

Toh, Z., & Lee, D. S. (2022). Is that Insta worthy? Predicting content sharing behavior on social media through interpersonal goals. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 16(4), Article 5.
<https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2022-4-5>

Is That Insta Worthy? Predicting Content Sharing Behavior on Social Media Through Interpersonal Goals

Zena Toh, & David S. Lee

Department of Communication, University at Buffalo, Buffalo, USA

Abstract

What motivates people to share contents that promote the image of the self versus the well-being of others on social media? Two studies examined how interpersonal goals, namely self-image goals and compassionate goals, influence intentions of sharing different contents on Instagram. According to research on interpersonal goals, self-image goals motivate people to maintain and demonstrate their desirable qualities to others; compassionate goals energize people to promote the well-being of others. Based on this research, we hypothesized that self-image goals (vs. compassionate goals) would propel people to have higher intentions to share contents that are self-promoting relatively more than contents that are prosocial. A correlational study that measured participants' chronic (i.e., stable) interpersonal goals (Study 1; n = 126) and an experiment that manipulated participants' incidental (i.e., momentary) interpersonal goals (Study 2; n = 201) confirmed these hypotheses. These results highlight the role of motivation in content sharing on social media and shed light on psychological mechanisms that help shape the social environment on Instagram.

Keywords: interpersonal goals; content sharing behavior; social media; Instagram

Editorial Record

First submission received:
September 24, 2021

Revisions received:
April 25, 2022
July 23, 2022

Accepted for publication:
July 26, 2022

Editor in charge:
Lenka Dedkova

Introduction

There are over 3.8 billion social media users (Kemp, 2020). Most adults use social networking sites such as Instagram to share content to stay connected with others (Manago & Vaughn, 2015; Vaterlaus et al., 2016). A large body of research indicates that people spend much of their time on social media to create and maintain an overly positive image of themselves in many ways. For example, people selectively share positive, opposed to negative, information about themselves (Ellison et al., 2006; Vogel & Rose, 2016), present themselves to be happier on social media than they are in real life (Qiu et al., 2012), and frequently edit and share photos of themselves to make them look more attractive (Chua & Chang, 2016; Fox & Vendemia, 2016). Unfortunately, these very behaviors can undermine other users' psychological well-being by eliciting processes such as social comparison (Arad et al., 2017; Fan et al., 2019), feelings of envy and jealousy (Appel et al., 2015; Pera, 2018; Verduyn et al., 2015), or the fear of missing out (Burnell et al., 2019; Hunt et al., 2018; Reer et al., 2019). Yet, little is known about factors that can reduce people's self-promoting behaviors on social media.

Extant research has identified several dispositional factors associated with sharing content that promote an ideal image of oneself. For example, people high in narcissism tend to post more self-promoting content (e.g., posting

positive status updates and attractive photos of oneself; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Carpenter, 2012). Other studies found that self-perfectionist (Al-Kandari et al., 2017) and those who scored high on a need for popularity (Utz et al., 2012) engaged in strategic self-presentation on social media, in which they selectively share information that helps build popularity or gain others' acceptance.

Common among these studies, which focus on the role of traits or personality, is the social *motivation* that drives people to demonstrate positive aspects of themselves through sharing self-promoting contents. Yet, less is known about what makes people share different kinds of content (e.g., self-promoting v. prosocial content). Thus, our focus was on identifying *why* people would share different contents. This is useful because understanding and identifying the motivational underpinnings of content sharing can shed light on the precise psychological mechanisms that can be leveraged to change real-world content sharing behaviors (see Walton, 2014). Further, while much work has focused on users' self-promoting tendencies on social media, less is known about mechanisms that motivate people to promote others' well-being on social media (see Ferguson et al., 2015, and Schattke et al., 2018, for notable exceptions). Thus, the present research sought to identify a motivational mechanism that can shift people's focus from sharing self-promoting contents to sharing more prosocial contents.

In the current research, we propose that interpersonal goals (e.g., Crocker & Canevello, 2008, 2012) could provide insight into understanding *why* people would share contents that promote the self or promote others' well-being. Specifically, we integrate the interpersonal goals literature with insights from the uses and gratification theory (Katz et al., 1974) to test the idea that interpersonal goals may influence whether people would share contents that would benefit their self-image versus promoting others' well-being on social media. We begin by reviewing the literature on uses and gratification theory (Katz et al., 1974) and interpersonal goals (Crocker & Canevello, 2008, 2012).

Uses and Gratification and Social Media

Scholars have applied the theory of uses and gratification (UGT) to understand why people are motivated to use media (de Oliveira et al., 2016; Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018; Khan, 2017; Ko et al., 2005; Rubin, 1983). According to UGT, people use certain media to fulfill different needs and goals based on what the media channel affords them (Katerattanakul, 2002; Katz et al., 1974). Examples of social and psychological motivation for using social media include interacting with others, information seeking or surveillance, and pastime (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; de Oliveira et al., 2016; Han et al., 2015; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

One common way people achieve their goals via social media is through content sharing (Hu et al., 2014; Manikonda et al., 2016; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). For example, Williamson and colleagues (2017) found that participants shared selfies to attain goals associated with relationship development, entertainment, and information sharing for the benefit of others. Boulianne and colleagues (2018) found that people used Twitter to express support and to recognize charitable behaviors. These studies suggest that contents shared on social media can be driven by goals users have—for example, communicating with others about what is important to them.

Building on this idea, the present research proposes that interpersonal goals may influence what content people choose to share on social media. Specifically, we sought to examine how a goal to construct a desired image of the self and how a goal to promote other's well-being influence whether people would share contents that enhance the self versus others on Instagram. Below we review the literature on two distinct types of interpersonal goals: Self-image and compassionate goals.

Interpersonal Goals

According to Crocker and Canevello (2008, 2012), interpersonal goals are a key motivational mechanism that guides how people connect and engage with others. Because motivational states can be both stable and dynamic (i.e., varying depending on contexts), we sought to build on prior work by directly examining how chronic (i.e., stable) and incidental (i.e., momentary) interpersonal goals influence content sharing behaviors. By chronic interpersonal goals, we refer to social motivation that is relatively stable across different contexts (e.g., I want to be a prosocial person in general); by incidental interpersonal goals, we refer to social motivation that is shorter-term, tailored to specific contexts, and sensitive to moment-to-moment fluctuations (e.g., I want to be prosocial right now, toward this person, etc.).

Extant research has focused on two distinct types of interpersonal goals: self-image and compassionate goals. Self-image goals motivate people to construct and demonstrate a positive self-image to others (Crocker & Canevello, 2008, 2012). Because of this goal, people with self-image goals tend to be self-interested and focus on managing impressions other have of themselves. Critically, they tend to approach relationships with a zero-sum mindset, in which what is good for others is a threat to themselves (Crocker et al., 2009, 2017). Numerous studies indicate that self-image goals are associated with being competitive with others and being less responsive to others' needs (Canevello & Crocker, 2010, 2011; Crocker & Canevello, 2008).

Prior studies suggest that self-focused tendencies and competitive mindsets may be associated with self-promotional behaviors on social media. For example, people who pegged their self-worth through competition with others tended to share more selfies (Stefanone et al., 2019). People high in narcissism frequently shared photos that focus attention on the self rather than others (Moon et al., 2016). However, these studies do not make specific predictions about whether competitive or narcissistic people would share contents that can benefit others. Because people with self-image goals focus on demonstrating their desired image to others, they should be more likely to focus on sharing information that can help boost their self-image (i.e., self-promoting content) as opposed to sharing content that can benefit others (i.e., prosocial content). Thus:

H1: Chronic self-image goals will be more strongly associated with the intent to share self-promoting content than the intent to share prosocial content.

In contrast, compassionate goals involve promoting the well-being of others (Crocker & Canevello, 2008, 2012). Because of this goal, people with compassionate goals tend to be cooperative and focus on what they can do to meet others' needs. Critically, they tend to approach relationships with a nonzero-sum mindset, in which being constructive and supportive toward others is good for their interpersonal relationships and ultimately for themselves (Crocker et al., 2009, 2017). Studies show that people with compassionate goals tend to be more responsive and provide more emotional support on Facebook (Tobin et al., 2020) and during face-to-face interactions (Canevello & Crocker, 2010, 2017; Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Lee et al., 2020). Thus:

H2: Chronic compassionate goals will be more strongly associated with the intent to share prosocial content than the intent to share self-promoting content.

To explore a potential causal link between interpersonal goals and content sharing, we also conducted an experiment in which we manipulated incidental interpersonal goals. Thus, we also predict:

H3: People primed with self-image goals would be more likely to have higher intentions to share self-promoting content than prosocial content compared with those primed with compassionate goals.

Overview of Research

We aim to examine how interpersonal goals (i.e., self-image and compassionate) predict sharing behavior (self-promoting versus prosocial content) on Instagram. In Study 1, we examine how chronic interpersonal goals are related to prosocial and self-promoting content sharing. In Study 2, we experimentally manipulated participants' incidental self-image goals or compassionate goals and assessed their intentions of sharing self-promoting contents and prosocial contents on Instagram.

We chose Instagram for several reasons. First, Instagram is a platform that facilitates users to engage in self-expressive behaviors. Studies indicate that Instagram is a platform that encourages self-promotion by curating an ideal identity (Choi & Sung, 2018; Hong et al., 2020). On the contrary, other studies show that people also use Instagram for prosocial reasons (e.g., volunteering and charity; McCosker et al., 2021; activism; Yuen & Tang, 2021). Further, much has been discussed in the public regarding how different norms and cultures prevalent on Instagram (e.g., self-promotion, social comparison) may influence critical issues such as mental health. Thus, making Instagram an ecologically valid context to study self-promoting and prosocial behaviors. Second, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms globally, with the largest percentage of global users between the ages of 25 and 34 (Statista, 2022a, 2022b), which was a population of interest for the current investigation.

Study 1

In this study, we examined how chronic self-image goals and compassionate goals are associated with sharing different types of content on Instagram. Participants read eight hypothetical scenarios in which they were considering whether to share certain information about themselves. Half of the scenarios involved sharing information that can help enhance their status and popularity, but potentially at the expense of others' well-being; the other half involved sharing information that can help others but can potentially undermine one's image. For each scenario, participants indicated how likely they would share those contents on Instagram. Having participants indicate their intent to share both types of contents allowed us to examine how chronic interpersonal goals are uniquely associated with sharing different types of contents rather than the amount of sharing in general.

Methods

Participants

An online survey was conducted on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) via CloudResearch within the United States in October 2019. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be Instagram users. Upon completion of the survey, participants were paid USD \$2.00 for their participation. Informed consent was obtained and all procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the authors' institution.

A total of 126 people responded to the survey. One participant who did not have an Instagram account was removed from the analysis. More than half identified as male ($N = 81$; 68.6%), with one participant preferring not to answer. Majority of participants identified themselves as White ($N = 62$; 49.6%), followed by Black ($N = 40$; 32.0%), Asian ($N = 13$; 10.4%), Hispanic ($N = 6$; 4.8%), American Indian ($N = 1$; 0.08%), and Native Hawaiian ($N = 1$; 0.08%). One participant preferred not to answer. The participants' age ranged from 20 to 59, with an average age of 34.7 ($SD = 10.9$), which falls in the range of an age group that is active on Instagram (Statista, 2022a).

Measures and Procedure

Participants first completed measures of chronic compassionate goals and self-image goals (described below). To control for the tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner, we also asked participants to complete a measure of social desirability. Then, participants read eight hypothetical scenarios that involved sharing different contents on Instagram. We have validated these scenarios through a series of pilot testing (see below for the factor analysis). In the four prosocial scenarios, participants were explicitly told that while sharing the content could benefit others, it might harm their own reputation; in the four self-promoting scenarios, participants were told that sharing the content could improve one's image potentially at the expense of others. Thus, all scenarios involved a tradeoff between benefits to self vs. cost to other (i.e., self-promoting) or benefits to the others vs. cost to self (i.e., prosocial). We explicitly mentioned these tradeoffs to prevent ceiling effects in participants' responses (i.e., high endorsement of sharing prosocial contents). The order in which the scenarios were presented was randomized. For all variables, we computed the average of the corresponding items. Table 1 summarizes means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for variables described below.

Self-Image Goals. Self-image goals were measured through 9 items adapted from Crocker and Canevello (2008). Items were modified to reflect self-image goals toward others on Instagram. Participants were asked, *On Instagram, to what extent do you want/try to... avoid sharing materials that would make me look weak, post or share things to get others to acknowledge your positive qualities, avoid interacting with friends who might make you look bad, avoid sharing things that will reveal your shortcomings or vulnerabilities, share or edit your posts so that others will respect or admire you, acquire as many likes on your posts as you can, share the best images of yourself, avoid coming across as unintelligent or incompetent in your posts or comments, avoid sharing materials that will make you look unattractive, unlovable, or undesirable*, ($\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.00$). Participants responded to these items on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much).

Compassionate Goals. Compassionate goals were measured with 7 items adapted from Crocker and Canevello (2008). Specifically, we modified the items to reflect compassionate goals toward others on Instagram. Participants were asked, *On Instagram to what extent do you want/try to... be supportive of others by liking and commenting on their posts, have compassion for others when they share sad news or negative experiences, be constructive and helpful*

to others when posting or sharing things, avoid neglecting your relationship with others by checking in and posting on others' page, avoid sharing materials that would be harmful to others, be aware of the impact your posts and comments might have on others' feelings, and make a positive difference in others' life by sharing uplifting and encouraging posts ($\alpha = .82$, $M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.72$). Participants responded to these items on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much).

Social Desirability. Social desirability was measured through 10 items adapted from Paulhus (1984). These items reflect socially desirable, but highly improbable statements. Example items included *I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable*, and *I always apologize to others for my mistakes*. Participants responded to these items on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). The reliability for this established measure was surprisingly low ($\alpha = .53$). Subsequent analyses to examine inter-correlations and dimensional structure yield an improvement in the Cronbach alpha value to .58 after removal of one item, *Once in a while I laugh at a dirty joke*. We thus created a composite variable by averaging participants' responses across 9 items given its face validity ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.56$). Importantly, our results do not change substantively regardless of the inclusion of this covariate.

Table 1. Zero-order Bivariate Correlations Among Key Variables.

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Self-image goals	3.14	1.00	—				
2. Compassionate goals	3.60	0.72	.45**	—			
3. Social desirability	3.53	0.56	.47**	.55**	—		
4. Self-promoting content sharing	3.64	0.94	.43**	.30**	.22**	—	
5. Prosocial content sharing	3.42	0.79	.54**	.53**	.44**	.61**	—

Note. ** $p < .001$.

Content Sharing. To further validate that our scenarios tap into self-promoting versus prosocial nature, we conducted a factor analysis. An exploratory factor analysis with principal components extraction with varimax rotation ($KMO = .801$, Bartlett's test: $\chi^2 = 330.48$, $p < .001$), a two-factor solution emerged explaining 60.01% of the total variance (See Table 2 for summary).

Self-Promoting Content Sharing. The first factor was comprised of elements related to overall *self-promoting content sharing* ($\alpha = .89$, $M = 3.64$, $SD = 9.94$). Four scenarios involved posting on Instagram information that could enhance one's self-image, potentially at the expense on others' well-being. For example, in one scenario, participants considered sharing a photo of an expensive and desirable gift. Participants were told that while it could increase their popularity, it could make others feel bad about themselves (see Appendix for all scenarios). Participants indicated their response to *How likely are you to share this post on Instagram*, and *How much would you like to share this post on Instagram*, on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). Table 2 reports the factor loadings and Cronbach's α , two of the most frequently used tests for checking construct validity and reliability (Straub, 1989).

Table 2. Measurement Items, Factor Loadings, Scale Reliabilities, and Descriptive Statistics.

Variables	Items	Loading	Cronbach's α	Mean (<i>SD</i>)
Key Factors in Content Sharing				
Self-promoting content sharing	Scenario 1	.86	.89	3.64 (0.94)
	Scenario 2	.68		
	Scenario 3	.85		
	Scenario 4	.74		
Prosocial content sharing	Scenario 1	.57	.84	3.42 (0.79)
	Scenario 2	.53		
	Scenario 3	.77		
	Scenario 4	.85		

Prosocial Content Sharing. The second factor included elements related to *prosocial content sharing* ($\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.79$). Four scenarios involved posting on Instagram information that could have a negative impact on their image, yet benefit others. For example, in one scenario, participants were to consider promoting a drug addiction recovery program. Participants were told that sharing this could lead others in their social network to know about their history of drug addiction (see Appendix). Intentions of sharing those scenarios were measured with two items on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). The items were *How likely are you to share this post*

on Instagram, and How much would you like to share this post on Instagram?. Table 2 reports the factor loading and Cronbach's α for each item.

Data Analyses

Data were analyzed using SPSS 26. Descriptive statistics were first calculated, followed by bivariate correlation among our variables of interest. Second, we ran two separate multiple regressions to test the relation between chronic interpersonal goals and perceived likelihood of content sharing, while controlling for age, gender, and social desirability. To test H1 and H2, first, repeated-measures ANOVA was utilized to understand the main and interactions effects between chronic interpersonal goals and content sharing intentions. Finally, simple slopes were constructed to determine if chronic interpersonal goals would uniquely predict intentions of sharing either self-promoting or prosocial content.

Results

Table 3 presents the regression coefficients when both goals are entered as predictors for sharing intentions of self-promoting and prosocial contents. Consistent with prior research (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Canevello & Crocker, 2010), chronic self-image goals and compassionate goals were significantly correlated ($r = .45, p < .001$). Thus, following prior work, we centered the goals and entered them as simultaneous predictors in our analyses to assess the unique effect of each interpersonal goal while controlling for the other.

Table 3. Regression Coefficients Predicting Content Sharing Intentions From Self-Image and Compassionate Goals.

	Self-promoting Content Sharing					Prosocial Content Sharing				
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Gender ^a	0.22	0.17	.12	.174	[0.75, 0.31]	0.02	0.13	.01	.872	[-0.23, 0.28]
Age	-0.01	0.01	-.14	.150	[-0.12, 0.58]	-0.01	0.01	-.09	.284	[-0.02, 0.00]
Social desirability	0.04	0.18	.03	.597	[-0.39, 0.31]	0.24	0.13	0.17	.069	[0.02, 0.50]
Self-image goals	0.32	0.09	.34	< .001	[0.13, 0.50]	0.24	.07	0.31	< .001	[0.10, 0.38]
Compassionate goals	0.19	0.14	.14	.189	[-0.09, 0.47]	0.32	.12	0.30	.001	[0.12, 0.55]
<i>F(df), AdjR²</i>	5.92 (5, 111), .18 ($p < .001$)					14.09 (5, 111), .36 ($p < .001$)				

Note. ^a0 = Male, 1 = Female

To test how chronic interpersonal goals are associated with intentions of sharing prosocial and self-promoting contents on Instagram, we conducted two sets of parallel analyses. First, we conducted a repeated-measures ANOVA with intentions of content sharing (self-promoting vs. prosocial) as a within-subjects factor and chronic self-image goals as a predictor of sharing while controlling for chronic compassionate goals. This analysis revealed a non-significant effect for intentions of content sharing ($M_{\text{self-promoting}} = 3.63, SD_{\text{self-promoting}} = 0.94, M_{\text{prosocial}} = 3.41, SD_{\text{prosocial}} = 0.93$), $F(1, 123) = 2.82, p = .095$, and a significant main effect of chronic self-image goals, $F(1, 123) = 22.89, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$. Confirming our H1, there was a significant chronic self-image goals X content sharing interaction, $F(1, 123) = 11.03, p = .001, \eta^2 = .08$. Simple slopes analyses revealed that chronic self-image goals positively predicted intentions to share self-promoting content, $\beta = .51, t = 5.83, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.34, .68]$, even when controlling for intentions to share prosocial content, $\beta = .44, t = 5.32, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.28, .61]$; chronic self-image goals also positively predicted intentions to share prosocial content, $\beta = .18, t = 2.10, p = .038$, however, this association became non-significant once we controlled for intentions to share self-promoting content ($p = .950$) suggesting that chronic self-image goals are uniquely associated with sharing self-promoting rather than prosocial content. Finally, controlling for social desirability ($p = .798$), gender ($p = .168$), and age ($p = .153$) did not change any of our results, suggesting that these variables did not account for our findings.

To test H2, we conducted a second repeated-measures ANOVA with intentions of content sharing (self-promoting vs. prosocial) as a within-subjects factor and chronic compassionate goals as a predictor of sharing while controlling for chronic self-image goals. This analysis revealed a non-significant effect for intentions of content sharing, $F(1, 123) = 2.83, p = .095, \eta^2 = .22$, as well as a main effect of chronic compassionate goals, $F(1, 123) = 12.55, p = .001, \eta^2 = .09$. Confirming H2, the interaction between chronic compassionate goals and intentions of content sharing was significant, $F(1, 123) = 12.13, p = .001, \eta^2 = .09$. Simple slopes analyses revealed that chronic compassionate goals positively predicted intentions to share prosocial content, $\beta = .54, t = 4.88,$

$p < .001$, 95% CI [.32, .76], even after controlling for intentions to share self-promoting content, $\beta = .50$, $t = 4.83$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.30, .71]; in contrast to chronic self-image goals, chronic compassionate goals did not predict intentions of sharing self-promoting content ($p = .323$, .421, when controlling for prosocial content). Controlling for social desirability ($p = .538$), gender ($p = .829$) and age ($p = .251$) did not alter any results. Thus, the results support our hypotheses that interpersonal goals are uniquely associated with sharing different contents: Chronic self-image goals are more strongly associated with intentions of sharing self-promoting than prosocial content (H1); chronic compassionate goals are more strongly associated with intentions of sharing prosocial than self-promoting content (H2).

Discussion

Findings from Study 1 provide initial evidence that interpersonal goals are associated with content (i.e., self-promoting vs. prosocial) people are willing to share on Instagram. Specifically, chronic self-image goals were associated with a greater willingness to share self-promoting content relative to prosocial content; in contrast, chronic compassionate goals were associated with a greater willingness to share prosocial content relative to self-promoting content.

Still, the correlational results from Study 1 do not allow us to make a causal or directional claim of the link between interpersonal goals and content sharing behavior. For example, these results cannot rule out the possibility that the willingness to share more prosocial (self-promoting) contents may enhance chronic compassionate (self-image) goals, opposed to goals predicting what content people would be more likely to share. Thus, to address these issues, we next conducted an experiment in which we manipulated users' incidental interpersonal goals.

Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to establish a causal link between interpersonal goals and sharing behavior. To this end, we experimentally manipulated participants' incidental interpersonal goals through a writing task by instructing participants to consider engaging in behaviors that would promote their self-image or compassionate goals. Specifically, in the incidental self-image goals condition, participants wrote about how they would present themselves in the best possible light on Instagram; in the incidental compassionate goals condition, participants wrote about how they could use Instagram to cultivate a nurturing space. Then, participants read the same scenarios as in Study 1 and indicated their intentions of sharing prosocial and self-promoting contents.

Method

Participants

An online survey was conducted in November 2019 through Amazon Mechanical Turk via CloudResearch. Participants were Instagram users who resided in the United States. Upon completion of the survey, they were paid USD \$2.00 for their participation. Informed consent was obtained and all procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the authors' institution.

A total of 202 people responded to the survey. One participant did not have an Instagram account and was removed from the analysis, yielding a total of $n = 201$ participants. More than half identified as male ($n = 134$; 66.7%), with two participants preferring not to answer. Majority of participants identified themselves as White ($n = 123$; 61.2%), followed by Black ($n = 59$; 29.4%), Hispanic ($n = 19$; 9.5%), American Indian ($n = 3$; 1.5%), Asian ($n = 2$; 1%), and Other ($n = 2$; 1%). One participant preferred not to answer. Participants age ranged from 22 to 69 with the average age being 34.1 ($SD = 10.4$).

Materials and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions to write about ways to either enhance their image on social media (i.e., incidental self-image goals condition; $N = 95$) or ways to create a nurturing space for others on social media (i.e., incidental compassionate goals condition; $N = 106$). In the incidental self-image goals condition, participants were asked to write about *how you can show the best image of yourself*. In the incidental

compassionate condition, participants were asked to write about *how you could use Instagram to make a positive difference on others' lives*. Participants in both conditions were told to provide at least three actions that they could use to accomplish those goals and elaborate on the benefits of accomplishing those goals. For example, some statements in the incidental self-image goals condition included: *I can show my best self on Instagram by presenting my positive qualities, I can display my achievements and honors I have received, and I can post flattering pictures of myself*. Some sample statements from the incidental compassionate goals condition were: *I can use my Bipolar Beautiful brand page to continue to raise awareness for mental health, I can post inspirational and motivational quotes with relevant hashtags to help those that may need it, and I can share my knowledge of cooking and healthy activities with the world*.

After three minutes of this writing task, participants were led to the next page where they read the same hypothetical scenarios as in Study 1 and rated their intentions of sharing self-promoting ($\alpha = .90$, $M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.97$) and prosocial content ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.00$). As in Study 1, the order in which the scenarios were presented was randomized.

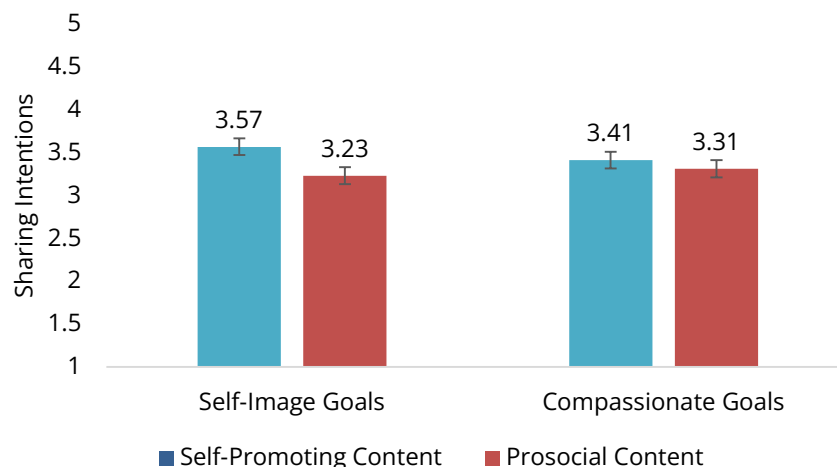
Results

Manipulation Check

To ensure that participants engaged in the writing task as intended and examine whether the writing task effectively manipulated participants' incidental goals, we coded participants' responses to the writing prompt. Specifically, two coders coded the responses on the extent to which they contained self-promoting themes ($\alpha = .96$, $M = 1.10$, $SD = 0.05$) and prosocial themes ($\alpha = .98$, $M = 1.23$, $SD = .003$) using a 3-point scale (0 = *not at all*, 2 = *very much*). As predicted, respondents in the incidental self-image goals (vs. compassionate goals) condition showed more self-promoting themes ($M_{self-promoting} = 1.10$, $SD_{self-promoting} = 0.91$ v. $M_{prosocial} = 0.03$, $SD_{prosocial} = 0.20$), $t(200) = 11.89$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.64$. Respondents in the incidental compassionate goals (vs. self-image goals) condition showed more prosocial themes ($M_{prosocial} = 1.23$, $SD_{prosocial} = 0.01$ v. $M_{self-promoting} = 0.07$, $SD_{self-promoting} = 0.31$), $t(200) = 11.20$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.72$. These results show that our incidental interpersonal goals manipulation was successful.

Main Analyses

Figure 1. Intentions of Sharing Self-Promoting and Prosocial Contents Between Conditions. Error Bars Represent Standard Errors.



To test how incidental interpersonal goals influence sharing self-promoting vs. prosocial content on Instagram, we conducted a repeated-measures ANOVA with content sharing (self-promoting vs. prosocial) as a within-subjects factor and incidental interpersonal goals (self-image goals vs. compassionate goals) as a between-subjects factor. This analysis revealed a main effect of content sharing ($M_{self-promoting} = 3.49$, $SD_{self-promoting} = 0.97$; $M_{prosocial} = 3.27$, $SD_{prosocial} = 1.00$), $F(1, 200) = 13.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$, indicating that overall, participants were more likely to share self-promoting content than prosocial content. Results revealed that the main effect of incidental interpersonal goals on the overall intentions of sharing was non-significant, $F(1, 200) = 0.087$, $p = .77$, suggesting that incidental interpersonal goals themselves did not influence intentions of sharing in general. Confirming H3, there was a

significant interaction between incidental interpersonal goals and intentions of content sharing, $F(1, 200) = 3.98, p = .047, \eta^2 = .02$. A closer look at this interaction revealed that participants in the incidental self-image goals condition reported higher intentions of sharing self-promoting content than prosocial content, $F(1, 200) = 15.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.51, -.17]$. However, for participants in the incidental compassionate goals condition, the difference between intentions of sharing self-promoting versus prosocial contents was not significant, $F(1, 200) = 1.58, p = .21, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.05, .26]$ (see Figure 1). Thus, results supported H3.

Discussion

Inspired by perspectives from UGT, the present research examined how interpersonal goals influence people's intentions to share the types of contents on Instagram. Because people with self-image goals are motivated to present a desirable image of themselves to others, we hypothesized that they would have higher intentions of sharing self-promoting content relatively more than prosocial content. On the other hand, because people with compassionate goals are motivated to promote the well-being of others, we predicted that they would have higher intentions of sharing prosocial content relative more than self-promoting content. Overall, results from both studies suggest that self-image goals are not only associated with, but predict intentions to share more self-promotional than prosocial content, thus supporting H1 and H3. Although we did not find a causal link between compassionate goals and intentions of sharing more prosocial than self-promotional content, results from Study 1 suggest an association between compassionate goals and prosocial content, supporting H2.

The present research makes several contributions to the existing literature. First, building on UGT research, both the users' chronic and incidental interpersonal goals predicted intentions of contents shared on Instagram. Our motivational framework not only integrates extant work on dispositional factors that influence sharing behavior (Al-Kandari et al., 2017; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Carpenter, 2012; Utz et al., 2012), but presents an opportunity in which these goals can be leveraged to potentially change real-world sharing behavior on social media. For example, considering that compassionate goals may promote intentions of sharing of prosocial contents, social media literacy programs can integrate this finding by cultivating prosocial motivations (e.g., compassionate goals, empathy) and teaching young adults about the ways in which they can make a positive impact on others on social media. Given that compassionate goals are associated with higher intent to provide responsive social support (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Lee et al., 2020), this could subsequently enhance other individuals' well-being and reduce propensities for cyberbullying behaviors by shifting people's focus to share content that is prosocial (vs. self-promoting or hurtful to others). Second, by demonstrating how each interpersonal goal is uniquely associated with intentions of sharing different content, the current findings contribute to a growing body of research on the role of motivation in social media use (Ham et al., 2019; Kim & Jang, 2019; E. Lee et al., 2015; Tobin et al., 2020). Finally, although much is known about the psychological antecedents of self-promotional nature of social media use (e.g., Big Five personality traits; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017; narcissism and self-esteem; Mehdizadeh, 2010), the present research suggests the possibility that compassionate goals may facilitate users to engage in prosocial behaviors on social media.

Broadly, the present research highlights the possibility that users' interpersonal goals may help shape the social environment on social media. For instance, self-image goals may in part account for the tendency for social media users to portray their lives as overly positive (Kross et al., 2013; Vogel & Rose, 2016). At the same time, users typically see idealized versions of others on their network, which may lead them to adopt and accept self-promoting behaviors as the norm on social media—thereby undermining the well-being of one another (e.g., Hunt et al., 2018; Verduyn et al., 2015). While we expected that priming compassionate goals would lead participants to have more intentions to share more prosocial than self-promoting content, it is possible that the norms and expectations of presenting oneself in a favorable manner by sharing self-promotional content on Instagram may have weakened our compassionate goals effects in Study 2. That is, the practice of selective self-presentation (Walther, 2007) on social media could have competed with motivations for sharing content that would oppose users' calculated impression management tactics to enhance their image in the presence of others. Nonetheless, future research should seek to examine if compassionate goals can leverage prosocial behaviors in different contexts—for example, can compassionate goals improve the likelihood of volunteering or making donations?

While the hypothetical scenarios used in the current research were designed to approximate real-world scenarios, future research should examine how interpersonal goals influence content sharing in real life. Relatedly, because it is unclear how long the experimentally manipulated goals would last, a longitudinal design that measures interpersonal goals and tracks actual content sharing could be useful. Moreover, because the goal of this research

was to examine how interpersonal goals influence what types of content people would intent to share, we did not account for the activity status of our participants. However, it would be an important future direction to examine how interpersonal goals may relate to various Instagram activities such as frequency of use or posting or types of use (e.g., active vs. passive users; see Tobin et al., 2020). In this vein, future studies should also examine how user's activity status and permanence of a post on a user's social media profile (i.e., fleeting v. permanent post) may relate to self-image and compassionate goals. Further, while we did not find our effects to be moderated by gender or age, future research should examine whether our findings generalize to different contexts including specific age groups (e.g., teenagers, older adults) or platforms that host content for an ephemeral period (e.g., Snapchat). Finally, although we have focused on the role of interpersonal goals on sharing behavior, it is possible that those goals can influence the impact of consuming self-promotional or prosocial contents. Could viewing others' self-promotional contents be especially threatening for those with self-image goals? Would viewing prosocial contents make people with compassionate goals more likely to share such information (e.g., retweets)? Future research could examine these questions.

Conclusion

Building on UGT, the present research demonstrated that interpersonal goals uniquely predict intentions for types of contents users share on social media. Self-image goals motivate users to demonstrate their positive image on social media through intentions to share self-promoting contents; compassionate goals energize users to promote others' well-being through intentions to share prosocial contents. The role of interpersonal goals in content sharing helps shed light on psychological mechanisms that shape the broader social environment on social media.

Conflict of interest

The authors do not have any conflicts of interest to report.

Authors' Contribution

Zena Toh: conceptualization, formal analysis, methodology, writing – original draft. **David S. Lee:** Conceptualization, formal analysis, methodology, supervision, writing – original draft.

References

- Alhabash, S., & Ma, M. (2017). A tale of four platforms: Motivations and uses of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among college students? *Social Media + Society*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117691544>
- Al-Kandari, A. A., Al-Sumait, F. Y., & Al-Hunaiyyan, A. (2017). Looking perfect: Instagram use in a Kuwaiti cultural context. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 10(4), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2017.1281430>
- Appel, H., Crusius, J., & Gerlach, A. L. (2015). Social comparison, envy, and depression on Facebook: A study looking at the effects of high comparison standards on depressed individuals. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 34(4), 277–289. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2015.34.4.277>
- Arad, A., Barzilay, O., & Perchick, M. (2017). The impact of Facebook on social comparison and happiness: Evidence from a natural experiment. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2916158>
- Boulianne, S., Minaker, J., & Haney, T. J. (2018). Does compassion go viral? Social media, caring, and the Fort McMurray wildfire. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(5), 697–711. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1428651>
- Buffardi, L. E., & Campbell, W. K. (2008). Narcissism and social networking web sites. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(10), 1303–1314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208320061>
- Burnell, K., George, M. J., Vollet, J. W., Ehrenreich, S. E., & Underwood, M. K. (2019). Passive social networking site use and well-being: The mediating roles of social comparison and the fear of missing out. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 13(3), Article 5. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5817/CP2019-3-5>

- Canevello, A., & Crocker, J. (2010). Creating good relationships: Responsiveness, relationship quality, and interpersonal goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(1), 78–106. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018186>
- Canevello, A., & Crocker, J. (2011). Interpersonal goals, others' regard for the self, and self-esteem: The paradoxical consequences of self-image and compassionate goals. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41(4), 422–434. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.808>
- Canevello, A., & Crocker, J. (2017). Compassionate goals and affect in social situations. *Motivation and Emotion*, 41(2), 158–179. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-016-9599-x>
- Carpenter, C. J. (2012). Narcissism on Facebook: Self-promotional and anti-social behavior. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(4), 482–486. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.11.011>
- Choi, T. R., & Sung, Y. (2018). Instagram versus Snapchat: Self-expression and privacy concern on social media. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(8), 2289–2298. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2018.09.009>
- Chua, T. H. H., & Chang, L. (2016). Follow me and like my beautiful selfies: Singapore teenage girls' engagement in self-presentation and peer comparison on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 55, 190–197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.09.011>
- Crocker, J., & Canevello, A. (2008). Creating and undermining social support in communal relationships: The role of compassionate and self-image goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(3), 555–575. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.3.555>
- Crocker, J., & Canevello, A. (2012). Consequences of self-image and compassionate goals. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 45, 229–277. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-394286-9.00005-6>
- Crocker, J., Canevello, A., & Lewis, K. A. (2017). Romantic relationships in the ecosystem: Compassionate goals, nonzero-sum beliefs, and change in relationship quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 112(1), 58–75. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000076>
- Crocker, J., Olivier, M. A., & Nuer, N. (2009). Self-image goals and compassionate goals: Costs and benefits. *Self and Identity*, 8(2–3), 251–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860802505160>
- de Oliveira, M. J., Huertas, M. K. Z., & Lin, Z. (2016). Factors driving young users' engagement with Facebook: Evidence from Brazil. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 54–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.07.038>
- Ellison, N., Heino, R., & Gibbs, J. (2006). Managing impressions online: Self-presentation processes in the online dating environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(2), 415–441. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00020.x>
- Fan, X., Deng, N., Dong, X., Lin, Y., & Wang, J. (2019). Do others' self-presentation on social media influence individual's subjective well-being? A moderated mediation model. *Telematics and Informatics*, 41, 86–102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2019.04.001>
- Ferguson, R., Gutberg, J., Schattke, K., Paulin, M., & Jost, N. (2015). Self-determination theory, social media and charitable causes: An in-depth analysis of autonomous motivation. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 45(3), 298–307. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2038>
- Fox, J., & Vendemia, M. A. (2016). Selective self-presentation and social comparison through photographs on social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 19(10), 593–600. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2016.0248>
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Diehl, T., Huber, B., & Liu, J. (2017). Personality traits and social media use in 20 countries: How personality relates to frequency of social media use, social media news use, and social media use for social interaction. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 20(9), 540–552. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2017.0295>
- Ham, C.-D., Lee, J., Hayes, J. L., & Bae, Y. H. (2019). Exploring sharing behaviors across social media platforms. *International Journal of Market Research*, 61(2), 157–177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470785318782790>
- Han, S., Min, J., & Lee, H. (2015). Antecedents of social presence and gratification of social connection needs in SNS: A study of Twitter users and their mobile and non-mobile usage. *International Journal of Information Management*, 35(4), 459–471. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.04.004>

- Hilvert-Bruce, Z., Neill, J. T., Sjöblom, M., & Hamari, J. (2018). Social motivations of live-streaming viewer engagement on Twitch. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 84, 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.02.013>
- Hong, S., Jahng, M. R., Lee, N., & Wise, K. R. (2020). Do you filter who you are? Excessive self-presentation, social cues, and user evaluations of Instagram selfies. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 104, Article 106159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.106159>
- Hu, Y., Manikonda, L., & Kambhampati, S. (2014). What we Instagram: A first analysis of Instagram photo content and user types. In *Proceedings of the 8th international conference on weblogs and social media, ICWSM 2014* (pp. 595–598). The AAAI Press. <https://asu.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/what-we-instagram-a-first-analysis-of-instagram-photo-content-and>
- Hunt, M. G., Marx, R., Lipson, C., & Young, J. (2018). No more FOMO: Limiting social media decreases loneliness and depression. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 37(10), 751–768. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751>
- Katerattanakul, P. (2002). Framework of effective web site design for business-to-consumer internet commerce. *INFOR: Information Systems and Operational Research*, 40(1), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03155986.2002.11732641>
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). *The uses and gratifications approach to mass communication*. Sage.
- Kemp, S. (2020, January 30). *Digital 2020: 3.8 billion people use social media*. We Are Social. [https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2020/01/digital-2020-3-8-billion-people-use-social-media/#:~:text=Worldwide%2C%20there%20are%203.80%20billion,percent\)%20over%20the%20past%20year](https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2020/01/digital-2020-3-8-billion-people-use-social-media/#:~:text=Worldwide%2C%20there%20are%203.80%20billion,percent)%20over%20the%20past%20year)
- Khan, A. (2017). Pakistani university students perspective on Whatsapp usage: From the lens of uses & gratification constructs. *International Journal of Digital Information and Wireless Communications*, 7(4), 184–199. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17781/P002373>
- Kim, D., & Jang, S. S. (2019). The psychological and motivational aspects of restaurant experience sharing behavior on social networking sites. *Service Business*, 13(1), 25–49. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11628-018-0367-8>
- Ko, H., Cho, C.-H., & Roberts, M. S. (2005). Internet uses and gratifications: A structural equation model of interactive advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 34(2), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2005.10639191>
- Kross, E., Verduyn, P., Demiralp, E., Park, J., Lee, D. S., Lin, N., Shablack, H., Jonides, J., & Ybarra, O. (2013). Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being in young adults. *PLoS ONE*, 8(8), Article 69841. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0069841>
- Lee, D. S., Jiang, T., Canevello, A., & Crocker, J. (2020). Motivational underpinnings of successful support giving: Compassionate goals promote matching support provision. *Personal Relationships*, 28(2), 276–296. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12363>
- Lee, E., Lee, J. A., Moon, J. H., & Sung, Y. (2015). Pictures speak louder than words: Motivations for using Instagram. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18(9), 552–556. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2015.0157>
- Manago, A. M., & Vaughn, L. (2015). Social media, friendship, and happiness in the millennial generation. In M. Demire (Ed.), *Friendship and happiness* (pp. 187–206). Springer Science+Business Media.
- Manikonda, L., Meduri, V. V., & Kambhampati, S. (2021). Tweeting the mind and Instagramming the heart: Exploring differentiated content sharing on social media. In *Proceedings of the tenth international AAAI conference on web and social media* (pp. 639–642). AAAI. <https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/14819>
- McCosker, A., Kamstra, P., de Cotta, T., Farmer, J., Shaw, F., Teh, Z., & Soltani Panah, A. (2021). Social media for social good? A thematic, spatial and visual analysis of humanitarian action on Instagram. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(13), 1870–1890. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2020.1748089>
- Mehdizadeh, S. (2010). Self-presentation 2.0: Narcissism and self-esteem on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 13(4), 357–364. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2009.0257>
- Moon, J. H., Lee, E., Lee, J.-A., Choi, T. R., & Sung, Y. (2016). The role of narcissism in self-promotion on Instagram. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 101, 22–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.05.042>

- Munar, A. M., & Jacobsen, J. K. S. (2014). Motivations for sharing tourism experiences through social media. *Tourism Management*, 43, 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.01.012>
- Paulhus, D. L. (1984). Two-component models of socially desirable responding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(3), 598–609. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.3.598>
- Pera, A. (2018). Psychopathological processes involved in social comparison, depression, and envy on Facebook. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, Article 22. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00022>
- Pounders, K., Kowalczyk, C. M., & Stowers, K. (2016). Insight into the motivation of selfie postings: Impression management and self-esteem. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(9/10), 1879–1892. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-07-2015-0502>
- Qiu, L., Lin, H., Leung, A. K., & Tov, W. (2012). Putting their best foot forward: Emotional disclosure on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(10), 569–572. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0200>
- Quan-Haase, A., & Young, A. L. (2010). Uses and gratifications of social media: A comparison of Facebook and instant messaging. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 30(5), 350–361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610380009>
- Reer, F., Tang, W. Y., & Quandt, T. (2019). Psychosocial well-being and social media engagement: The mediating roles of social comparison orientation and fear of missing out. *New Media & Society*, 21(7), 1486–1505. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818823719>
- Rubin, A. M. (1983). Television uses and gratifications: The interactions of viewing patterns and motivations. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 27(1), 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838158309386471>
- Schattke, K., Ferguson, R., & Paulin, M. (2018). Motivations to support charity-linked events after exposure to Facebook appeals: Emotional cause identification and distinct self-determined regulations. *Motivation Science*, 4(4), 315–332. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mot0000085>
- Sheldon, P., & Bryant, K. (2016). Instagram: Motives for its use and relationship to narcissism and contextual age. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 58, 89–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.12.059>
- Statista (2022a, March). *Distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of January 2022, by age group*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/>
- Statista (2022b, February). *Number of monthly active Instagram users from January 2013 to December 2021*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/>
- Stefanone, M. A., Yue, Z., & Toh, Z. (2019). A social cognitive approach to traditional media content and social media use: Selfie-related behavior as competitive strategy. *New Media & Society*, 21(2), 317–335. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818795488>
- Straub, D. W. (1989). Validating instruments in MIS research. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(2), 147–169. <https://doi.org/10.2307/248922>
- Tobin, S. J., Chant, G., & Clay, R. (2020). Interpersonal goals as predictors of Facebook use, social capital, and envy. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 23(4), 257–263. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2019.0446>
- Utz, S., Tanis, M., & Vermeulen, I. (2012). It is all about being popular: The effects of need for popularity on social network site use. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(1), 37–42. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2010.0651>
- Vaterlaus, J. M., Barnett, K., Roche, C., & Young, J. A. (2016). “Snapchat is more personal”: An exploratory study on Snapchat behaviors and young adult interpersonal relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 62, 594–601. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.04.029>
- Verduyn, P., Lee, D. S., Park, J., Shablack, H., Orvell, A., Bayer, J., Ybarra, O., Jonides, J., & Kross, E. (2015). Passive Facebook usage undermines affective well-being: Experimental and longitudinal evidence. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 144(2), 480–448. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000057>
- Vogel, E. A., & Rose, J. P. (2016). Self-reflection and interpersonal connection: Making the most of self-presentation on social media. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 2(3), 294–302. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tps0000076>

Walther, J. B. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(5), 2538-2557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2006.05.002>

Walton, G. M. (2014). The new science of wise psychological interventions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23(1), 73–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413512856>

Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). Why people use social media: A uses and gratifications approach. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 16(4), 362–369. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2013-0041>

Williamson, P., Stohlman, T., & Polinsky, H. (2017). Me, my “selfie” and I: A survey of self-disclosure motivations on social media. *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2(2), 71–85. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijcs.2.2.05>

Yuen, S., & Tang, G. (2021). Instagram and social capital: Youth activism in a networked movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2021.2011189>

Appendix

Table A1. *Self-Promoting Content Sharing Scenarios.*

Variable	Items
Self-promoting	<p>You are on vacation with some friends. You are about to share a photo of you and your friends enjoying your time on Instagram, which is likely to get many “likes”. However, you also know that if you share this post, others who are not on this trip with you may feel left out or jealous.</p> <p>You just received an expensive and very desirable gift for your birthday. You would like to share this news on Instagram as it will very likely increase your popularity; however, you also know posting could potentially make some of your friends feel bad about themselves because they can’t afford it.</p> <p>You are about to share a professionally-edited photo of yourself on Instagram. You are confident that your followers will “like” this photo because you really look good in the photo; however, you are also aware that posting this photo can make some friends feel worse about their own appearance.</p> <p>You got endorsed by a brand and are about to share this news through a post on Instagram. This will increase the appeal of your Instagram profile and gain more followers. However, the post will make others feel worse about their own Instagram profile.</p>

Table A2. *Prosocial Content Sharing Scenarios.*

Variable	Items
Pro-social	<p>You came across a post that supports legalizing medical marijuana to help people with chronic pain. You are contemplating whether to share this post on Instagram. On the one hand, sharing this information can provide useful information about how medical marijuana can help deal with chronic pain to those in need. On the other hand, given the controversy surrounding the legalization of marijuana, there is a possibility that some people you know may be turned off by your post and think less of you.</p> <p>You came across a post about fundraising to help animal shelters improve their facilities. You are contemplating whether to share this post on Instagram. On the one hand, sharing this post can facilitate fundraising efforts to drastically improve the lives of abandoned animals. On the other hand, you also wonder whether sharing this post would make you look like someone who cares about animals more when there are people in your own community dealing with hardships.</p> <p>You came across a post about a local focus-group program that can help people effectively recover from drug addiction. You are contemplating whether to share this post on Instagram. On the one hand, you would like to share this information as it has helped you deal with your own experience with drug addiction. On the other hand, you are also hesitant because some of your friends may now discover your history with drug addiction and may think less of you.</p> <p>You came across a post that informs people of their basic religious rights. You are contemplating whether to share this post on Instagram. On the one hand, you would like to share this post because knowing these rights can benefit many people. On the other hand, you are also afraid that sharing this post can lead some of your friends to think of you as too “religious”.</p>

About Authors

Zena Toh is a doctoral student at the University at Buffalo, the State University at New York. Her research involves interpersonal goals and their associations and consequences within interpersonal processes, such as social support and wellbeing.

David S. Lee is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and a faculty associate in the Department of Psychology at the University at Buffalo, the State University of New York. His research centers on social relationships and well-being, with a particular focus on social support processes and social media use.

✉ **Correspondence to**

Zena Toh, Department of Communication, University at Buffalo, 359 Baldy Hall Buffalo, NY 14260, USA
zenatoh@buffalo.edu

© Author(s). The articles in *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace* are open access articles licensed under the terms of the [Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) which permits unrestricted, non-commercial use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the work is properly cited.