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Methodological Debates—Modernism and/or Post-Modernism: Examples for each approach through an analysis of the print media

Debate continues over methodological issues in the history of sport. Moreover, in some places the debate between modernist and post-modernist approaches has begun. This paper is a contribution to this debate. It discusses the wide use of newspapers as a primary empirical source to delineate and debate the different methodological approaches.

The focus on newspaper documentation comes from a 1995 NASSH conference session entitled *Sport Journalists: Historians and Historical Sources* in which a journalist, Leonard Koppett, asked, “how do you know what we tell is true?” This challenged us to consider many questions. How much do researchers vet the details and journalistic accounts for the methodological requirements of veracity, reliability, and validity? How deeply does the researcher investigate the newspaper itself, the reporters, the journalists, and the text? How much do we know of the knowledge and ideological base of these sources? Finally, how can we develop methodologies that help us deal with these matters? In this paper we revisit these methodological issues and propose the method of triangulation as a technique to establish the veracity of newspaper sources, within both modernist and post-modernist approaches.

We do not argue that there is a definitive method. We assert that scholars must be aware of their own perspective and how this perspective impinges on the data sources, collection and evaluation procedures, and on the use of the data in the final text of the research (i.e., what degree of objectivity is there in the analysis and writing). Finally, we attempt to add to and, perhaps, clarify some of the debate about sport history as a sub-discipline within a hybrid field; if not set the debate further along the path of scholarly order or chaos.