

Pacific Islanders in Rugby: Tackling Issues of Globalization and Exploitation From the 1970s to the Present



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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to determine why Pacific Islanders and other indigenous groups became elite rugby players beginning in the 1970s. Rugby Union and Rugby League became popular sports in certain countries in the western world during this time. Professionalization radically changed the game of rugby. Similar to first nations peoples in North America and the Caribbean, people of Polynesian descent were romanticized during Colonial expeditions. One of the most intriguing descriptions of Pacific Islanders during this time period were their large bodies and savage like characteristics. As rugby became more physical, the bodies of rugby players became big factors in the sport. This paper attempts to show that Pacific Island rugby players have been racially exploited due to their natural physique. It also attempts to explore the effects that globalization has had on Pacific islanders due to the commoditization of rugby.

Research Question and Thesis

Research question: I am studying Indigenous Pacific Islanders as rugby players from the late 1970s to the present day because I want to find out why Polynesian residents of these islands became popular, elite athletes playing in Western Europe, the Oceania region and South Africa during this time period. Furthermore, I would like to determine whether they were racially exploited or if they were examples of historical progression as global commodities in sport specifically in Australasia and Western Europe.
Thesis: This essay will argue that Indigenous Pacific Islanders from the 1970s to the present have become commodities of sport on a global scale specifically in rugby league and rugby union in the Westernized world, which has mainly exploited these groups merely as commodities in the business of sport. This will be analyzed to show the impact of Pacific Islanders, racial segregation and cultural assimilation.

Results

The results of this paper would evidently identify that Pacific Islanders have indeed been exploited. This shows that history should not be viewed as a progression. More specifically, first world Westernized countries still take advantage of racial minorities in order to gain economically. This is exemplified with Polynesian players and team owners throughout Europe and Oceania.

Introduction

Global commodification of minority races in sport is not a new phenomenon. For example, globalization has led to the commodification of Africans in soccer specifically in the European football market. Similar to soccer, rugby has also used racial minorities as commodities. Indigenous Islanders from countries such as Fiji, Samoa, New Zealand and Australian aboriginals are just a few examples. The professionalization of rugby union and the soaring popularity of rugby league that emerged in the late 1970s incorporated indigenous peoples into the game. The research question that has been posed will seek to find if these indigenous peoples were exploited in the process of becoming professional rugby players or if they have benefitted as commodities and therefore agents of history as a progression. This will be analyzed through a variety of primary and secondary sources to show the Pacific Islanders' impact on the professionalization of rugby union, the racial segregation of Pacific Islanders (studying the Australian Rugby League's Indigenous All Stars and Maoris in New Zealand) and cultural assimilation into Western society (effects on the national identity of Pacific nations, the notion that many players migrate and play for Anglo-centric countries rather than the country of their birth).



B



C

Methods and Materials

The approach that I took in this research paper was a qualitative method. The materials that I used mainly consisted of a large number of primary and secondary sources including indigenous perspectives from Pacific Islanders. Once this research was completed, I formed my arguments and defended them through a variety of secondary sources including scholarly journal articles which were found through York University's Online library.

Conclusions

Sport history is often viewed as a progression where things are portrayed as getting better with time. However, this paper disproves this flawed notion. It is clear that the effects of globalization on Polynesian rugby players is not always a beneficial process.



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References

Figure A: <http://static2.stuff.co.nz/1369461559/701/8717701.jpg>
Figure B: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/TxFyWFRMmo/hqdefault.jpg>
Figure C: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/image/4510244-3x2-940x627.jpg>
Figure D: (1978 New Zealand Touring team): <http://www.rugbyrelics.com/images/players/Teams/NZ/1978-GS-tour-squad.jpg>
Figure E: 2015 Haka All Blacks v. Georgia:
<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/54f4f01ee4b079cf2b617a03/t/55e7db00e4b09880734ba9f8/1441258242884/>
Top Left: <http://www.bulkingbro.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/henrytuilagi-rugby-beast.jpg>
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