Writer's Statement for "'Where Are the Female Athletes?': An Investigation of College Student Perceptions of Gender Representation in the Media"

MARIA YIM
Produced in Nathan Holic's Fall 2018 ENC 1102

Before beginning this research project, I obviously knew that women and men got treated differently in the world of sports. Because I am a female student-athlete, gender inequality is an issue that I can't ignore because it directly affects myself, my team, and my sport. I think it's important to include that I often forget the significance of this issue because, frankly, as a female I am used to it. Also, my team is incredibly blessed with the highest level of coaches, resources, and facilities. And finally, the difference between the way that UCF treats its male and female athletes is not nearly as drastic as many athletic organizations. But with that being said, gender inequality in sports is an issue that needs to be addressed, and I am glad that I was able to contribute even a small piece of knowledge to that conversation this semester.

My final research paper was created through three project phases. Project I started from the very beginning, and focused on developing a research question. Project II was the core research phase, where I read others' research studies and conducted my own. Project III focused on my final research product.

I first had the idea to address gender inequality in sports during a brainstorming activity. Projects I and II of my research project stemmed from my original research question found in that activity: how are female athletes portrayed in the media, and how does this affect young girls' participation in sports? Somewhere between the Projects II and III, that focus shifted to the first half of the question: how are female athletes represented in sports media? The reason for this change was partly because I could not contribute valid or valuable research about how it affects young girls' decision to play sports, and also because my research and interest naturally led me to focus more on the media coverage of female athletes.

I faced some challenges with Project II, most notably developing primary research methods. I wasn't satisfied with my original project so I happily accepted the opportunity to revise it. My professor's critiques were extremely helpful, and after reading them I realized that I had not fully understood the reason for certain parts of the project. There were a few major improvements I made when revising Project II:

First, the annotated bibliography: As mentioned in my professor's feedback, the commentary portion of each annotation should "show" instead of "tell." I tried my best to show how each individual source connected to my project, and helped me to move forward in each step of my research.

Second, primary research: The greatest improvement I made when revising Project II was developing and completing a third form of primary research. When reading the critiques I had a great idea (that I wish had come to me the first time I did Project II!). I had previously wished to conduct a content analysis, but could not even find enough content regarding women in sports to study. Then, inspired by Huffman, Tuggle, and Rosengard's study in "How Campus Media Cover Sports," I chose to analyze the media coverage of male and female athletes right here on the University of Central Florida campus. I looked at 371 posts (all posts from January 1-November 30, 2018) from the UCF Knights Instagram page. I chose that page because it is the official Instagram account and most popular social media platform of UCF athletics. Unlike my previous idea of analyzing a large-scale sports media source (such as ESPN), this was a doable method of primary research that added valuable information and carried Project II to a new level.

Finally, annotated bibliography (again): Because I added a new multimodal annotation to my bibliography, I also removed an annotation that was in my original project, "Victory? A New Language for Sportswomen." I removed this annotation because it was not as relevant to my project. The "replacement annotation" (discussed in my previous point) added much more value to my project.

I learned a lot during this semester, not only about my research topic, but also how to approach, read, discuss, and create a research paper. This course was really difficult, but I grew a lot as a writer, researcher, and artist (maybe). I'm excited to have this knowledge, and I pray that I will never have to create another research project again.