

PHYSICAL CULTURE, FITNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

To Serve and Defend: Female Physical Educators during WWII in Canada and the US

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While much is known about the history of the female physical education profession in America, and about its alternate paradigm for sport as it was governed by separatist sport governing bodies (such as the Women's Division, National Amateur Athletic Federation), far less is known about the profession as it existed in Canada, and of the Canadian Womens Amateur Athletic Federation, which promoted NSWA modified sports, yet which did not hold as hard a line against female sports competition. This research examines the WWII wartime professional service and war-related work of female physical educators in Canada and the United States, identifying the variety of ways in which the female profession in both countries worked to promote female physical activity during each country's national wartime crisis. It compares the pre-war female profession as it existed in Canada and in the United States — its similarities and differences over matters such as playdays, athletics, and international competition - and it evaluates the connection between the two groups, as well as how professionals in the two countries responded to their nation's wartime crisis. Specific questions to be addressed include: Did these two groups respond to the wartime situation in the same way? How did each negotiate its engaging in physical training activity and sport programs during wartime? Were pre-war Canadian and American differences on the matter of competition borne out in the military context? Further, how did each country's military, in turn, respond to the professional service of female physical educators? And, more generally, how did this wartime experience in both countries affect peace-time policies for the profession?

Sources used in this analysis include WWII-era professional literature published by AAHPER/CAHPER; military documents from the Army Air Forces (US) and the Dept. of Natl. Defence (Can.); archival sources from American and Canadian physical education collections; as well as secondary works on the histories of American and Canadian physical education.