

## A Phenomenological Investigation of Women's Experiences With Personal Training

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### ABSTRACT

*Int J Exerc Sci 3(3) : X-Y, 2010.* Personal training is a rapidly growing industry in a country that is in dire need of physical fitness and health improvements. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand women's experiences with personal training. To address the research question, eight female participants ages 24 to 54 years were interviewed using the following phenomenological question: "When you think about your current experience with personal training what stands out for you?" The interviews were conducted, transcribed, and qualitatively analyzed to identify themes in participants' responses. The ground that emerged was *positive experience* within which existed four figural themes: *Relationships, trainer qualities, outcomes, and motivation*. Results reveal new insight for professionals in the fitness industry and provide future directions for research in kinesiology and exercise psychology.

**KEY WORDS:** Physical activity, training, exercise, personal training, fitness facility, phenomenology

### INTRODUCTION

With the current obesity epidemic in the United States physical activity and maintaining health and fitness should be a priority for our population. The medical implications of obesity include an increased risk of morbidity and mortality, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, diabetes, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, cardiovascular disease, and cancers such as breast, colon, endometrial, kidney and esophagus (13). Yet, over 38% of adults remain physically inactive. Further, 34% of adults in the U.S. are overweight and 31% more of them are obese (3). These statistics demonstrate that

60-65% of adults in America have a weight problem with critical medical, psychological, social, and economic effects. With this in mind, the challenge to begin and maintain a program of physical activity and incorporate health and fitness into a lifestyle is posed. Personal trainers may provide part of a solution to the growing problem of obesity and inactivity. Offering guidance, education and motivation to a population that needs direction, information and inspiration may be one reason why the personal training industry has taken off.

The popularity of personal training in the U.S. has grown rapidly. In 1985, there were

approximately 9,000 personal trainers employed; by 1991, this number had grown to over 40,000. This trend is expected to continue. The hourly wage of trainers has also skyrocketed from minimum wage levels to upwards of \$100 per hour in some locations. While the personal training profession continues to expand, little is known about why women seek and continue with personal training services. For those individuals who are not in shape and/or who are intimidated by fitness facilities, trainers can provide the emotional comfort needed to initiate a program. Personal trainers may serve as a bridge for many people new to exercise and fitness, particularly women who may be unfamiliar with a gym atmosphere.

However, to date no studies have examined U.S. female exercisers' perspectives of the personal training experience. Knowledge of female clients' perceptions could provide greater insight into the relationship women have to exercise, with their own bodies, as well as aspects of the personal trainer-trainee relationship that influence the quality of the exercise experience. Since women hold the majority of U.S. gym memberships (4), the purpose of this phenomenological study was to obtain an in-depth description of their experiences with personal training.

## METHODS

### *Participants and Context*

Approval to conduct this research was obtained from the university Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB approval). The participants included eight Caucasian females between the ages of 24 and 54. Women currently working with a certified personal trainer who had

completed at least eight one-hour sessions in the previous eight weeks were recruited for the study. The particular fitness facility that the women were recruited from opened in September of 2001 and currently has three locations in the same city. Its mission statement reads, "[Our goal is]...to provide a bright, energetic, and state of the art facility with a fun atmosphere that will encourage and motivate people to exercise." Further, this facility aimed to "...provide a staff to assist and educate our members every step of the way on their journey to improved health and fitness."

According to its latest report, membership included 55% female, 45% male, and an average member age of 35 years (age ranged from 20-60 years). There was a one-time enrollment fee of between \$99-\$149 and monthly dues of \$39-\$69. Enrollment fees were sometimes waived if members selected a membership option that included a certain number of personal training sessions up front. One example of this was a membership which included 25 sessions with a personal trainer as well as "elite status," meaning that the member could bring in any guest or the same guest as much as s/he wanted as long as they worked out together.

### *Procedures*

The qualitative research method of phenomenology was utilized in this study to fully understand and describe the lived experience of the participants. Phenomenology allows participants to give in-depth, rich descriptions of their experience of a particular phenomenon (12). The first three authors gained access to participants by working collaboratively with Fitness Managers and personal trainers at the three sites. Each was also a

certified personal trainer herself but had no relationship with the training clients interviewed. An information card, which explained the purpose of the study and invited women to participate, was given to potential participants. Those who were interested were asked to fill out the card and return it to the Fitness Manager of the club where they trained. The manager placed the card in an envelope and forwarded it to the researchers. The researchers then contacted the participant, determined if she qualified for the study, and scheduled an interview at a time and location convenient to the participant. Efforts were made to ensure that no prior relationship existed between the interviewer and the participants in this study. All participants signed an informed consent form agreeing to take part in the study on a volunteer basis, with no compensation offered, and all were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Prior to data collection, the researchers underwent bracketing interviews conducted by another member of the research team. These interviews addressed each individual's experiences with personal training as well as any expectations she held of potential participant responses. The bracketing interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed following the guidelines suggested by Moustakas (12). All relevant statements were recorded and arranged into meaning units (e.g., non-repetitive and mutually exclusive codes). These meaning units were reread and recoded to identify emerging themes which were then synthesized with the meaning units to form a textural description of the researchers' perceptions. After reflecting on the textural description, a structural

description was created which described how the textural descriptions were related to the phenomenon of personal training. Lastly, the researchers created textural-structural descriptions that wove both textural and structural descriptions together to form overarching themes (12).

The bracketing interviews were analyzed and the researchers' biases were identified, several themes emerged. For example, the researchers expected participants to discuss topics such as social support, accountability, relationships, results, both positive and negative experiences with their trainers, knowledge gained from trainers, and psychological and physiological effects of exercise through personal training. Their experiences as personal trainers and previously as clients shaped the expectations for the current study. At that point, one researcher was selected to conduct all the interviews with participants. Prior to each interview, she explained the purpose and procedures of the study and asked the participants fill out an informed consent statement and a demographic information form. Each participant was also asked to choose a pseudonym in order to preserve the confidentiality of her interview. The site of the interviews varied, as they were chosen by the participants to be convenient to their locations and schedules.

Moustakas suggests there are five definitive characteristics to a phenomenological research question: (a) it attempts to expose the true essence of an experience; (b) it seeks to qualitatively address an individual's experience; (c) it fully and passionately engages the participant; (d) it is descriptive (not predictive) in nature; and (e) it is illuminated through thick

descriptions of an experience (12). Applying these principles, the phenomenological question each participant was asked to address was: "When you think about your current experience with personal training, what stands out for you?" Follow-up questions (e.g., "Could you say a bit more about that?") and low-inference paraphrasing were used only to obtain additional clarification or a more complete understanding of the participants' experience. The interviewer began each interview with an informal conversation to create a comfortable atmosphere and develop an initial sense of rapport. Once a safe climate was developed, the interviewer turned on the digital audio recorder and asked the aforementioned question. Interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes.

#### *Statistical Analysis*

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researchers. Each then independently coded and thematized individual transcripts in the same fashion used to thematize the bracketing interviews. They then met to discuss the emergent themes of individual interviews that each had discovered. This triangulation process continued until consensus was reached on the major themes of participants' interviews. After the individual interviews were thematized, the themes were communicated to the participants as a form of member-checking. Each was asked whether her personal training experience was accurately captured in the themes and all said they were.

## RESULTS

The results of the phenomenological analysis revealed four main figure themes: relationships, trainer qualities, outcomes, and motivation. Each of these themes is grounded in a theme of *positive experience*. Supporting quotes, discussion and connection to existing literature is provided in the next section.

#### *Thematic Ground: Positive Experience*

The theme of *positive experience* was prominent in all of these women's experiences with personal training. Every interview contained phrases, words, or ideas that expressed this theme. Additionally, each participant described the experience of personal training using words like "enjoyable," "fun," and "meaningful" in a number of ways.

The words "positive experience" surfaced specifically in several interviews. As Kacey stated, "I've had *positive experiences* with it [personal training]" and "I think it's a very positive thing, for me." Participants also talked about how their experience with training was fun, enjoyable, and how a training session "does not feel like it's all work." Many looked forward to their training sessions. As Lorraine said, "I have something to look forward to after work....it's been a very positive experience, I would have to say." Katie also described the workout with her trainer as something she looked forward to saying, "I really enjoy it...she always makes it fun, and I'm like 'yes, I get to have fun' even though I'm working out - I get to have fun, and with her."

#### *Theme #1: Relationships*

Several aspects of *relationships* emerged as important themes in the interviews. Specifically, participants talked about the

friendship they had with their trainers, including communication, the social component as well as the professional side. Of these subthemes, participants most frequently mentioned how important it was to feel like their trainer was a friend.

*Friendship.* Communication was an important aspect of the participants' friendships with their trainers. It was important for them to feel like they could talk to their trainer, both socially and on a deep and personal level. Participants talked about relationship issues, family struggles, males at the gym, and other "things that are going on" and "hard times." They noted both "talking" and "listening" as aspects of the friendship dynamic they experienced as necessary with their trainers. In fact, Kacey specifically compared her friendship with her trainer to therapy, saying, "It's like therapy and working out at the same time, you know?" This statement reinforced for us the notion that communication was a salient quality of this friendship.

In addition to communication, several women expressed that being known and understood were positive aspects of client-trainer friendship. Katie stated, "She actually *knows* me, she knows my birthday, she knows my mom, I mean she's getting to know *me*, she knows I'm in school and it's, it's like really becoming a friend." Being known on a personal level made participants feel as though the trainer could tailor their exercise programs specifically to their individual needs.

In addition to feeling known and understood, many of the women felt a personal connection with their trainer. Katie described this positive connection as unique when she stated:

*And there's only been a few other people that I have that connection with, and they're my best friends. So, for me to have the connection with her [personal trainer] like that, I'm just like, stunned and I'm just like, I can't believe this...it feels like I've known her since I was little.*

Because of this connection, friendships with trainers which extended beyond the fitness facilities were not uncommon. Several women talked about dining or "hanging out" with their trainer, showing that the relationship they had with their trainer was personal as well as professional.

*Social.* Several of the participants also talked about social relationships that developed from the personal training experience. These included relationships with other trainers, with friends of the trainer, and with other members of the "gym community." These relationships were important and appeared to make their personal training a more positive experience overall.

Many mentioned being introduced to new people through their trainer, both inside and outside of the fitness facility. Katie liked the fact that other trainers knew her name, acknowledged her, and encouraged her, all of which contributed to her positive experience. JD also discussed the social atmosphere surrounding personal training when she said, "But, there's a social factor in there, too, like, it's hilarious. They just crack me up, you know? Our trainers are there for a good majority of the day, so they have all these crazy stories of stuff that goes on." The camaraderie and social relationships amongst their trainers, other

trainers and other clients was something these women enjoyed.

*Professional.* In addition to friendship with the trainer, participants also described the professional aspect of their relationship. These women understood that the client-trainer relationship was business-oriented and based on money. Some acknowledged that they were paying for the services of the trainer, but did not view this in a negative way. In fact, JD and Kacey specifically stated that personal training was “worth the money.”

Some participants noted that their trainer “goes the extra mile” professionally. For example, Heidi stated that her trainer gave her a personal cell phone number, prescribed outside exercise, and rearranged her schedule so the two could meet for a training session. She described this trainer as, “very professional, she’s always on time” and that “...she really goes out of her way to make sure that I get what I want.”

#### *Theme #2: Trainer Qualities*

The second primary theme appeared as *trainer qualities*. This included both *trainer characteristics* and *trainer skills*. Personal trainers played an integral role in all seven women’s overall enjoyment of their current engagement with personal training. Dakota stated, “Well, first and foremost, I mean, I love my trainer...she is awesome, and that, that’s what’s most important to me.” JD said, “I introduce everybody to my trainer. I’m like, ‘You gotta come meet my trainer. She’s awesome!...everybody needs to have one [personal trainer].”

*Trainer characteristics.* Participants often described the characteristics of their trainers when reflecting on their current

experiences with personal training. The most commonly cited subthemes included being optimistic and being fun. One participant, Katie, described her personal trainer as a person who has “a bubbly attitude,” “can’t think of anything bad to say about anybody,” and “always upbeat.” Another participant, JD, described her trainer as being highly energetic and funny when she said, “[She’s] very, very lively. She cracks me up. She’s actually quite hilarious.” Throughout the seven transcripts, words like “nice,” “friendly,” “outgoing” and “a hoot” emerged when participants were talking about their personal trainers.

Interestingly, none characterized their trainers in a negative way. However, several commented on their trainer’s gender. Among other things, they felt that they would not have the same connection with a male trainer because they believed that female trainers had a better understanding of women’s bodies. As Heidi explained:

*I think if I had a male trainer, I don’t think that I could, I would get along with him the same way...I couldn’t joke around with, or have as good a time with a male trainer...maybe I would be too self-conscious...it just seems like it’s easier for me to, uh, get along with a female.*

As Heidi’s quotes illustrate, participants believed that only a *woman* could understand another woman’s body.

*Trainer skills.* In addition to commenting on personal trainer *characteristics*, participants also discussed the *skills* of their trainers in depth. Three main subthemes emerged to describe trainer skills: *maximizing client effort*, *understanding client capabilities*, and

*possessing competence* in the field of personal training.

Participants often described ways that trainers *maximized the exercise sessions*. With the assistance of personal trainers, participants were able to achieve more than they expected and exceed the level of workout they thought was possible. They felt their trainers pushed them to new levels during sessions through encouragement and motivation and perceived the presence of a trainer to be integral to this accelerated exercise level. As Anna stated, "If I do it on my own, I'll come and do it, but I won't probably do as hard a workout," acknowledging that her trainer caused her to work harder than she would have alone. Kacey echoed Anna's statement when she explained, "I'm just like, 'Oh, I'm dying,' but she gets it out of me, you know? Whereas, I would not push myself that hard. She definitely pushes me." Participants believed that their trainers helped them achieve new levels of exercise and break former self-imposed barriers and limitations.

Part of the subtheme of trainer skills was the *understanding client capabilities*. Participants appreciated the fact that their trainers were aware of their physical capabilities and many noted that they knew their limits better than the clients themselves. As Kacey said, "To me, I would think, 'Oh, you know, this is just perfect'..[but]...it'd be like, she'd give me heavier weights. And, so, it's like, 'I don't think I can do this' but, she knew..." Kacey thought she knew her own capabilities; however, her personal trainer recognized that she could do more. Dakota reported a similar situation in which her personal

trainer understood her limits or lack thereof. Similarly, Dakota said:

*She took time in the beginning to know what I could do, and...she knows, I think, even more than I do a lot of times what I can do, 'cause she'll do something, and I'll look at her, and I'm like, 'Yeah, you really want me to do that?' and she's, 'Sure, you can do this.'*

The last major subtheme that emerged for trainer skills was *possessing competence* in the field of personal training. Participants spoke of particular types of knowledge their trainers possessed including *designing workouts* and *informing/teaching* them about exercise and nutrition. This was particularly important because many participants sought out personal training because they had plateaued using their own fitness routines. Others had injuries that prevented them from engaging in various types of exercise. Regardless of the reasons for purchasing personal training, these women all felt their personal trainers were skilled in designing workouts for them. They were appreciative that trainers addressed their wants and needs providing creative new exercises to challenge and maintain interest. As JD said, "I have a specialized type of knee issue. She completely redesigned, or designed a workout program to strengthen my knee." JD's trainer had competence in working with injuries and this enhanced her effectiveness in program design. Several participants also addressed another important component of the workouts their trainers designed for them: variation of exercise. As Katie stated:

*...when you constantly do something over and over, you get tired of it, and she [my trainer] makes these things up, and...I don't know what*

*we're gonna do next. I don't know if we're gonna go work out on a machine, go play trampoline basketball, do floor crawls, Jacob's ladder, what exactly we're going to do.*

Katie was pleased with the unpredictability of her workouts because they kept her motivated and she didn't "...get tired of it." Dakota, reported a similar experience with the variety of her trainer's exercises as she explained:

*I can't even keep up with all the exercises that she's done with me because we don't do the same things ever. So, I'm always sore. And, I think that's helped to develop my muscles more because we don't do the same thing. Rarely, rarely do we do the same thing.*

Dakota also linked the variability in her workouts to an increase in her muscular development. This meant progressing toward her fitness goals including an increase in muscle mass and a higher caloric burn. This was also mentioned as a competence that trainers had which participants appreciated. Trainers taught clients about exercise as well as nutrition. Some teaching occurred in the form of making sure participants executed their exercises correctly, while other teaching included informing participants about nutritional needs. For example, Kacey, talked about her trainer's instruction about proper weight-lifting form, "...I don't have a really good sense of if I'm doing something in the correct way, where she'll be going, 'No, no, no, no, no.' No, look...your knee's not—watch your knee'...she gives me pointers." Katie explained that her trainer possessed important nutritional information and viewed her as a source of knowledge on the topic. As she said, "[My trainer] has the

degree in the nutrition area. So, I know that she knows more than me...I'm gonna listen to her." These three types of *trainer skills - maximizing client effort, understanding client capabilities, and possessing competence* - were crucial components of participants' experiences with personal training.

### *Theme #3: Outcomes*

The third figural theme that emerged was *outcomes* which included *physical outcomes* and *psychological outcomes*. While the purpose of this investigation was to explore women's experiences with personal training, the emergence of this theme was not surprising since the premise of personal training is to design and supervise exercise programs that produce outcomes clients are paying for.

*Physical outcomes.* The most prominent outcome mentioned by participants was *physical outcomes*. Physical outcomes included losing weight, inches and sizes, becoming stronger, seeing more muscle definition, experiencing progression to more advanced exercises, and in some cases, rehabilitating old injuries. Comments like Anna's such as, "I've noticed the weight loss" and then a reference to significant others (e.g., Anna then referred to her husband and how "he can tell the results") were common as participants described how their bodies changed physically as a result of working with a personal trainer. Participants also took pride in their progress as Heidi commented, "...now I can see a tricep and my biceps are getting bigger, and I can bench press more and I can definitely see physical results that I'm happy with." Participants also indicated that people noticed physical changes in them. For example, Katie described, "and, like, even



the trainers that I don't train with have come up and said, 'you look good.'"

Physical outcomes were directly attributed to working with a personal trainer and many women talked about personal training as the catalyst for these physical changes. Heidi gave one example of this when she stated, "I've lost about eight pounds I think since I've been working out with her [personal trainer] but I've just, I gained muscle mass and I've gained definition- you can see it - so that's, that's reward enough for me." Others felt their personal training had helped them break plateaus, accelerate results, and alleviate injuries.

*Psychological outcomes.* Closely linked with the physical outcomes were the *psychological outcomes*. Many participants described their experiences as making them feel better about themselves, helping them develop more self-confidence, and resulting in an overall increase in energy as an outcome of the personal training. Another psychological outcome was a sense of accomplishment, as Lorainne described, "I feel so much better about myself after every workout with her." Participants clearly saw several benefits of working with a personal trainer for improving mental states. As Kacey continued:

*It's not like I've achieved perfection. But, you know, it's a process, it's a journey - whatever you want to call it, you know? But, at least I'm not stuck at the very beginning, you know? I feel like I'm a lot better able...I don't know. I think (my trainer is) improving my confidence I guess.*

*Theme #4: Motivation*

The final figural theme was motivation, with *accountability* and *encouragement* emerging as subthemes. Each participant talked about how her trainer motivated her in some way, often mentioning the factor of accountability. Many also talked about their trainers' use of encouragement.

*Accountability.* Nearly every woman felt accountable to be present for a set appointment, motivating her to arrive at the fitness facility for an exercise session. Several of the participants stated that, "Having a personal trainer has definitely motivated me to go to the gym because it is someone I'm accountable to." According to participants, the appointment with the trainer was the primary motivator to exercise. Anna indicated that, "If I don't have someone that I have an appointment with to do it, then I'm just, I'll probably find something else to do." Having a set appointment with a trainer was similar to having a contract to exercise.

Along with feeling accountable to the appointment/trainer, many participants also felt accountable to work *hard* during sessions because their trainer was watching or instructing them to perform a pre-planned workout. Angie talked about the pressure she felt to perform well for her trainer when she stated, "She has high standards, and she holds other people to her standards, you know?" Overall, participants' trainers appeared to use accountability as a motivational tool.

*Encouragement.* Encouragement was another form of motivation emerging from the interviews. Trainers provided inspiration in various ways such as exercising with participants, being fit and healthy role models, and showing

participants their own capabilities. A second form of encouragement was verbal feedback from the trainers. Dakota stated, "she encourages me, she pushes me really hard...and I like that." Encouragement included exhortation to do more repetitions, more weight on a machine, try a new exercise, and/or be challenged.

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand women's experiences with personal training. To address the research question, female participants ages 24 to 54 years were interviewed using the following phenomenological question: "When you think about your current experience with personal training what stands out for you?" Results suggest that participants choosing to be in the study were grounded in a *positive experience* of personal training through four figural themes: *Relationships*, *trainer qualities*, *outcomes*, and *motivation*. From these results new insights emerge for professionals in the fitness industry as well as several future directions for research in exercise psychology.

Melton et al. (13) studied the perceptions of personal trainers in the fitness industry and believe that training programs and certifications should become more streamlined and rigorous to ensure that trainers are qualified for the job. Most undergraduate training programs and certifications in the field emphasize anatomy, kinesiology and fitness prescription but overlook the psychological, social and emotional themes described by participants in the current study. These themes should be addressed and included as Melton et. al. (11) calls for a single National Personal Training Certification to

"enhance the personal training industry...which has the potential to improve public perception, job security, salaries, exercise adherence, and perhaps, public health" (p. 887).

Participants in the current study suggested that in order to maintain their exercise programs, they hired trainers who made the activities fun and rewarding. This falls in line with exercise psychology literature suggesting that individuals who enjoy their experience with physical activity maintain exercise behavior longer, improve their health and fitness levels, and reach specific goals. Koivula (9) found that both men and women rated fun and enjoyment as either the most or second most important reason they maintained an exercise program. Briggs (1), Jakicic et al. (6) as well as Wankel (17) found fun and enjoyment to be highly correlated with levels of sport and physical activity participation. Fitness professionals themselves ranked enthusiasm as one of the most important competencies in their field (2). The experiences of participants in the current study suggest that their personal trainers exhibited these characteristics as well. Thus, it might be reasoned that utilizing a personal trainer who makes activities fun and exhibits enthusiasm may increase exercise adherence and the benefits derived from physical activity.

Trainer-client relationships have not been previously examined in the realm of physical activity. However, participants in this study described the relationships with their trainers as both a personal and a professional relationship and one that contained elements of friendship as well as social support. Social support in any significant personal relationship has been

associated with a wide range of health benefits and a greater sense of well-being (15). Oman and King (14) also discuss the importance of matching the style or form of exercise to an individual's needs in order to increase client motivation and enhance adherence. Based on the positive perceptions of participants in the current study, it appears that the personal trainers they worked with understood their capabilities and created exercise programs that met their specific, individual needs.

The role of motivation in physical activity and fitness performance has been extensively researched. Hubbard and Mannell (4) suggest that, "whether or not motivation is an immediate antecedent and plays a stronger direct role in countering the effects of constraints, when other types of leisure activities, motives, and circumstances are involved is unclear and will have to be determined by future research" (p. 159). Having a personal trainer may be a critical aspect in motivating women to exercise, become physically active, and/or improve fitness. Several motivational factors have been shown to influence physical activity adherence, participation, and fitness goal achievement (8, 9, 18). Research has indicated that a sense of accountability may increase adherence and motivation to exercise (18). The concept that personal trainers are an effective form of accountability was echoed by nearly all of the participants.

Discovering specific motivational factors is important for individuals attempting to begin, maintain, and adhere to a systematic exercise program to reach specific health and fitness goals. Previous research has suggested that motivation was associated

with many positive behavioral outcomes such as greater levels of participation and persistence, positive emotions, and higher levels of satisfaction (9, 18). For the women in the current study, personal training provided several forms of motivation that appeared to produce positive behaviors, emotions, and outcomes. This relationship also provided supervision and accountability. As research suggests, supervision of a workout program is known to enhance physical outcomes (10).

This is one of the few studies examining the experience of personal training. Due to limited research in this area, there are multiple future directions to explore. We have examined women's experiences with personal training (and as it turned out) with female personal trainers only. What is not known is how women experience male personal trainers nor how males experience male and female personal trainers.

Additionally, as discussed in our *trainer description* theme, most of the current study's participants mentioned the issue of gender and how important it was to have women training other women. Further research is needed to explore the unique aspects of the female-female client-trainer experience. A semi-structured interview guide with specific questions targeting same and different gender personal training relationships and experiences may provide more detailed information about the role of gender in these "connections" for females and also for males.

This study examined individuals who are *currently* participating in personal training. What would also be of interest is an examination of the experience of those who are no longer utilizing personal training.

Some clients discontinue their personal training. Therefore, it is critical to gather information about *why* they did so and whether they have continued to exercise independently. This information would be invaluable to the fields of kinesiology and exercise psychology to pinpoint specific factors that increase exercise adherence and contribute to enjoyment.

With these future directions in mind, it is crucial to remember that the results of qualitative research are not intended to be generalizable. However, the results of this study offer information that could lead to survey development examining a larger population's perceptions or experiences with personal training. Potential questions include whether the cost of personal training services deters individuals from using the services as well as whether the norm of utilizing or not utilizing personal training impacts exercisers' decisions to use such services.

Personal training has grown exponentially over the past decade. This study clearly indicates that personal training is a service that has the potential to impact people's lives in a variety of positive ways. The results provide information for personal trainers to help maximize the training experience of their clients. Clearly, interpersonal skills are as important as technical competence when it comes to client satisfaction. Professionals working with clients towards health and fitness goals should know that having competence (experience and education), developing a relationship, holding the client accountable, maintaining motivation and producing psychological and physical results have been described as key factors for success.

With sedentary lifestyles becoming the norm, people's experiences with physical activity must be enjoyable if they are to continue with that behavior. Personal trainers should understand the magnitude of their role in people's exercise behavior and the implications of a poor experience with exercise. Additionally, they have the opportunity to be part of the solution in the fight against physical inactivity and should take that responsibility seriously. While these results may not be generalizable for all potential clients, they do add knowledge to the exercise psychology literature and should be considered for future investigations regarding the personal training profession.

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