

Body image and social support relationships and change during a 12-week dragon boat intervention with overweight women.

C.M Sabiston, M.H. McDonough, P.R.E. Crocker, & W.A. Sedgwick.
University of British Columbia

The purpose of this research was to examine relationships among and changes in social support network size, amount of perceived support, and body image following a 12-week dragon boat intervention. Adult women ($M_{age}=42.64$, $SD=11.79$) who had BMI's over 26 kg/m² replied to poster advertisements and volunteered for a 12-week dragon boat physical activity intervention. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental ($n=33$) and control ($n=32$) groups and completed questionnaires at the first (T1) and last (T2) dragon boat practices. The questionnaire examined perceived social support and social support network size in each of informational, emotional, esteem, and tangible dimensions (Richman, Rosenfeld, & Hardy, 1993), Appearance Evaluation (AE) and Orientation (AO), Overweight Preoccupation (OP), Body Areas Satisfaction (BAS), and Self-Classified Weight (SCW) body image subscales (MBSRQ-AS; Cash, 1994), and several other measures. At T1, there were no differences between the control and experimental groups. Perceived esteem support was significantly ($p<.05$) correlated with BMI ($r=-.32$) and BAS ($r=.28$). BAS was also related to perceived emotional support ($r=.26$). Repeated Measures ANOVA's revealed a time by group interaction on perceived information support, $F(1,58)=4.72$, $p=.03$, $\eta^2=.09$, and no changes in support network sizes. Significant main effects of time emerged on AE, $F(1,58)=30.94$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.35$, and BAS $F(1,58)=27.89$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.33$. Interaction effects were observed on AO $F(1,58)=7.66$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.12$, and OP $F(1,58)=4.27$, $p=.04$, $\eta^2=.07$. These results suggest that a 12-week structured dragonboat intervention may decrease the importance overweight women place on appearance and the concerns they express with their weight. Perceptions of information support also appear to be positively influenced by a physical activity intervention. These changes are important to mental health, and may in turn lead to physical benefits that were not realized over the 12-week period. The links between BMI, BAS, and perceptions of emotional and esteem support requires further attention.