

# Concepts and Factors Underlying North American Culture as a Backdrop To Physical Education and Sport Development

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Selected concepts and factors are presented in an analysis of the milieu in which 20th century development in North America took place. These social, historic, and philosophic concepts and factors have in essence also provided a backdrop for what is currently called “sport and physical education” within the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. Moreover, these concepts and factors are responsible to a considerable degree for the development that has occurred in sport, dance, play, and exercise.

The topic was pursued in the following sequential manner: (1) by a presentation of the images of man’s basic nature from two perspectives; (2) by a recapitulation of the ways that men and women have claimed that they acquired knowledge of reality; (3) by a discussion of the profession’s persistent historical problems, as explained through a delineation of the social forces and professional concerns that have influenced the field; (4) by an historical review of the profession’s 20th century objectives (or “common denominators”); (5) by a consideration of ten recommended changes in prevailing stances if true professional status is to be achieved; (6) a brief statement about the status of the field’s disciplinary development; and (7) a recommendation of a systems approach which, if adopted, might hasten the profession’s development in the remaining years of the 20th century.

With the taking of such a holistic approach, the author is aware that he can only lay claim that partial evidence has been provided in an effort to explain the direct and indirect influences of these concepts and factors upon the present status of the profession and its body of knowledge (or possible disciplinary status). Nevertheless, after completing a consideration of the above sub-topics in sequential fashion, it was possible to draw some tentative hypotheses about the field’s development. *First*, a variety of influences have thwarted the achievement of true professional status, and it may be stated further that the field seems to be suffering from what Walter Kaufmann has identified as “decidophobia” – the fear of making autonomous decisions. *Second*, the field of sport and physical education is only minimally professional based on its disciplinary development. *Third*, the evolving profession has not yet appreciated the need for the promotion and implementation of a ‘total system’ concept. *Finally*, because other fields are increasingly encroaching on what could be the profession’s primary concern -the study and promulgation of knowledge about human motor performance in sports, dance, play, and exercise – the opportunity for the achievement of true professional status will not be available indefinitely.