Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore changes in group constructs (groupness and cohesion) during a semester of physical activity classes as well as changes in fitness measures.

Participants

• College students (N=60) enrolled in physical activity courses

• Mean age=21.2 males and 32 females (28 did not complete questionnaire)

Procedures

• Randomized groups participated in 3 group activities over the semester:
  • Semester goals discussion
  • Meal planning
  • Outdoor hike

• Pre/Post questionnaire on group constructs

• Pre/Post Fitness assessments

Measures

• Cohesion: Assessed by the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ; Carron, et al., 1985)
  • Attraction to the Group – Social (ATG-S): “I enjoy the social interaction occurring in this group”
  • Attraction to Task (ATG-T): “I like the approach to exercise in this group”
  • Group integration – Task (GI-T): “Members of our group have similar aspirations regarding our group’s progress”
  • Group integration – Social (GI-S): “Members of our group stick together outside of the class setting”

• Groupness: (Spink, Wilson, & Priebe, 2010)
  • 5 items: “Do you consider the individuals in this setting to be a group (i.e., “we”) as compared to a collection of individuals”
  • No difference for the number of steps in one week (p=1.14) & 1.5 mile run test (p=1.60)

• Both group integration subscales were not significant (p>.09)

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Analyses

• Dependent t-test performed in SPSS

Results

Changes in Group Constructs

• Decrease in groupness throughout the semester (t(29)=2.85, p=.001)

• Decrease in ATG dimensions of cohesion (ATG-Task: t(29)=2.14, p=.041; ATG-Social t(29)=2.36, p=.025)

• Neither group integration subscale was significant (p>.09)

Changes in Fitness:

• Fitness Measures increased in sit-ups (t(59)=9.59, p=.001) & pushups (t(59)=9.28, p=.001)

• No difference for the number of steps in one week (p=1.14) & 1.5 mile run test (p=1.60)

Discussion

• Group constructs decreased over the semester
  • These lower levels may translate to lower levels of effort and attendance
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• Previous teambuilding interventions were more intensive than group assignments
  • Other minimal interventions such as a one day challenge course show no benefits

• Increased scores in fitness measures performed with partners (sit-up & push-up)

Limitations/Future Research

• Absence control group limits interpretation of changes
• Minimal group intervention may limit changes observed

• Need to explore factors that may lead to decreases in group perceptions

• Further research needed to see if allowing students to choose their groups would result in different findings, given students were assigned their groups in this study

Conclusion and Application

• Fitness changes observed suggest benefits of class participation
• However, decreases in group perceptions suggest instructors may wish to examine ways to promote the group in the classroom