LOOKING FIT & TONED: HOW DOES SELF-PRESENTATION DIFFER IN THOSE WHO POST ABOUT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND THOSE WHO DO NOT?

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ABSTRACT

During social interactions, people desire to be perceived positively by others, this is particularly true for social media (SM) users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As an individual shapes the content shared over SM networks, that individual may idealize their character rather than presenting an authentic version (Goffman, 2002). This study examined whether people who post about physical activity (PA) on SM differed in their self-presentational efficacy (SPE) (confidence to present themselves in a positive fashion) when compared to those who do not post. **Methods:** A convenience sample of 113 kinesiology students (males: n=62, 55%, females n=44, 45%) completed a cross-sectional survey that included the self-presentational efficacy scale (15 items; Gammage, Hall, & Ginis, 2004). This scale asked about perceptions with regards to specific outcomes such as 'being in good shape' and 'looking fit and toned' in terms of SPE, self-presentational outcome expectancy (SPOE; belief that exercise would lead to each outcomes), and self-presentational outcome value (SPOV; the importance placed on each outcome). Independent t-tests were conducted to compare sharers with non-sharers. **Results:** Students self-identified as sharers of PA on SM (n=39, 34.5%) or non-sharers (n=66, 58.4%). There were significantly different levels of SPE, with those who posted about PA on SM having higher levels (M=75.1, SD=17.6) than those who did not post about PA on SM (M =64.5, SD=22.4), t(102)=-2.507, p=.014, d=1.48. No significant differences were found between those who post about PA and those who don't based on SPOE (t(62.99)=0.375, p=.709, d=0.83) or on SPOV (t(103)=-1.490, p=.139,d=1.83). **Conclusion:** Students who use SM to post about PA had higher levels of SPE suggesting the need for future research to explore how SM use may affect or be affected by self-presentation.

INTRODUCTION

Self-presentation is the process by which people attempt to monitor and control the impressions others form of them (Leary 1992)
- Associated with either increased or decreased exercise behavior. (Leary & Kowalski, 1990)

For physical activity, self presentation concerns conceptualized in terms of three constructs (Gammage , Hall, & Ginis, 2004):
- **Self-presentational efficacy** (SPE): confidence to present themselves in a positive fashion
- **Self-presentational outcome expectancy** (SPOE): belief that exercise would lead to specific outcome s (i.e., Being in good shape, looking fit and toned)
- **Self-presentational outcome value** (SPOV): the importance placed on specifics outcome (i.e., Being in good shape, looking fit and toned)

During social interactions, people generally desire to be perceived positively by others (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

As an individual shapes the content shared over social media (SM) networks, that individual may idealize their character rather than presenting an authentic version (Goffman, 2002)

Self-presentation concerns may underlie most of our social interactions and create apprehensiveness about sharing on SM, in particularly, about PA as individuals may expect to receive negative evaluation (Hausenblas, Brewer & Van Raalte, 2004)

People have reported sharing about physical activity over social media in order to gain recognition (Pinkerton et al., 2017), this gaining recognition may be tied to ones confidence to present themselves well over social media

- Understanding self-presentational efficacy as it relates to a user and his or her relationship with posting on SM may enhance insight into expectations of social (SM) and cognitive behaviors of that sharer

PURPOSE

Examined whether people who post about physical activity on social media differed in their self-presentational efficacy (confidence to present themselves in a positive fashion) when compared to those who do not post.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants consisted of a convenience sample of 113 undergraduate kinesiology students at California State University, Fullerton.
- Age: Ranged from 19-39 (M = 22.14, SD = 3.04)
- Gender: 62 males (54.9%) and 44 females (38.9%)
- Ethnic breakdown:
  36 Hispanic (31.9%), 30 Asian (26.5%), 27 Caucasian/White (23.9%), 6 Pacific Islander (5.3%), 1 African American (0.9%), 1 Native American (0.9%), 1 Middle Eastern (0.9%), and 3 who identified as Other (2.7%)

Do you share any information or details about PA on SM?

Non-Sharers: n=66, 58.4%   Sharers: n=39, 34.5%
- Yes
- No
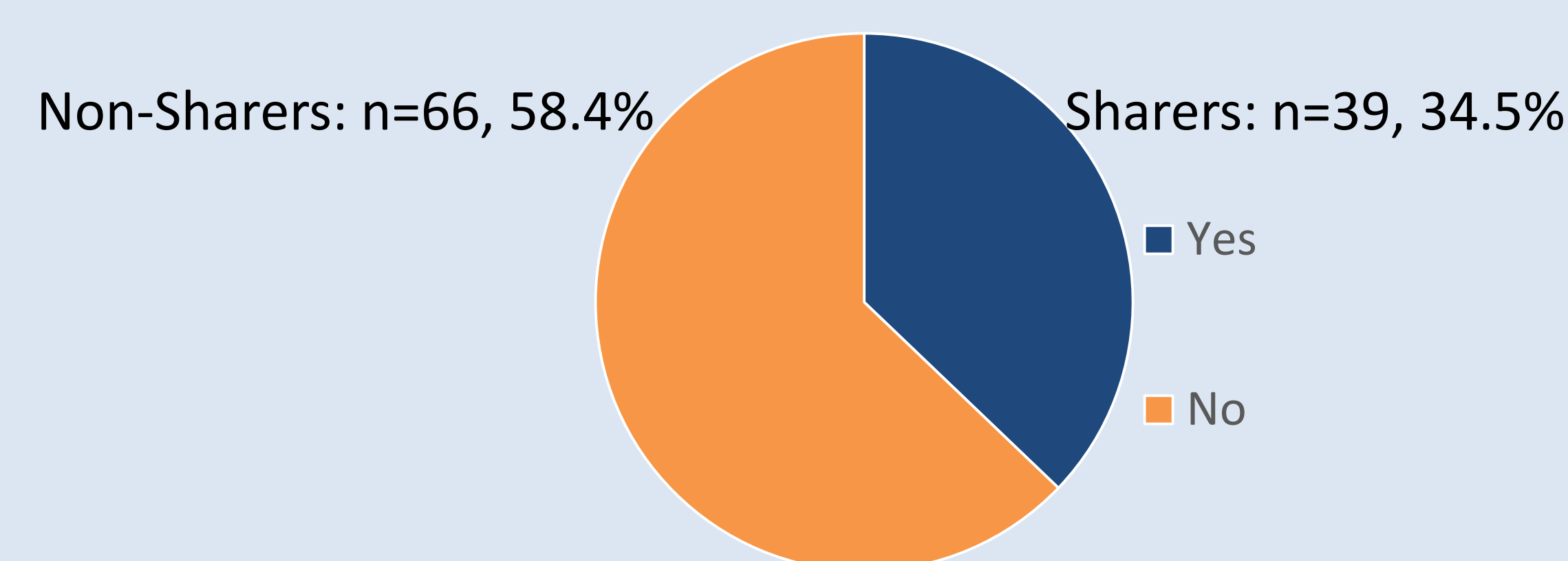
METHODS

Procedure:
- In Fall 2016, students completed a cross-sectional questionnaire in their introduction to statistics class

Measures:
Self-Presentation was measured using self-presentational efficacy scale (15 items; Gammage, Hall, & Ginis, 2004).
  This scale asked about perceptions with regards to specific outcomes such as 'being in good shape' and 'looking fit and toned'
- **SPE:** Confidence that other people will think...your body looks fit and toned
  - 0(not at all) to 100% (completely confident) - Cronbach alpha = 0.94
- **SPOE:** By exercising regularly, other people will think that my body is fit and toned
  - 1 (agree) to 5 (not agree) - Cronbach alpha =0.93
- **SPOV:** I place a lot of value on having a body that looks physically fit.
  - 1 (agree) to 5 (not agree) - Cronbach alpha =0.92

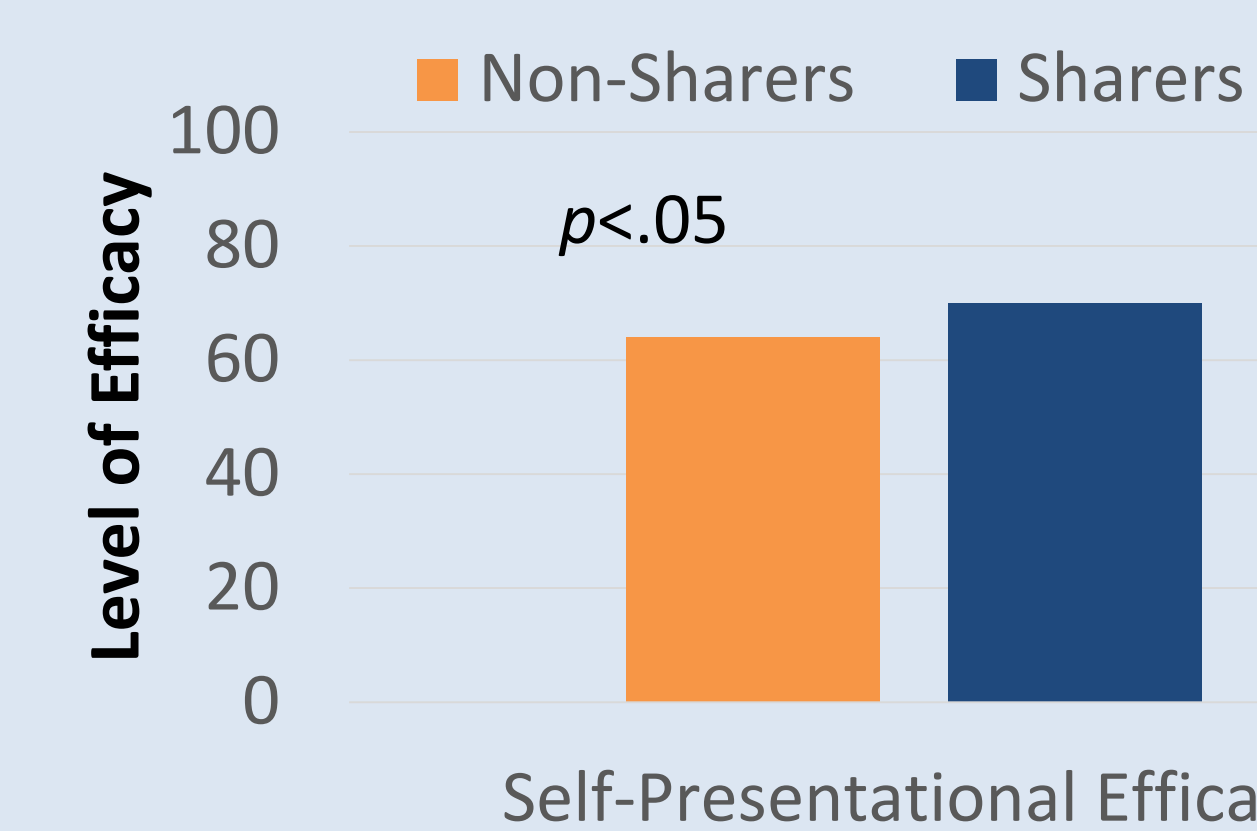Background demographics including age and gender
Self-reported use of social media for sharing about physical activity

Analysis:
Three independent t-tests were conducted in SPSS to compare sharers with non-sharers on the three types of self-presentation
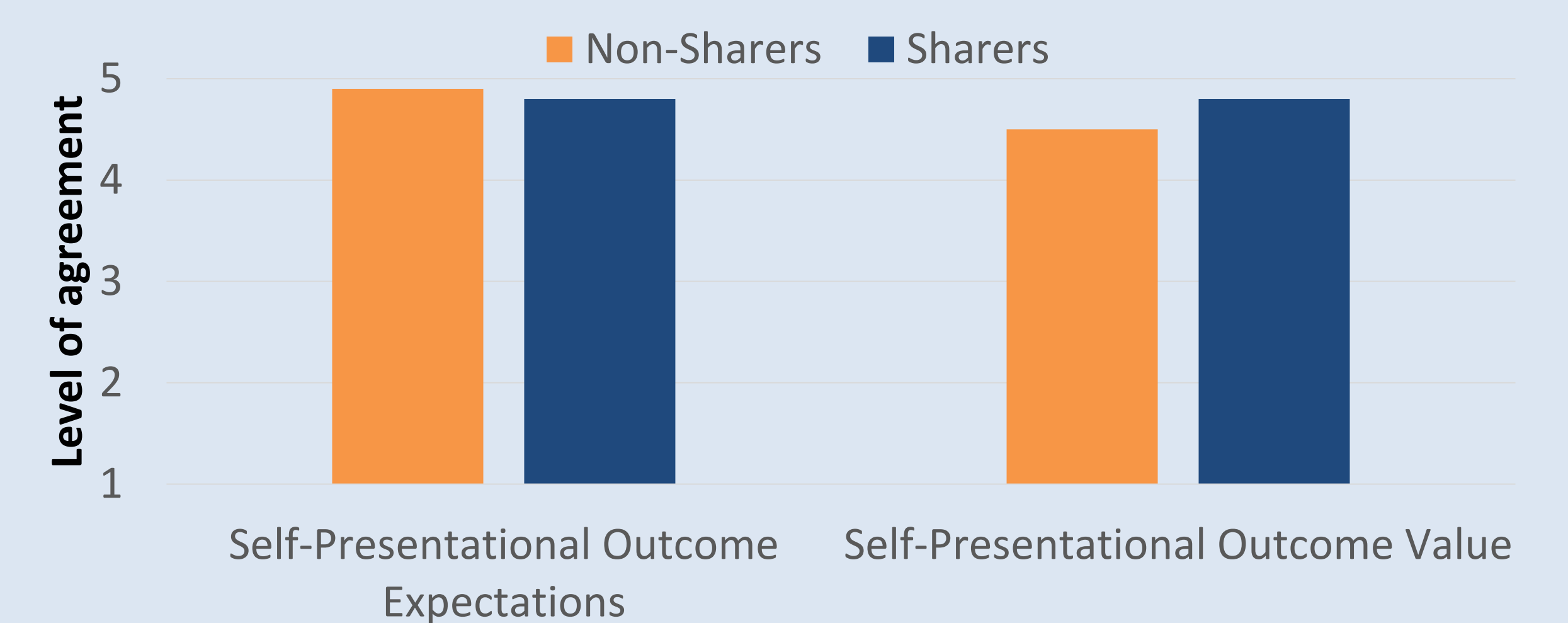
RESULTS

Self-Presentational Efficacy

Those who posted about PA on SM had higher levels of SPE (M=75.1, SD=17.6) than those who did not post about PA on SM (M =64.5, SD=22.4), t(102)=-2.507, p=.014, d=1.48.

Outcome Expectations and Outcome Value

No significant differences were found between those who post about PA and those who don't based on SPOE (t(62.99)=0.375, p=.709, d=0.83) or on SPOV (t(103)=-1.490, p=.139,d=1.83).

DISCUSSION

- Participants who posted about PA on SM had higher levels of SPE than those who did not post about their PA on SM
  - Those who share might be more confident to present themselves well or those who are confident may be more likely to share
    - As this was a cross-sectional survey directionality can not be established
- Reasons for posting on SM have been to gain recognition (Pinkerton et al., 2017) so it might be speculated that more confident people may expect gaining recognition through their interactions on SM

- **Limitations:**
  - Due to using a convenience sample, there is a small sample size and all the participants in the study were kinesiology students. Therefore, it does not serve as a representative sample and has low external validity

- **Future Directions:**
  - Continue to explore the underlying factors behind why people choose to post about PA on SM to better understand the publics' motivation to post and how it relates to their motivation to participate in PA
  - Examine how one portrays oneself on SM surrounding PA relates to participation in physical activity