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The entrance to physical education through the examination room gives exceptional opportunity for the study of the individual. I wonder whether this opportunity is being embraced at its fullness, even on the physical side. Do we know enough about a small proportion of the men who go out of the examination room to prescribe what exercise is best for them or whether they need exercise of our kind at all? Are we guessing or are we examining?

Granted that the individual capacity is known within reasonable limits, how is he then to be interested in activity? Can he not be confronted with a ladder, the steps of which ascend gradually to a complete physical vigor and find out on this ladder where he is qualified to take hold? In other words, is there in the Association a graduated program of physical exercise which consists of progress from the simplest to the most complex and are we able to fit the individual into this program?

It is a fair question whether the Young Men's Christian Association is much concerned with highly competitive sport. We are after a different thing, namely, the values which are discoverable in the individual man. As we cannot do everything, we must concentrate as an organization upon what is most important.

The Young Men's Christian Association is in real danger as a Movement because of its continued emphasis upon the group and the consequent danger of losing the individual. Physical education under the strong attraction of recreative games may be led to the development of a training process instead of an individualized educational process, that is, it may become not a school but a military organization whose object is to regiment scores of individuals to perform movements to music in unison without much regard to what is happening to the individual in this program. That is, the instructor has decided in advance what is good for a great company of men and he shoves them all through that process. This may be training but it is not education because it does not take into account the varieties among individuals.

Everyone likes to see an expert perform and many Americans get their exercise by climbing the steps to the grand stand. There is probably some value in this as a form of human interest but it can hardly be called stimulation of physical education with character building as an end.

The Young Men's Christian Association cannot afford to get off its major program, namely, to watch individuals and to help them in their all-round character building process. Physical education has a big responsibility because of the increasing knowledge which we have of the relation between physical well-being and the smooth functioning of the mental process, the control of emotional reactions, and particularly the sense of power to carry out purposes.

To my mind, it is not necessary to assume that the character building process through physical education is to be secured in group activity only. My own belief is that as the individual is being developed either through group activity or in some other form to a vigorous and zestful physical life, he is forming thus the basis upon which character education can proceed. I am not at all sure that there are character building values in physical education. Those values are rather on top of physical education. I would not argue against the conviction expressed above that there are great advantages to human character in group activity such as games. What I question is whether there is a carry over into life. There is no such question about physical education of the individual which helps him to start young to develop a strong psycho-physical mechanism, particularly if the educational process does in the realm of the physical what it should do in the school, namely, to stimulate him to life-long care of his physical needs in the same way that the school should stimulate him to a life time of study and intellectual activity.

Anything which gets in the way of this individual development may be all right for others but it is hampering the distinctive function of the Association.

Can the Physical Director Really Change Character?

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The answer to this question is important. If the physical director cannot *change* character then an army of devoted Christian men have passed through great tribulation to no purpose. It has been a heroic task to build up this profession and the guiding star of all the pioneers has been the faith that the intelligent direction of physical activities could lead to improved character and better conduct. Without this faith, thousands of physical directors would begin to look for other jobs where the hours are shorter, the pay larger and the work easier. In these days of scientific testing and measuring when human nature is being analyzed and investigated in a thousand ways unheard of before it

may be worth while to review this question "Can the physical director change character?"

The first answer from some quarters would be an emphatic "no." The study of heredity has made enormous progress in the last half century and has revealed the amazing control of life by the germ plasma. The unbending laws of inheritance, work out the pattern of our bodily estate in the dark mystery of sub-atomic combinations far beyond the reach of even our strongest microscopes. We only know enough of chromosomes and cell division and multiplication to be sure that nature has set barriers about us beyond which we cannot go. Height, weight, sex, color of skin, hair and

eyes, quantity and quality of muscles, bones, glands, organs, and even the quality of the nervous system itself, all these are irrevocably determined the moment sperm and ovum unite. Now it is just this intricate balance of muscular—neural—glandular activity which establishes the frame work to which all acquired habits will have to be attached. Inherited reflexes, instincts and tendencies form the basis on which all individual habits must rest. Hence, all later habit-systems of feeling and emotion, of imagery and ideas, of skills and morals are pre-destined and fore-ordained from the foundations of the world to make John Smith the man he is. He is what he is by virtue of inherited patterns over which neither he nor his friends have any control. "When someone will show me how to inject the Golden Rule into the chromosomes," says one, "then will I begin to take an interest in moral education." Others claim to be able to predict with certainty whether a six months child will be able to complete high school or not. If this answer is correct, we might as well close up the shop or else discover new and better reasons for keeping it open. From this point of view the physical director cannot change character.

A second answer from a radically different point of view is equally negative. According to the Behaviorists this idea of instincts and their influence is rank nonsense. All children are born free and equal. John Locke was accurate in describing the mind as a blank tablet. We are not born with bonds but build our own in response to stimuli. Character in all its aspects is the product of conditioned reflexes organized as habit-systems. One famous leader of the school offers to take any child of any parents and make him into an intelligent, moral and efficient citizen. This is decidedly more encouraging than the rigid determinism of the Hereditarians.

But, alas, this system is of little use for a physical director who does not meet his pupils until they are twelve years old, and who is expected to produce character changes even in the bald-headed members of the Business and Professional Men's Club. For the exponents of this system assure us that the great issues of life are settled before we reach kindergarten. It is claimed that the first few years build up a system of conditioned emotional responses which form the patterns on which later habits will be organized. This theory if validated ought to lead to the rehabilitation of the Nurse Maids Union and to the establishment of new degrees for experts on infantilism, but it means ruin for the physical director who hopes to alter character. He is too late.

A third answer in the negative can be secured from the psycho-analysts. Here too we have great emphasis on the period of infancy. At this time overwhelming but unconscious drives for food and sex and power struggle with the negations and inhibitions of conscious experience. The conflict leaves its unhealed scars, its unsatisfied desires in the subconscious. If the devotees of this system are right our later life is merely a thinly disguised picture of the incessant warfare

among these denizens of the deep. Obviously this interpretation finds no place for an innocent physical director, with his gym and pool except as he provides a theatre for "exhibitionism" or egoism. It is enough to make the angels weep to think of the energy wasted on "Anthropometry" and "Physical Diagnosis" when all the time we should have been developing psycho-analytical fishermen, able to hook the hideous complexes of the deep and drag them forth to light. Obviously the current activities of the physical director are of little or no avail if this theory is sound.

Now it will be noted that all of these schools of thought, however violently they contradict each other, are all agreed on one point—*character is formed and destiny settled either at birth or very shortly after.* The Association helped to popularize the idea that character was being formed in childhood and youth. For a quarter of a century it paralyzed criticism by its use of such magic words as adolescence. The teen age was the critical and strategic period. We thought we had located the storm centre of life and that our adroit manipulation of physical activities and Bible study could bring peace and order out of chaos. But, if these current theories are correct the battles of adolescence are sham battles or at least only the working out of decisions made in infancy. If these doctrines are to be accepted at their face value, we cannot change character. By the same token, all other educational enterprises conducted by schools and churches are equally futile. It looks as if the YMCA physical directorship is not a life work at all. It is a mere waste of time and energy.

Now, wait a minute. Before you send in your resignation we had better check up some of these theories. Psychology is in a very fluid state. As a science it is just beginning, and hasty generalizations need to be examined. Promising leads are frequently developed into elaborate systems by the free use of imagination. Individual experience is elevated into universal law. Not infrequently rival theories cancel each other. Before we abandon all the methods which have been developed by practical experience we ought to study the central body of psychological opinion. If we do, we will find that the three viewpoints already summarized are to be accepted with reserve. The truth of the matter is that we know very little about the nature of character, the laws which govern its development, or the methods most useful in securing desired results.

At the first YMCA convention in Buffalo in 1854, one of the delegates stated that the aim of the YMCA was character. For nearly half a century it was assumed that good character was a by-product of "conversion." The scientific approach to the problem belongs almost entirely to this century and mostly to the post-war period. Character formation after more than a century of life service by the schools is now the centre of educational inquiry and experiment. The churches are beginning to study the problem and to develop better ways for getting character. The International Council of Religious Education, 1516 Mallen Building, Chicago, has

worked out a new theory of the curriculum and its recent issue of a Leaders Guide—"The Christian Quest" represents the pooled experience of "the best minds." On every hand we find the sharpest kind of thinking and careful experimentation going on and every forward looking physical director should have a share in it. Educational theory is veering around to a belief that our activity programme has great possibilities. We will find the most incisive criticism of our slipshod methods and our easy faith that physical activities have of themselves moral, religious or educational value, but, the tide is setting strongly in our direction. While popular magazine scientists pour out their sensational findings and their extravagant educational deductions there is more reason than ever to believe that the physical director can effectively change character.

Of course there is truth in all that is being said about the importance of heredity and of infantile experience.

Some matters are settled long before a boy appears at a YMCA. On the other hand, a great deal remains unsettled. Many of the most important issues of life hang in the balance as conflicting instincts struggle with each other and with conflicting habits. New ideals are forming and the physical ideals of skill and power and grace have the right of way. The physical director cannot hope to be as influential as parents in determining character but he has an unusual opportunity if he knows how to use it. Can a physical director change character? It all depends on the physical director. He can if he will pay the price to learn how. If you are interested in this question you might begin by reading such a book as "The Psychology of Character" by Roback, published by Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927 and "The Christian Quest"—published by the International Council of Religious Education of Chicago.

Impressions from the Annual Conference of the Association Profession

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This article was solicited because of the fact that its author is the chairman of the Joint Committee of the Personnel Division and the Physical Education Department of the National Council studying matters related to the Physical Directorship. As a graduate of the physical education course of the Association College, Chicago and also a graduate in medicine, he spent many years in serving as physical director in important Association positions. For almost eleven years he has been General Secretary of the Milwaukee Association.—Editor.

In the last fifteen years since the organization of the Conference on the Association Profession, we have progressed a long way towards establishing the Secretaryship as a profession. In these years policies have been created and standards raised for the training, placing, transferring, and retiring of our secretaries, as well as the organization of a Personnel Division in the National Council.

The recent meeting of the conference at Pocono Summit, Pa., March 22-24, although it had no legislative power, carried the flag a bit further by its thinking.

A considerable amount of time was taken up with the general topic of "Selecting and Training of Men." In this it was emphasized over and over again that theory and practice must go hand in hand. My mind was constantly running back of course, over my own experience, and not infrequently to the Physical Department where we have the most complete demonstration of how theory and practice, as far as character building is concerned, have been kept in close proximity. No phase of our work has been more practical in character building than the Physical work, beginning with the advent of the Christian Physical Director, followed by Dr. Gulick with his introduction of the American type of Physical Education best expressed in Association work.

Considerable time was devoted to the review of the methods of the various Associations in affording their

secretaries an opportunity to further their education in local colleges or training agencies. As I briefly reviewed the men present I knew of at least four who had been, or are at the present time in physical work, who had done this very thing in their early preparation. In those days this plan was not always agreeable to the Association. Some of us had to change our location in order to finish college.

As practically all of our smaller conferences are now conducted on the Discussion Method plan, this of course was no exception. The chief advocates of the discussion method were present. It occurred to me that the Physical Directors were not using the discussion method as much as they should perhaps, and yet it is nothing new in physical work. Good college coaches have used it for years, going into detail on the blackboard, not only working out the plays, but discussing theory and ideals. Physical Directors don't seem to have time to use this valuable method in their work. Few of them have a convenient blackboard upon which to work. Wouldn't it be a good plan, for instance, to call a meeting of all the players in an older boys' basketball league and devote at least an hour discussing the purpose of the league, the advantages to the players, the rules or agreements of the game, what penalties would be enforced for violations of agreement, attitude towards the officials, and other questions of this nature.

We tried this plan in one of our community leagues in Milwaukee this winter. The games were played in the social center. Later the manager of the social center came to our secretary and asked him to explain the secret of the high grade of sportsmanship which these boys exhibited in the league.

Another fruitful field along discussion lines would be the Psychology of Play, especially in its relation to