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Reflective Essay

For the class KNES 293 A History of Sport in America, we were assigned a research paper on nine research topics such as the commodification of American football (1880's- 1920s), Winter Skating at New York City's Central Park (1850s – 1890s) and The 1932 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games (1930s). We were instructed to select one of the nine topics with its specific time period and use research to demonstrate the dialectic thesis: “the study of how sport and physical culture have been mutually related and influential to society within historical contexts” (Clevenger, 2017, p.1). In order to do this, we needed to research the sport from our chosen topic and find three primary sources and three secondary sources to dialectically analyze the sport within the time period.

After being given the list of topics, I was unsure of the topic that I wanted to choose. So far in our course, we had discussed American football and the ways in which it was used to remedy some of the problems within society. Originally, I had chosen this topic, the commodification of football (188's-1920s). But after discussing the topics with my professor, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (1940s-1950s) topic stood out to me. This topic had connection to a broader concept within our course, gender. In looking at sport and physical culture within this time period, women's baseball was inextricably linked to gender and the stereotypes society had for them and this left me wanting to know more about society at this time. So, the topic that I chose to research was the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (1940s-1950s).

In order to find our primary and secondary sources, we were recommended a few online databases from the university library: Americas Historical Newspapers, Historical Newspapers

ProQuest and JSTOR. We were instructed that our primary sources needed to be newspaper articles because that was physical documentation about the sport in question at the time. Our secondary sources were instructed to be peer-reviewed academic papers which would help provide the background on our historical context. Because my topic was in a specific time period, it was important for me to set my searches within these databases to the 1940-1950 time frame. In addition to setting a time frame for my searches, I needed to use specific key words in the search box so that the documents popping up related to my research. However, at first, I had trouble coming up with the key words that would give me the documents I wanted, and I was getting very frustrated and contemplating changing my topic. But after discussing this problem with my professor, he helped me come up with some sequences of key words that should bring up some documents such as "All-American + Girls + Baseball" and "All-American + Girls + Skirts". When I used these key terms and more variations of these examples listed, I had to go through several pages of documents to find the primary sources on the ProQuest database. After finding those, I had an easier time finding the peer-reviewed academic papers using the JSTOR database and the same key words listed above.

During this time period, women were exploited on the field as they played baseball as a means to entertain the audience of men. There was also this idea of the contradictory female where women were allowed to play baseball, but they still needed to carry out the aspects of women life like getting married and having children. So, while I was sifting through primary sources, I was looking for newspaper articles that alluded to things like this, the exploitation of women in short skirts and the female apologetic. In looking for secondary sources, I was looking to find academic papers that provided me with a background of the historical context, so I could know what was going on. For example, during this time six million men had been drafted to the

war and that was the reason why women were allowed to play baseball at the time. This directly relates to the background of the All-American Professional Girls Baseball League.

What I learned during research that will further help my academic career is that the context of a situation matters. What happens in society is based upon what is going on during that time. So, in researching a topic we must look into the time period that it is in and determine the forces that propelled such an event.

Reflecting on my research experience, I would change the frustration that I had. In the beginning, I was mad at the library for not being able to give me what I wanted but what I needed to do was to relax and properly examine the documents that I was finding. I was finding a lot of good articles but neglecting to realize it because I was so frustrated. In addition to this, I needed to allot more time to looking through the pages and pages of documents that I was given so that I didn't feel as stressed. One way the library could be a better place for my research needs is setting up a program where students can virtually talk to a librarian about how to research things and what to look for in your research.

References

Clevenger, S. (2017, Fall). Research Essay Handout. KNES 293, University of Maryland:
College Park, MD.