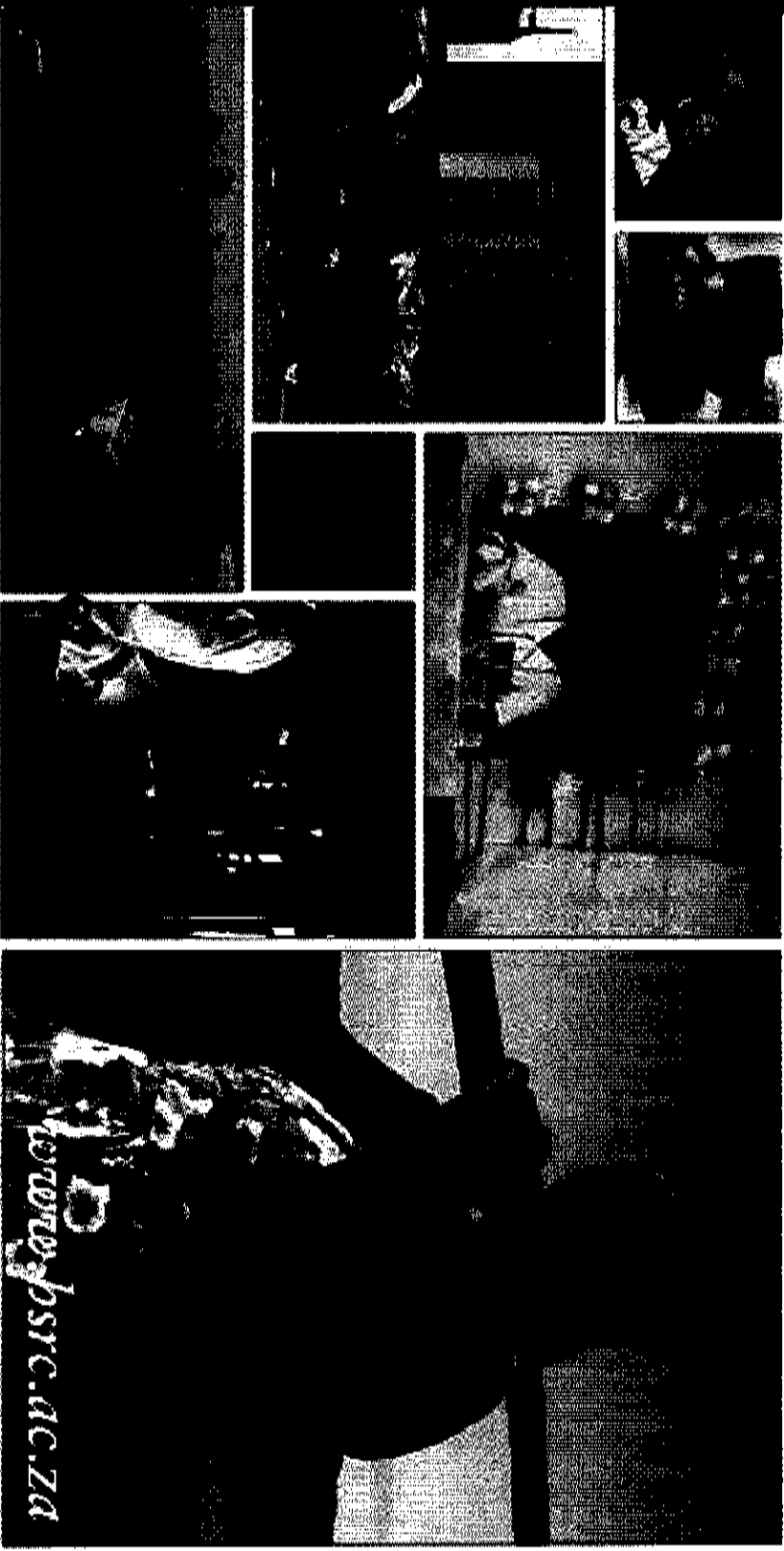


HSSRC

*Social science that makes a difference*

# ***Feminist Intellectual Activism: Within and Beyond the Academy***

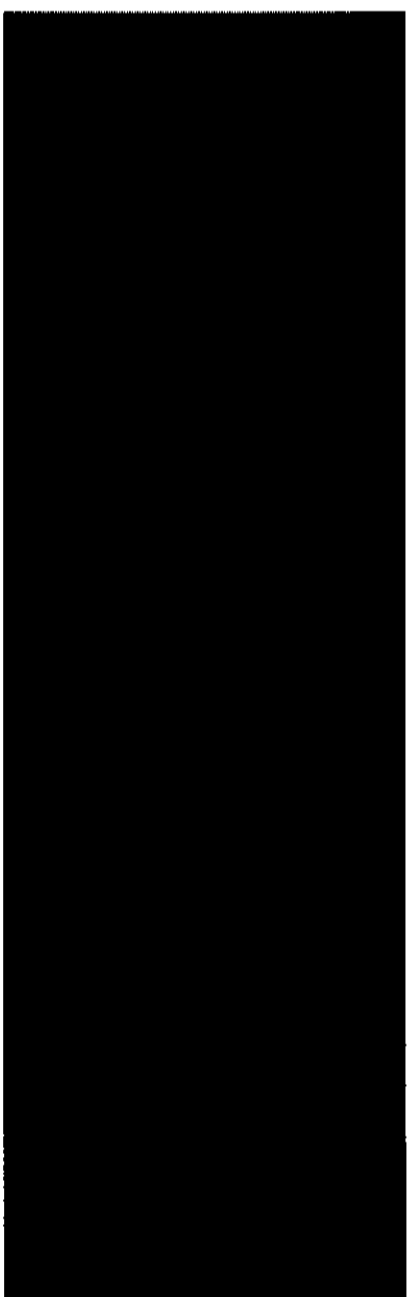
HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL



*Social Science and Humanities Research Council*

**Constructions of whiteness, gender and  
sexuality in South African magazines**

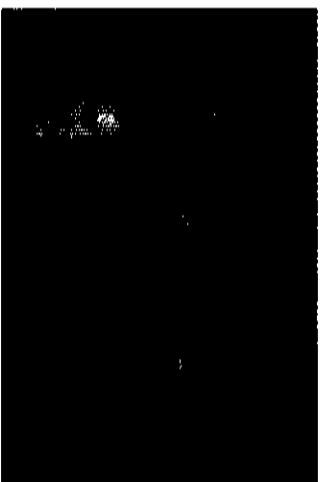
# Background



**Exploratory  
study**

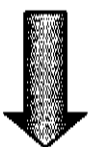


**How dominant discourses are  
normalised, maintained and  
reproduced in South African  
women's and men's magazines**



# Methodology

Based on a  
Postmodernist  
framework



Understands identities as fluid  
and static

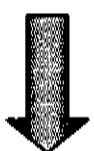


Race, in particular, is  
understood as a complicated  
multiplicity of identifications which  
are continuously being reproduced  
and transformed within the  
changing socio-political climate in  
South Africa



# Methodology

Magazines



Powerful form of media



Significant site where race, gender and sexuality as interconnected identity positions are constructed, reproducing binary oppositions where power is allocated to one side of the dichotomy

Men/Women



White/Black

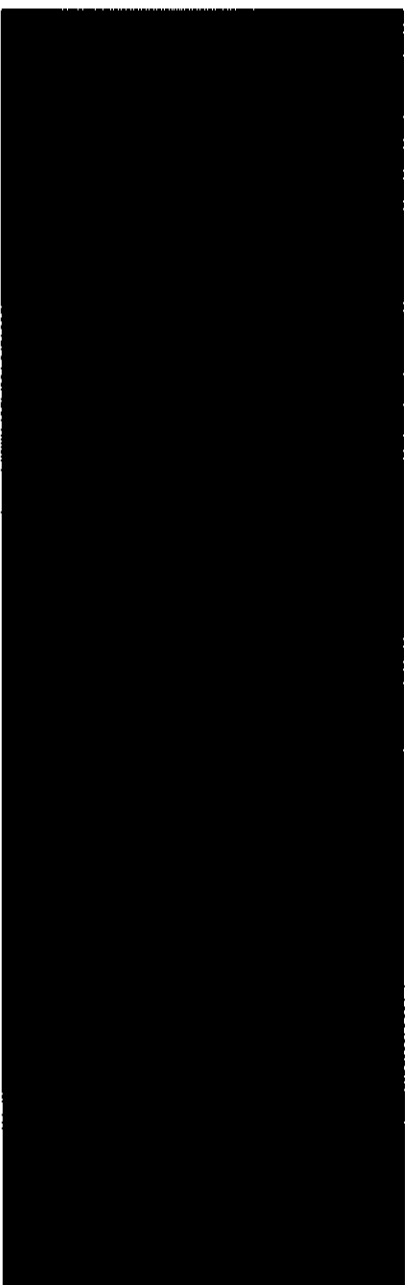


Heterosexual/  
Homosexual





# Method



Through looking at images, letters' pages and educational articles in magazines aimed at male and female readerships, whiteness as a changing, fluid, mobile identity construction is only attributed meaning through contexts where other identity markers are interdependently located



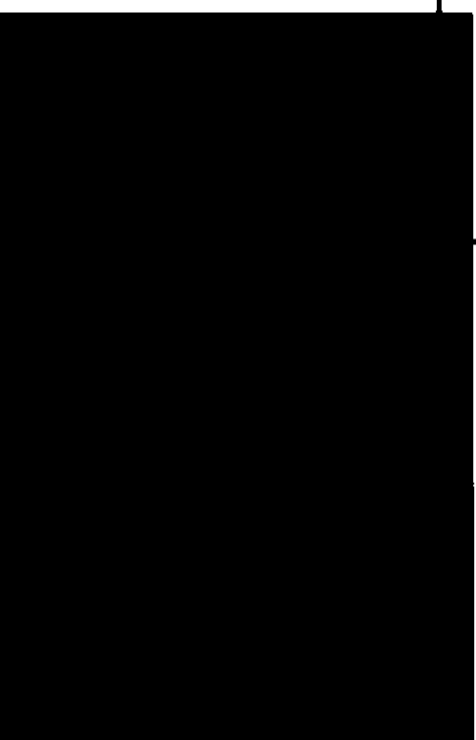
# Preliminary Findings

- **South African magazines are only one but powerful site of socialization where notions of whiteness are normalized, maintained and reproduced by the media.**
- **Discourses around whiteness in South African magazines sheds light on more 'popular' daily forms of racialised discourse serving to normalise whiteness**



# Preliminary Findings: race, gender and sexuality

Magazines as a powerful form of media, is a significant site where race, gender and sexuality as interconnected identity positions are constructed, reproducing binary oppositions of men/women; white/black; heterosexual/homosexual where power is allocated to one side of the dichotomy.



# Preliminary Findings: race and gender

Representation of  
black women and  
men in magazines



Constructed in  
racialised terms

Representation of  
white women and  
men in magazines



Simultaneously constructed  
as 'normal' and deracialised

Magazines aimed at female readerships

in particular, link nationalist and  
reconciliatory discourses to black  
women, while representing white  
women as individuals, 'unraced',  
'normal' and unmarked by South  
Africa's racialised history



## Preliminary Findings: femininity and race

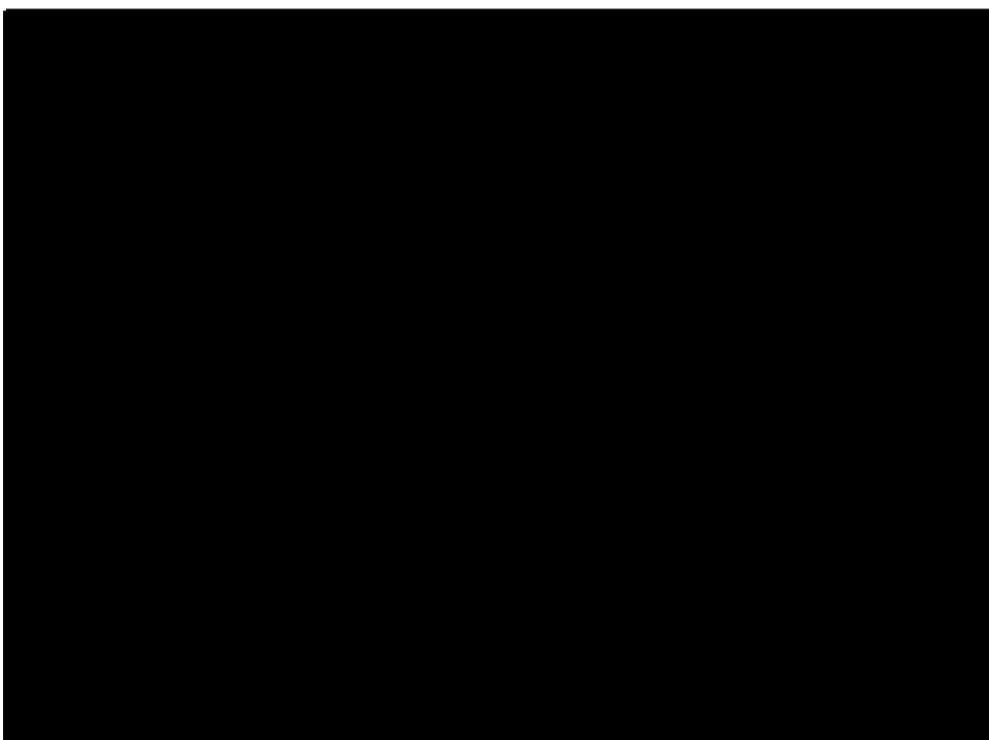
Despite new constructions of 'black beauty', black women are encouraged to aspire to Western notions of beauty which continue to pervade magazine discourse



While women are encouraged to embark on careers, magazines maintain and reproduce constructions of femininities as primarily heterosexual and inherently child and family oriented.

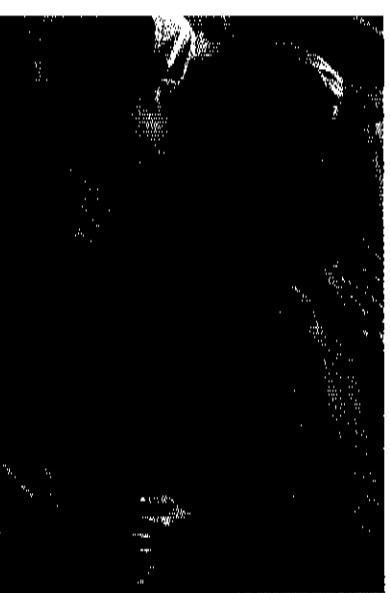


# Preliminary findings: masculinity and race



# Conclusion

Despite the contradictory messages which South African magazines deliver to their readerships, dominant discourses around race, gender and sexuality continue to be produced, reproduced and maintained in the magazines apparent effort to exercise democracy



The complete  
men's life kit

OCTOBER 2003

\$25.95

# Men's Health

> WARNING! ADULTS ONLY  
**SEX TRICKS FROM  
PORN FLICKS**

**The BEST FOOD  
a man can eat**

## GET BACK

**LEAN AND MEAN IN 4 WEEKS**

**PERFECT HEALTH**

- > Lose weight!
- > Feel great!
- > Live to 108!

## 12 Sports that beat stress

10 023 OCTOBER 2003 \$25.95  
9 780230 000000

**LAWYERS**

Survive anything, p214

**HOW TO...**  
Make an impression  
Look like a winner  
Buy a TV





# TRUE VIBE

ALL A WOMAN NEEDS

## Rosie Motene

on boyfriends, heartache, leaving 'Generations' and her international movie break

## Longing

for a child  
One woman's painful story of childlessness

## Sex

Helping him rise to the occasion

## Leg lengthening

Chinese girls risk all for a few extra inches

## Win

A Sealy Resturepedic, Chrysalis linen, Kells CDs and other great prizes in our bridal competition worth

**R1.5 million**

Starts 23rd Nov 05  
R1.25 million 1st prize  
1st prize opening at 2pm the previous



Extra TRUE VIBE

TV section

Whatever happened to the brilliant  
**Lauryn Hill?**

**Zimbabwe's youth militia**  
An undercover report on terror, rape and looting

**15** business-like steps to  
thriftling a husband  
How to be 100% in love with life  
The truth about why men don't phone



**FREE!**

L FREE  
SIZZLING  
POSTER!

SA'S SEXIEST CITIES - GO THERE, p122

# MEN'S HEALTH

THE ULTIMATE  
SEX TRAINING  
MANUAL

TAKE YOUR  
SEX TO THE  
NEXT LEVEL

**OFF** FROM  
TOTAL  
4 WEEKS

**RELAX INSTANTLY**  
21 Stress Busters

THE ONE HEALTH RISK  
YOU NEED TO BEAT

**365** AMAZING NEW HEALTH,  
FITNESS & NUTRITION  
TIPS

MAXIMUM NUTRITION  
MINIMUM MONEY

12018  
12018  
12018

Surf a longboard... Mix a cocktail... Sting like Ali!

THIS GIRL  
WANTS YOU  
TAKE HER HOME. P34



The magazine  
men love to  
read

MARCH 2005

\$29.95

# Men's Health

VOTED SA's BEST  
MEN'S MAGAZINE  
5TH YEAR RUNNING

**EAT MORE!  
WEIGH LESS!**  
18 FOODS THAT FIGHT FAT

**33 AMAZING NEW  
SEX TRICKS**  
TRY NO. 7 TONIGHT

**BOOST YOUR  
BRAIN POWER, p71**

**GREATLINE**  
The New Tummy

**BREATHE  
EASIER  
DOWN**



Think yourself thin, ride an ostrich, blow her mind again and again!

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Tips and Tricks to make you a *bubble* power user

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