



Mid Atlantic Regional Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine

Annual Scientific Meeting, November 4th- 5th, 2017
Conference Proceedings

International Journal of Exercise Science, Issue 9, Volume 6



The Effects of a Six-Week Boot Camp Program on Exercise-related Affects and Perceptions

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Physical inactivity is the greatest public health concern of the 21st century (Blair 2009; Kohl et al., 2012). Lack of motivation for behavior change as well as a low sense of self-efficacy for exercise are amongst the greatest contributors of the problem (Lox, 2017). While evidence suggests the effectiveness of select physical activity (PA) interventions for improving PA levels, whether these interventions can also help long term PA behavior change is unknown (Prince et al., 2014) **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was two-fold 1) to investigate the effectiveness of a six-week boot camp program for increasing motivations for long-term PA behavior change, self-efficacy for exercise, and improving participants' perceptions of their general health as well as 2) to gauge participants' motives for adhering to the program. **METHODS:** Twenty-seven sedentary adults ($M_{age}=30.04$, $SD=10.33$) participated in a vigorous boot camp program for a minimum of five days per week for fifty minutes a day throughout a six-week period responded to questionnaires measuring their motivation for behavior change, self-efficacy for exercise and, perceptions of general health at the onset and the completion of the program. At the completion of the program, participants also responded to a single qualitative prompt for identifying motives for continued adherence to the program. **RESULTS:** Paired sample t tests indicated a significant improvement in participants' mean scores for self-efficacy for exercise ($M=7.21 \pm 2.2$ pre vs. 8 ± 1.65 post; $t= -2.38$, $p < 0.05$) and the perception of their general health ($M=3.17 \pm 1.01$ pre vs. 3.92 ± 0.7 post; $t= -4.21$, $p < 0.05$). Results from the qualitative prompt revealed three main themes for continued adherence: (1) structured aspect of the program, (2) accountability between the participants and exercise leaders, and (3) the sense of community within the program. **CONCLUSIONS:** These findings suggest that alternative boot camp interventions can prove effective means for improving important precursors of PA behaviors. From a practical standpoint, structured approaches that can provide a supportive community as well as a sense of accountability may present critical initiatives in promoting long term PA and solving the problem of inactivity.

Statement of Disclosure: Supported by a West Chester College of Health Sciences Student -Faculty Research Award and West Chester University Foundation Faculty and Student Research (FaStR) Grant