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Is There a Discipline of Physical Education?

David A. Rose

American physical educators have struggled to gain academic legitimacy for the last 100 years. This paper examines a key part of this struggle, the debate over the nature of the field. Two periods in the debate are identified. The search for an American system of physical training resulted in "physical education." When this system came under attack in the 1960s, there began a search for a discipline of physical education. This discipline has been seen most often as a cross-disciplinary, research oriented study of human movement. However, it has failed to distinguish itself from an interdepartmental study of human movement and from a cross-disciplinary, research oriented conception of the profession. The paper concludes by demonstrating how these problems are overcome if the discipline is seen as a form of culture in which movement is the medium of expression.

For approximately the last 100 years, there has been an effort by certain individuals to gain academic legitimacy for an area of American higher education commonly called physical education. While this effort seems to have paid dividends—in the form of undergraduate and graduate programs, scholarly journals, and professional associations—the question of legitimacy is still in doubt. In the 1960s, physical education was attacked for failing to properly train its teachers (Kroll, 1971) and for lacking a discipline (Henry, 1964). The ensuing years yielded responses to these challenges. Those who addressed the former problem attempted to ground teaching practices in scientific understanding (Locke, 1977b). Those who addressed the latter problem came to define an academic discipline of physical education that was a cross-disciplinary study of sport and physical activity (e.g., Kroll, 1971). In both instances, relatively more emphasis was given to scientific research and cognitive coursework.

Nevertheless, problems persist (Sage, 1984). Undergraduate majors tend to be relatively inferior students (Lawson, 1979; Loy, Kenyon, & McPherson, 1980). Research tends to be relatively poor (Dotson, 1980). AAHPERD, the national professional association, has not responded to the challenges; it has shown no inclination to boost support for research (Park, 1980; Smith, 1981), nor has it exercised a power of sanction against incompetent members (Lawson, 1979). Underlying all of these is a continuing effort to conceptually organize the dis-

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cipline (e.g., Haag, 1979; Kroll, 1971; Lawson & Morford, 1979; Zeigler, 1979) an effort that has yet to resolve fundamental concerns regarding the discipline's nature (Broekhoff, 1979; Henry, 1978; Lawson, 1979; Locke, 1977a), uniqueness (Henry, 1978), breadth (Broekhoff, 1979; Lawson & Morford, 1979; Parkhouse & Ulrich, 1979) and cohesiveness (Broekhoff, 1979; Park, 1980; Zeigler, 1979). The purpose of this paper is to determine if there is a discipline of physical education and, if such a discipline exists, to specify its nature.

Methodology

Attempts to conceptualize the field now known as physical education are not a recent development. By recognizing that such efforts are in fact a regular event, it is possible to historically examine the debate and determine if any progress is being made. Progress means cumulating agreement between positions over the history of the debate. It may take one of two forms: either later conceptions of the field focus on problems not overcome by earlier conceptions, or later conceptions reject earlier conceptions and thus overcome the social and conceptual problems left over from the past. Lack of progress then is continuing disagreement in the debate, with no significant difference between earlier conceptions of the subject matter and later conceptions.

If progress is discernible in the history of the debate, the discipline's existence and its nature may be extrapolated from this history. If no progress is discernible, then the history should reveal what positions are in fact futile, it should expose fundamental questions that must be addressed, and it may expose a conception of the field from which to address these questions.

The Search for an American System of Physical Training

Following the Civil War, there emerged within the United States a movement to promote physical training. Participants in this movement united and formalized their efforts in 1885 with the formation of the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education. Members of the movement were strongly influenced by and attempted to promote a Greek ideal of physical culture, which encompassed three related tenets: a presumption of the inherent unity of mind and body, a belief in the harmonious development of mind and body, and a belief in a "cultured" individual being excellent both mentally and physically (Hitchcock, 1887; Joblin, 1886; Sargent, 1891). In other words, given the example of the ancient Greeks, members of this movement believed programs of physical training were educational; the task of their organization was to verify this to others (Hitchcock, 1885).

The programs promoted by members of the movement were inspired not only by the Greek ideal of being physically cultured but also by a pragmatic concern for promoting physical health in the schools. Promoting physical health was seen as a corrective to school and social practices and as a foundation without which mental learning could not take place. In other words, physical training was promoted as both hygienically and socially educative (Hartwell, 1897). It was educative in a hygienic sense because unlike the pathological orientation of medicine, physical trainers attempted to encourage preventive practices that would

avoid or correct physiological debilitation and asymmetry produced by school and living conditions. It was educative in a social sense because certain activities of physical training were believed to be “laboratories” in which the cognitive lessons of the classroom could be reinforced and truly learned by the experience of the unitary involvement of mind and body (Sargent, 1908).

The effort to legitimate physical training as a valid part of the curriculum was also recognized by members of the movement as intimately connected to the occupational status of directors of such programs (hereafter referred to as physical trainers). In contrast to two popular stereotypes of the day, that gymnasias directors were muscle men (Allen, 1890; Sargent, 1891) and that gymnasias without directors were themselves educational (First National Convention, 1899, p. 13), physical trainers sought to demonstrate that their practices were grounded in scientific knowledge and hence worthy of professional status (Gulick, 1890; Meylan, 1905; Sargent, 1903). Given the lack of such knowledge during these formative years, physical trainers were struggling within their movement to determine which of the extant systems of training were scientifically based. However, the battle of prevailing systems was not strictly a question of scientific soundness. There were equally important questions of costs in terms of both time and money (Molinaireux, 1887). Particularly appealing to the movement were activities known as athletic sports (“athletics” for short).

Athletics satisfied all the criteria of the movement. Not only were they physically strenuous but they were believed to yield social lessons as well (Gulick, 1903). And they seemed to have inherently a feature the more formal gymnastic systems of Europe lacked: athletics were fun (Gulick, 1903; Sargent, 1892; Seaver, 1887; White, 1888).¹ Indeed, by 1897 Hartwell (1892, 1897) had formulated a system of physical training, complete with rationale, which incorporated both gymnastics and athletics. Where gymnastics were primarily hygienic, appealing to one’s innate desire for development, athletics were primarily social, appealing to one’s innate desire for “fighting,” that is, competitive testing. Likewise, where gymnastics were expected to precede athletics in parallel to the natural growth of the child, it was intuitively recognized that until such time as an integrated progression of physical training was introduced into education, schools at all levels would probably have to sponsor both hygienic and social physical activities.

What was problematic from the perspective of the leaders of the movement, however, was that athletics had been permitted to develop within schools as a student-led activity (for males, since the overwhelming majority of students were male) outside faculty control (Hitchcock, 1895; Sargent, 1892). As a student-dominated activity, athletics were seen as a natural eruption—a coincidence between what physical trainers saw as the students’ legitimate need and desire for physical activity and the faculty’s and administrators’ reluctance to support programs of physical training designed to meet this need (Hartwell, 1897). By developing without regulation, intercollegiate athletics had become a monster, particularly from the perspective of the physical trainer. Physical trainers reject-

¹Although European systems of physical training did not emphasize athletics, they did not exclude them either, at least when the systems were being promoted in the U.S. (Enesbuske, 1890; Posse, 1892).

ed unregulated athletics on two grounds: they were not conducted on the basis of scientific knowledge and they violated the ideal of being physically and mentally cultured, thereby tending to separate the student body into mental and physical giants (Sargent, 1901).

In this latter respect, physical trainers saw the perversion of the Greek ideal in ancient times and the perversion of the ideal in their own time as a consequence of the same motive—professionalism, that is, developing one's body (to the implied neglect of one's mind) for the purpose of displaying it in a spectacle (Gulick, 1908; McKenzie, 1909). In their own time this professionalism involved both the moral corruption of intercollegiate contests (Sargent, 1892, 1903) and the gambling and "baser" bloodthirsty orientation of professional sports. Because physical trainers perceived athletic professionalism to be intimately related to the downfall of Greek society, it was to be combated in contemporary society—through control of intercollegiate athletics by the director of physical training (Bolin, 1898; Hetherington, 1907; Sargent, 1910) and through total scholarly and organizational disdain for professional athletics (Hetherington, 1909, 1910b).

Because of their relative academic powerlessness—programs of physical training were virtually nonexistent in American public schools prior to 1905 (McCurdy, 1905)—physical trainers could not bring athletics under their control without administrative support. This support, of sorts, eventually came with the formation in 1906 of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association, which later became the National Collegiate Athletic Association. But as Sargent had predicted in 1892, regulation proved to be something of a pyrrhic victory (Bowen, 1909). Regulation was imposed, and athletics and physical training in general were defined as educational (McKenzie, 1912); but regulation was imposed in such a way that intercollegiate contests remained spectacle (Cline, 1910; Day, 1910), controlled not by the director of physical training but through a variety of forms involving the interested factions: parents, school boards, administrators, faculty, and alumni (Sargent, 1903).

In contrast to these developments in physical training for men (PTM) were developments in physical training for women (PTW). While not linked to the Greek ideal, programs of PTW were also intended to be hygienically and socially educative for the masses (Gerber, 1974, p. 49; Spears & Swanson, 1978, p. 218). But this similarity in orientation contained an important difference in content: a difference in the perception of what constituted appropriate behavior in physical activity for males and females. More specifically, athletics were seen as a domain more appropriate for males than for females (Gerber, 1974, p. 68; Spears & Swanson, 1978, p. 218). Although Gulick's characterization of the source of this difference as ontogenetic (Gerber, 1974, pp. 70-71) may have been dubiously scientific, it does reveal a contrast in the social setting in which programs of PTM and PTW were being developed. While promoters of both types wanted to combat evils in men's athletics and wanted to use athletics to encourage mass participation in physical activity, promoters of PTM had to gain control of extant, fully functioning, highly visible programs that clashed with their beliefs. Promoters of PTW encountered no such problem.

Therefore, promoters of PTW (who believed women should be leaders of women's programs) were able to discourage varsity (i.e., intercollegiate) pro-

grams in favor of recreational programs for the masses of female students. After intercollegiate programs were officially rejected in 1923, athletics were organized in a variety of ways (Spears & Swanson, 1978, pp. 219-223). Most of these were intended to emphasize the stimulation associated with the contest as an arena of social interaction, but all were intended to avoid the stimulation associated with agon as a test of competence. For example, in a telegraph meet opponents were not physically copresent, so that while an outcome did occur and was dependent on the physical skill of the participants, it was not determined by agonetic exchange. In play days and sport days, events and teams were often unique to the time and place, with implications of performance further obliterated by disdain for scorekeeping (Gerber, 1974, pp. 65-66). Thus, in seeking to avoid winning at all costs, which women associated with the evils of men's programs, women constructed programs designed to avoid "outcomes through competence at all costs" (e.g., Lee, 1924, 1931, 1937).

Following World War I, the widespread passage of state laws mandating programs of physical education established the sought-after American system of physical training (Lewis, 1969). The resulting system of physical training, promoted to those within the field as the "new physical education," emphasized overall (i.e., physiological, psychomotor, moral, and intellectual) child development (Hetherington, 1910a; Wood, 1910) through playing sports. In higher education, physical education became the academic major of prospective teacher-coaches.

It is generally believed (e.g., Van Dalen & Bennett, 1971, pp. 433-435) that the new physical education became the American system of physical training because it was consistent with the influential social-education-through-play theories popular at the time, theories that could be implemented through the also-popular athletic sports. Historians of the field (e.g., Kroll, 1971; Lewis, 1969) have tended to characterize this development as a shift from education *of* the physical to education *through* the physical, and from a grounding in science to a grounding in education (Kroll, 1971, p. 79). On the former point, Lewis (1969, p. 36) contended that it was "in response to outside forces and developments within education between 1906 and 1916 [that] physical educators began to seriously consider the place of sports instruction in the basic curriculum and gave some thought to extending the program to include supervised competition for highly skilled students."

Given the evidence presented above, such assessments overlook both the goals physical trainers had laid out and the problems they confronted in realizing these goals. If the emphasis in physical training had been hygienic in the early years of the movement, this orientation was primarily attributable to hygiene's position as the basic part of fundamental education (Hetherington, 1910a) and to the predominant needs of the times (Gulick, 1907). To imply, however, that the shift of physical training toward social education through athletics was principally an expeditious response to outside forces ignores two points (Hetherington, 1907, pp. 170-171; Posse, 1903, 1905). First, athletics were presumed to yield hygienic benefits; they were seen as a link to, not an abandonment of, earlier objectives of the movement. Second, a conception of physical training that incorporated athletics as its higher, social educative part had been put forth in the 1890s. That increasing acceptance of this idea by physical trainers coincided with the changing theme of education in the early 1900s does *not* undermine the idea's legitimacy.

In this regard, it appears rather that physical trainers inadvertently provided the arguments that school administrators used to justify continuing to operate men's sport as a spectacle. But if agreeing to work in such programs can be properly called an "accommodation" by physical trainers, as Lewis suggests, it can hardly be considered a "transformation" or a "bringing [of] harmony to previous differences." For there was no profession to be transformed; if the *new* physical education replaced anything, it was "no physical education." And as the history of women's physical education attests, conducting school athletics as spectacle has remained the single most controversial question of the field.

Suggesting that physical trainers abandoned science when the notion of education became more prevalent also overlooks several important points. First, while it is true that individuals with medical backgrounds were among the early leaders of the movement, medical education at the time was not particularly rigorous and became more so only after publication of the Flexner Report in 1910, as Kroll acknowledged (1971, p. 73). By the time of the Flexner Report, however, it was recognized that physical trainers and future leaders of the movement would probably not have medical backgrounds (McCurdy, 1910; Sargent, 1891). As both hygienic and social education, physical training was expected to become a greater responsibility than could be easily directed by medically educated men. It is also likely that the Flexner Report facilitated this change by moving medicine deeper into a pathological orientation, away from the preventive direction advocated by physical trainers (McCurdy, 1910).

But neither the abandonment by medical doctors nor the alignment with education precluded physical education from developing a scientific base. As an aspiring profession, physical trainers had intended to operate on the basis of scientific principles (Wood, 1893). But prior to the entrenchment of the American system, no scientific base had been developed (Bolin, 1897; Seaver, 1901). Nor could one have been developed, because, quite literally, all cognitive knowledge was relevant to physical training. That is, the presumed inherent unity of mind and body established a relationship between physical training and other parts of education which might be called "omnidirectional interest" (Enesbuske, 1890; Gulick, 1902; Sargent, 1891; Wood, 1893). But as cognitive knowledge to be manifested in physical training, all knowledge was inherently applied: it was pedagogical and/or administrative.² Physical trainers expected to convert knowledge developed by the disciplines to their own use, and needed to produce their own research only in those areas related to physical training's uniquely pedagogical nature: by classifying children according to tendencies, capacities, and needs, and formulating a program of activities to meet these discovered traits.

Hetherington formalized this position in 1925, reinforcing his argument with a sample curriculum (1925, p. 263). Modifications in such a curriculum were to be based upon job analysis, an awareness of the service activities to be performed by the teacher or administrator. Between 1930 and 1960, leaders of the profession picked up different aspects of this approach and developed them

²For example, when Cureton (1949) attempted to categorize dissertations relevant to physical education, he classified Dulles' dissertation in sociology, which became the classic, *America Learns to Play*, under the category, "programs."

into their own programmatic variations within the main line (Gerber, 1972). McCloy emphasized the classification of children and the acquisition of teaching skills to be used to train students to maintain health. Nash emphasized the determination of children's "felt needs" and the teaching of activities of interest to them for future use in leisure time. Williams emphasized the teaching of character development and the teaching of a wide range of activities to help students "understand the American way of life as a worthy ideal of all peoples."³

In the American system of higher education, however, physical education's omnidirectionality produced two important consequences. To the extent none of the functioning divisions of higher learning could logically encompass physical training, and to the extent academicians in each branch opposed such an affiliation, physical education was free either to combine with a program of its own choosing or become its own separate school within the university. And to the extent that scientists ignored issues relevant to physical training, physical trainers were free to develop their own scientific standards.

Given either the absence of or inconsistency of associations between physical training and more established domains of academia, there was minimal pressure to be productive in the traditional scholarly sense. In view of the basis on which men's physical training had been accepted into education, the physical trainer likely wanted (or needed) to show only that the size of the program was increasing, the football (or other athletic) team was winning, and the campus was calm (Cline, 1910; Day, 1910). And given the environment in which programs of physical training for women were operating, research undertaken by women about women in physical education likely seemed esoteric and of little value outside women's programs. Together these yielded a counterculture approach to research in physical education: lacking verification from scholars outside the field, appearing scientific became the primary test of being scientific. Form prevailed over substance: following, and explicitly stating that one was following, the scientific method was intended to overcome doubts about the lack of substantive significance.

The Search for an Academic Discipline of Physical Education

In the 1960s physical education came under severe attack from both outside and inside the profession. On the one hand, a study of teacher education indicted physical education as the worst of a generally deformed course of study:

If I wished to portray the education of teachers in the worst terms, I should quote from the description of some graduate courses in physical education. To my mind, a university should cancel graduate programs in this area. (Conant, 1963, p. 201)

³For further examples of this variety within the main line, see Williams (1927), Staley (1931), Savage (1933), Scott and Neilson (1935), Norris and Sweet (1937), Johnson (1943), Hewitt (1946), Blesh (1947), Morehouse and Aloia (1948), Price (1948), Larson (1949), Streit and McNeely (1950), Cowell, Daniels, and Kenney (1951), Loucks (1952), and Morehouse and Mills (1954).

And an example developed by Kroll implied questions about the conduct of practitioners that echoed issues Sargent (1891) had raised much earlier:

if a profession merely stresses acquisition of mechanical skill in a physical or manual sense, it may likewise contribute less to society because of a diminished amount of knowledge and intellect that is available to guide its practices. No matter how skilled the surgeon might be at the task, bloodletting is no longer accepted as a medical treatment. (Kroll, 1971, p. 127)

Meanwhile, events in California produced an even more difficult challenge. High school faculties there were being legally required to qualify their teaching matter as a bona fide academic subject, and again physical education was a prominent target of attack. Familiar with these events, Henry (1964) declared to the profession that physical education lacked an academic discipline, something everyone knew and accepted; but he contended that physical education should have one, indeed must have one, if it was to survive.

Mobilized by Henry's call, there quickly followed a description of the traits of an academic discipline, that is, a subject matter with a focus of inquiry, a unique methodology, a body of knowledge, and a search for the academic discipline related to physical education ("The nature of a discipline," 1967; Harper, 1974). Brown and Cassidy's (1963) call for a discipline of physical education, to be known as the art and science of human movement, anticipated much of the post-Henry search. In particular, they identified human movement, in its broadest sense, as the focus of inquiry and identified the body of knowledge as a cross-disciplinary study of movement. For example, Henry stated later,

What is this scholarly field of knowledge that constitutes the academic discipline of physical education? It was stated (Henry, 1964) to be constituted of certain portions of such diverse fields as anatomy, physics and physiology, cultural anthropology, history and sociology, as well as psychology. The focus of attention is on the study of the human as an individual, engaging in motor performances required in daily life and in other motor performances yielding aesthetic values or serving as expressions of a person's physical and competitive nature, accepting challenges of one's capability to cope with a hostile environment, and participating in leisure time activities that have become of increasing importance in our culture. (1978, p. 14)

Likewise, Kroll wrote,

Physical activity constitutes a phenomenon that is as broad and varied as the sum total of mankind's history of human movement endeavors. Man's motor activities represent expression of his physical and competitive nature, yield expressions of aesthetic values, involve him in social and cultural aspects of society, and affect him in both physical and physiological dimensions. As a focal point of interest, physical activity includes considerably more than just those activities traditionally taught by physical educators in a school setting. At the present stage of development, it is seen to include sport in its

broadest sense and subtends play, dance, games, exercise, and athletics. The strongest common bond between these physical activity components is the muscular exertion involved in and the natural desire in man for muscular activity in nonutilitarian pursuits, both competitive and non-competitive. (1971, p. 96)

Kroll's course of study for the discipline supported Henry's cross-disciplinary approach (1971, pp. 110-111).

A major demur to this approach, at least to the identity of the focus of inquiry, was the recommendation that the focus be not human movement but sport. In view of physical education's traditional concern for exercise, play, games, dance, *and* sport, sport as a focus appeared more narrow than did human movement (Harper, 1974; Sheehan, 1968). Nevertheless, much of the literature published during the period focused on sport activities or organizations, and emerging subdisciplines adopted the suffix of "sport" behind their theoretical approach: for example, philosophy of sport, history of sport, sociology of sport, psychology of sport.

Another dissent was contained in Metheny's discussions of movement and meaning. Metheny posed the notion of viewing movement itself as a form of knowledge (1968), variants of which included exercise, sport, and dance (1965). While Metheny's activities seemed to overlap with the focus proposed by Henry and Kroll, her reason for studying these activities was radically different. For in asserting that movement was a form of knowledge, Metheny was implicitly recommending that not cognitive but kinesthetic knowledge was the body of knowledge of the field. This line of argument was consistent with the more expressive tradition of physical training in women's programs and extended a notion germinating on a theoretical level since the late 1940s (Dunlap, 1951; Goellner, 1953; Stumpf & Cozens, 1947a, b) and on a practical level since the 1950s: movement was educational because it was part of culture.

Undercutting this orientation, however, were two factors. First, the notion that the discipline's body of knowledge was kinesthetic displaced cognitive knowledge to a subservient role, an idea many resisted. Henry, for example, stated,

A point that needs to be emphasized is that this discipline does not consist of the application of the disciplines of anthropology, physiology, psychology, and others to the learning and performing of physical activities. (1978, p. 15)

The continuing need of professionals in the field to establish legitimacy in higher education seemed to mandate that the body of knowledge be cognitive, not kinesthetic (cf. Sargent, 1891; Storey, 1907). Second, Metheny's variants—dance, sport, and exercise—were remarkably consistent with traditional forms of physical education and thus seemed more pragmatically than theoretically based. Reinforcing this perception was Metheny's continuing identification of these activities as "education" (1967), a confusion that became manifest in physical education programs when movement education gained popularity as an improved pedagogical technique (Bucher, 1975, p. 147).

In view of these fundamental differences, it is not surprising that Kroll (1971, p. 100) acknowledged the "content domain of an academic discipline of physical education cannot be fully and adequately defined at this time." His recommendation was not to debate but to act: "The best way to define a discipline may very well be simply to be a discipline—by doing all the things required of a discipline" (1971, p. 75). The continuation of these differences (noted in the introduction) over 20 years after Henry's charge suggests that action has *not* led to resolution. If anything, action may have exacerbated the problem, for the societies and publications that have since emerged are often distinct from (and disdaining of) traditional physical education (in sport sociology, e.g., Loy, Kenyon, & McPherson, 1980; McPherson, 1978, pp. 77-78).

Particularly threatening to this ambiguity is the inability to distinguish between a cross-disciplinary department and an interdisciplinary committee project, or to establish the desirability of such a department to nothing at all. Kroll, for example, identified no fewer than six "respectable" professions interested in cardiovascular fitness and health (1971, p. 71). And Henry's warning of the unthinkable portended the fates that have befallen the field at the University of Washington and at SUNY, Brockport:

When a physical education department demonstrates that many of its courses and the research of its students and faculty are in fact possible within the various traditional disciplines, it is also signaling the university administration that it can be phased out; that the students will not suffer since an interdisciplinary group major set up from courses in the traditional disciplines will presumably take care of their needs, and faculty research will continue since it is within those disciplines anyway. (Henry, 1978, p. 21)

While Henry believed that "the unique cross disciplinary scholarly body of knowledge that I have called physical education is important and should not be lost by default" (1978, p. 21), he conceded a few paragraphs later that he was unable to overcome the problem:

Neither of these examples is literally perfect for establishing the exact difference between the *cross* and *inter*-disciplinary concepts. The question is simple enough, but the answer is complex and in some instances tends to be diffuse rather than nicely circumscribed. If one will read (and perhaps re-read) *all* of my previous publication (Henry, 1964), the distinction will be clear, but I find I can neither quote nor write a short paragraph that offers an exact solution. (1978, p. 22)

His effort reflects the confusion still inflicting the field:

In the present context, cross-disciplinary knowledge always refers to the *appropriate part* of a body of knowledge from another discipline that is related to the academic and scholarly aspects of *physical education*, with a concomitant development or tie-in with that relationship. Physical education, in this context, refers to human beings engaged in motor behavior of the so-called large muscle type (some would use the term gross motor behavior). (1978, p. 22)

This description either puts physical education back at the core of the discipline that Henry had been asserting (the profession of) physical education did not have, restates the profession's historical emphasis on research in the service of education and administration, or identifies physical education as profession *and* discipline *and* focus of inquiry.

But Henry's struggle here is the same one that has plagued physical trainers since the beginning of the movement (Oktavec, 1930). What is different now, however, is that the cross-disciplinary approach is being labeled disciplinary knowledge; before, it had been seen as professional knowledge (Leonard, 1912). Lacking a rationale, the strategy appears to skeptics as no more than political expediency: circling the wagons of academic careers and building what amounts to a parallel university—serving principally the academically disadvantaged (Kenyon, 1965).

Is the Discipline of Physical Education Illusive or Elusive?

The history of the debate over the nature of the field suggests that in fact little progress has been made over the 100 years. While physical activity is consistently identified as the focus of the field, *which* physical activity is central has not been agreed upon. In practice, however, it seems that more play-like activities are thought to be most relevant. That is, members of the field have shown interest in the balance of gymnasts more than of ironworkers, in the biomechanics of hammer throwers more than of dock workers, in the group dynamics of basketball more than of surgical teams. Nevertheless, no theoretical structure has been built that sorts out play, games, dance, athletics, exercise, and sport— notions that are most frequently raised in attempting to describe the focus. Equally problematic is the omnidirectional relationship between physical activity and cognitive knowledge about it. Particularly troubling here, as Henry's insight reveals, is the inability to conceive a discipline that distinguishes between a cross-disciplinary and an interdisciplinary study of the focus. Given this history, it appears that a discipline of physical education can be defined and defended only if it addresses at least the following questions:

1. Is there a discipline of physical education whose focus clarifies which physical activity is central to the field?
2. Is there a discipline that distinguishes between a cross-disciplinary study and an interdisciplinary study of the focus?
3. Is there a discipline that theoretically subsumes, yet unites, the various practical dimensions of the field?
4. Is there a discipline that clarifies the field's relationship to intercollegiate athletics?

On the first question, it would appear that the only viable option is to explore an idea the field has traditionally resisted, in effect to pursue implications of the idea posed by Metheny: that the orientation of the field should be toward producing not ideas but performance, in the artistic sense. In other words, suppose the discipline is physical culture, a form of culture in which movement is the medium of expression (Bressan, 1979). Such an orientation does identify

in an abstract way which physical activity is the focus of the field. And although the field has resisted identifying performance as its focus, it should be noted that expressive forms of knowledge are accepted within higher education. Drama, art, and music are forms of recreation that have also attained the status of high culture, that is, forms of knowledge whose production is legitimate for its own sake. But physical performance, with the exception of dance, has heretofore not been so accepted.

Does "physical culture" successfully differentiate between cross- and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of expressive human movement? It does. Studies whose questions are borrowed from the mother discipline are interdisciplinary; studies whose questions are intended to enhance or learn more about performance are cross-disciplinary, and thus germane to the discipline. Sociology of sport may be used to reveal the distinction here. In an interdisciplinary approach, one studies socialization or stratification in the sport world to learn more about these processes; in a cross-disciplinary approach, one studies them in the sport world to learn how they affect sport performance (Rose, 1982).

Loy's (1970) study of adoption of innovation among British amateur swimming coaches provides a specific example here. Although undertaken in a sport context, Loy's emphasis on the social psychological attributes of early adopters is directed more to filling a void in the study of innovation (i.e., the use of personality inventories) than in the study of sport. While such an inquiry *may* contribute to the cross-disciplinary study of sport, Loy stopped at the point where cross-disciplinary investigation begins. Loy did not ask, nor has his study stimulated others to ask, questions oriented toward enhancing performance: Can these findings be generalized to other sports or to sports in other countries? Compared to other occupations, are coaches more predisposed or less predisposed to innovation? What are the social psychological and sociological processes coaches use to identify potential innovations? Do early-adopter coaches successfully distinguish between innovation and frivolous or inappropriate change? What procedures or conditions affect the rate of innovation in sport? How do the social psychological attributes of athletes affect results here? (And so on.)

While a cross-disciplinary approach is thus more applied, more issue-oriented than an interdisciplinary approach, a cross-disciplinary approach must be informed by, though not enslaved to, the propositions and theories of the mother discipline(s). The danger of inadequate theory construction is demonstrated by the long-running debate over the conduct of college athletics. This debate, over whether "big time" programs are education or entertainment and whether athletes in such programs are amateur or professional, has waxed and waned for the past 100 years. During that time, the explanations offered by those on both sides have changed little (Rose, 1985). Thus, while it is widely suspected that college sports have been corrupted, scandal and reform seem to alternate naturally and uncontrollably, with no end in sight. No position has put forth a convincing theory: the amateur/professional question remains, no one has explained why reforms have not worked in the past, and no one can persuasively identify policies that might work in the future.

Running parallel to the difference between the inter- and cross-disciplinary study of expressive human movement are differences in organizational support for each approach. Within a department of physical culture, research is directed toward improving or enhancing performance. As implied above, such research

includes more than just anatomical, physiological, and psychological investigations. Outside a department of physical culture may be individuals studying some subdomain of expressive human movement from the perspective of their discipline.

Bringing together the work of these diverse disciplinary approaches and the cross-disciplinary approach might be a form called a research institute. Such an institute would attempt to formalize the omnidirectional relationship between physical activity and the other disciplines and would be an arena for interaction between scholars in physical culture and other disciplines. Such a mechanism would institutionalize review of the other's research, and thereby force scholars of physical culture to improve the quality of their research. But conversely, such a mechanism would provide a vehicle for critiquing the work of those following an interdisciplinary approach. It would provide scholars of physical culture a vehicle for revealing to interdisciplinary researchers where their research is deficient because it overlooks some aspect of physical culture. An obvious example here is the validity of any history or sociology of higher education that neglects intercollegiate athletics.

It is also worth noting in this regard that as a discipline of physical culture matures, the question of inter- versus cross-disciplinary study will likely disappear. In music, for example, little debate is waged over the teaching of music history. Nor is it thought inappropriate to study the psychological and sociopolitical environment of the musician—in order to better appreciate a work. Recent developments provide further evidence: the mathematics of music has given rise to computer-based electronic music from synthesizers. But the point remains: the first step to ending the debate within physical education is identifying and understanding the nature of the field's discipline.

If physical culture overcomes these first two problems, does it address the next question: Can physical culture be divided (theoretically) in such a way that it encompasses the various practical activities it should unite? Here again, Metheny's position is suggestive: identify the distinct game-forms within physical culture. Given play, games, sport, dance, athletics, exercise, and so forth, can the concepts that organize and differentiate them be identified? For example, if sport is a form of game identified conceptually as "agon" (Caillois, 1955), can the other game-forms of the field be identified using Caillois' scheme? Is this scheme sufficient to cover all the forms? Conversely, if dance is thought to be a part of physical culture, can it be defined as a game-form?

But game-forms alone do not seem to adequately express the field's scope. Notions such as recreation and education are generally accepted as germane to the field, but they are certainly not game-forms. Another dimension seems to be needed here. The intuitive possibility is to identify, as a second dimension of physical culture, the setting of participation. Recreation seems to be a type of setting; education seems to be another type (Haag, 1979, p. 28). The question is, what are the different settings? How can they be identified theoretically?

Given these two dimensions, it may be inferred that notions such as exercise and health can be incorporated into the theoretical structure as objectives of participation (see Figure 1). An objective is the primary purpose of engaging in a particular game-form in a particular setting. The challenge here then is to identify the objective for each cell of the cross-classification. For example, if exercise is an objective within the domain of physical culture, is it the objective of the subdomain "recreational sport"?

SETTING OF PARTICIPATION

GAME-FORM

	Recreation (?)	Education (?)	?	?
Agon (?)	Exercise (?)	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?

OBJECTIVE OF PARTICIPATION

Figure 1 — Hypothetical domain of physical culture.

Finally, does this discipline of physical culture clarify the field's relationship to intercollegiate athletics? If both the discipline and college sport promote the pursuit of improved performance, for example, what is the relationship between the two? Were the early leaders of physical training correct in wanting to bring intercollegiate athletics within a department of physical training? Certainly the existence of college sport verifies the enthusiasm of college students for pursuing highly skilled performance and the acceptability of such pursuit in higher education. On the other hand, college athletics have always been controversial, embraced by those who claim they are educational but who want them kept separate from physical education, and often criticized by those within physical education who see these programs as entertainment (Rose, 1985). Indeed, the recent attempt by women physical educators, through the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, to overcome this separation ended in failure without resolving the issue (Rose & Oglesby, 1982). Is intercollegiate athletics a legitimate and appropriate part of a department of physical culture?

Rose (1981) found that intercollegiate athletics is a form of sport in which the primary purpose is neither education nor entertainment, but deference, that is, gaining respect. The outcome of this competition for respect extends not merely to athletics but to the entire institution. As such, it encourages the pursuit of improved performance for reasons different than does the discipline. In college sport, improved performance is the vehicle for gaining respect; in physical culture, improved performance is an end in itself. In physical culture, as in the liberal arts in general, learning (to perform) is done for its own sake. In other words, college sport and physical culture may share facilities and game-forms, but as ideal types they do not share purposes.⁴

The discipline of physical culture, when combined with this understanding of the nature of college sport, does more than clarify the relationship between the two. It reveals why college sport has had an inimical effect on the field until now. This effect becomes apparent when examining the athletic grant-in-aid. Given the purpose of college sport, it may be seen that athletic grants are given to those individuals who increase a school's chances of succeeding in its effort to be respected. An athletic grant therefore is *not* equivalent to an academic scholarship, which is given to someone with talent in a particular field. It *would* be equivalent if it were awarded to an individual with talent in and a desire to major in physical culture. Because there has been no such obligation and no such discipline, the better students have been free to avoid the field, even if their motive for participating in intercollegiate athletics has been improved performance for its own sake. On the other hand, the athlete who is a weak student gravitates toward the field because its reputed lack of rigor coincides well with the athlete's chosen major, staying eligible. One need look no further than this double jeopardy for a major root of the field's beleaguered reputation.

This double jeopardy suggests finally that the field's link with education has been harmful, not because it undermined a scientific approach but because it undermined a disciplinary approach, that is, an approach in which quality of performance was the major criteria for determining success and failure. Without such criteria, all such judgments are superfluous. And the field's reputation as organized recess is incontrovertible. A discipline of physical culture negates these problems. Superior students are attracted to the field for the challenge it poses; inferior students look elsewhere for an avenue to a diploma. And leaders of higher education are forced to reveal where they stand, for or against the discipline.

The Challenge Ahead

From its inception, the field currently known as physical education has been plagued by an identity crisis, a crisis over its legitimacy in higher educa-

⁴In Rose's (1981) model of sport, sport as a deference challenge and sport as education (i.e., sport within physical culture) are distinct ideal-types. This distinction may be blurred in reality, however, for example, if education itself is conducted as a deference challenge. One example of research here is to investigate the conduct of actual programs vis à vis the ideal-types.

tion. This paper has examined attempts to identify the nature of the field in order to determine *if* the crisis can be resolved. Two phases in the search for legitimacy were identified.

The search for an American system of physical training culminated in the 1930s in physical education. This conception of the field legitimated its place in academia by arguing that physical activity, notably sport, was a setting in which learning, especially of personal and social values, takes place. Within higher education, the principle objective of instruction became the preparation of the teacher-coach. The second phase began when physical education came under attack in the 1960s, that is, when the field was criticized for the inadequate quality of the teachers it produced and for its lack of a unique body of knowledge. While members of the field have responded by trying to boost the scientific credibility of their work, doubt about the field's body of knowledge remains. Two problems are salient: members of the field have been unable to conceptually identify the focus of their inquiry, and they have been unable to distinguish between a cross-disciplinary and an interdisciplinary study of the focus.

A resolution to this situation was proposed by observing the historical consistency of two points, the field's difficulty in articulating a unique body of cognitive knowledge (i.e., theory and ideas) and its disdain for promoting kinesthetic activity (i.e., performance) for its own sake. Resolution was suspected to lie in turning this posture on its head! It was therefore suggested that the discipline of the field should be understood as physical culture, a form of culture in which movement is the medium of expression. It was argued that such a discipline identifies *which* physical activity is the subject matter of the field *and* successfully distinguishes between cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary cognitive knowledge. Cross-disciplinary ideas and theories are those that are intended to encourage and enhance the ultimate goal of the field, the production of kinesthetic culture.

The challenge posed by this conception of the discipline compels reexamining at least the following: individual attitudes, research goals, and teaching objectives; the structure of the curriculum and the structure and interaction of the field with other fields; and current understanding about all forms of physical culture, their nature, their relationship to each other, and their place in society.

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