

Fitting Sport into the Study of History: 20th Century America as a Test Case

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This paper will deal with the relationship of the specific study of sport history to the diffusion of sports studies into social studies generally. Although it is true that courses dealing with sport studies and sport history specifically are increasing in number, it remains true also that sport is all but ignored in the preponderant number of general courses in various of the social sciences. The assumption of this paper is that this exclusion is no accident. In fact, *the nature* of much of the study of sport history done up to the present has been such as to encourage this very exclusion, which students of sport in its social context would consciously regret.

The difficulty is twofold: in some relatively conservative quarters, the study of sport remains somewhat suspect as an academic discipline. Some assume that the study of play implies that its students are themselves playful rather than “serious” in their efforts. This problem the paper will not address at length, except in so far as it reflects on the second and serious part of the difficulty. Specifically, the writing on sport history to date has been, for the most part, isolated from the best and most innovative research being conducted simultaneously in parallel fields. As a result, the significant relationships of sport to social history, politics, law, popular culture, and a host of other fields are very usually lost to the non-expert - in large part because there are no sufficient investigative, interpretative links between sport studies and other fields.

The main thrust of the paper, then, will be to suggest ways in which the research and presentation of sport history may be adapted to new techniques and interpretations in other fields so that sport history, while retaining its own integrity, can make a greater impact in the study of American society more generally.



Convention Manager for 1979, Mary Lou LeCompte discusses problems of registration with Joan Hult, Assistant Convention Manager at Maryland.