On the formation of favourable impressions: Associations between self-presentation motives, task behaviour, and others’ evaluations of the self in a team-sport setting

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Abstract

Individuals adopt self-presentation motives in sport settings to shape others’ perceptions of the self. However, the effectiveness of different types of motives in shaping favourable evaluations has not been explored. We examined pathways from 2 x 2 self-presentation motives to others’ evaluative perceptions via task behaviour. Participants (N = 112) reported their self-presentation motives immediately prior to a basketball game, had their behaviours (i.e., shots, time spent on the sideline) recorded via video during the game, then completed agentic (e.g., competent) and communal (e.g., supportive) ratings of their teammates following the game. Structural equation modeling revealed positive pathways from acquisitive motives to behaviour (i.e., acquisitive agency) and favourable evaluations (i.e., acquisitive-agency and -communion). Negative pathways were observed from protective communion to behaviour and others’ evaluations. The findings indicate that different types of self-presentation motives may differ in their impression management effectiveness and may either promote or suppress task behaviour.

Keywords: Perception; impression management; basketball; hierarchy; social
Self-presentation motives

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Managing others’ impressions of the self is a fundamental part of daily social life. At least since Goffman’s (1959) seminal dramatological work on the self-management of impressions, researchers have explored the type of image individuals wish to portray to others, the strategies employed in pursuit of these aims, and the social conditions that may shape these processes. Self-presentation motivation (i.e., individuals’ desire to shape others’ perceptions of the self) represents a key aspect of the self-presentation process insofar as it energises all aspects of individuals’ approach to impression management, including the diverse impression construction strategies (i.e., choosing what image is to be presented and how to achieve this) that may be employed to create a desired impression (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

In the physical activity domain, research supports the relevance of a self-presentation motivation approach to understanding important outcomes. For example, self-presentation motivation, when conceptualised as individuals’ motivation to be seen as an exerciser, has typically been found to positively align with physical activity behaviour (Martin Ginis, Lindwall, & Prapavessis, 2007). In sport settings, research findings indicate that athletes may be concerned about the image that they are presenting to others (Wilson & Eklund, 1998), are motivated to manage how others perceive them (Payne, Hudson, Akehurst, & Ntoumanis, 2013), and that self-presentational pressures may influence the quality of athletic performance (Mesagno, Harvey, & Janelle, 2011).

Despite the considerable insight provided by previous physical activity self-presentation work, no research has explored links between how individuals want to be perceived (i.e., self-presentation motivation), how individuals behave, and how individuals
Self-presentation motives

Actually are perceived (i.e., the favourability of others’ evaluations). Existing work on impression formation in the context of physical activity has focused on the exercise stereotype, with findings consistently demonstrating that individuals who are viewed as exercisers are rated more positively by others on personality and physical dimensions (cf. Martin Ginis, Latimer, & Jung, 2003). However, it is possible that the mere act of participating in physical activity is not sufficient to generate positive impressions. In fact, physical activity provides the opportunity for participants to generate both favourable (e.g., being seen as competent and friendly) and unfavourable (e.g., being viewed as incompetent and unfriendly) perceptions.

Our aim in the present manuscript is to address this research need by exploring associations between self-presentation motives, physical activity behaviour, and others’ evaluations. Our specific focus is on a team-sport (i.e., basketball) setting. However, we draw from broader (i.e., physical activity and social psychology) literature to introduce the present study and to interpret our findings. In the following introductory paragraphs, we discuss the conceptualisation of self-presentational physical activity motives before addressing potential links between (a) self-presentation motives and others’ evaluations, (b) self-presentation motives and behaviour, and (c) behaviour and others’ evaluations.

In regards to conceptualising self-presentation motivation, physical activity researchers have mostly focused on individuals’ general self-presentation motivation to be seen as an exerciser (cf. Conroy, Motl, & Hall, 2000). More recently, however, scholars are also beginning to explore the merits of a more differentiated approach to self-presentation motivation. For example, Payne et al. (2013) developed a measure of the different self-presentation motives that team-sport members may endorse. Their measure assesses individuals’ self-presentation motivation regarding self-development, social identity development, avoidance of negative outcomes, and avoidance of damaging impressions.
Howle and colleagues (Howle, Jackson, Conroy, & Dimmock, 2015) have also discussed different types of physical activity self-presentation motives that individuals may adopt. These authors proposed a 2 x 2 framework of acquisitive-agentic (i.e., a desire to gain social approval from others in terms of their perceptions of one’s physical qualities and task ability), acquisitive-communal (i.e., a desire to gain social approval from others in terms of their perceptions of one’s interpersonal qualities), protective-agentic (i.e., a desire to avoid social disapproval from others in terms of their perceptions of one’s physical qualities and task ability), and protective-communal (i.e., a desire to avoid social disapproval from others in terms of their perceptions of one’s interpersonal qualities) self-presentation motives. This 2 x 2 framework guided the present investigation.

The 2 x 2 self-presentation motives are grounded in the approach/avoidance (Elliot, 2008) and agency/communion (Bakan, 1966; Horowitz et al., 2006) theoretical paradigms. Acquisitive (i.e., approach-oriented) motives involve a focus on gaining social approval, whereas protective (i.e., avoidance-oriented) motives involve a focus on avoiding social disapproval (Arkin, 1981). Agentic motives involve a focus on influence, task-related achievement, and mastery, whereas communal motives involve a focus on interpersonal relationships and connections (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Bakan, 1966; Wiggins, 1991). One benefit of the 2 x 2 self-presentation motive framework approach is that it allows researchers to consider the potential variation in the ways that individuals may wish to present themselves to others and the distinct outcomes with which these motives may be aligned.

In outlining the 2 x 2 self-presentation motive framework, Howle, Jackson et al. (2015) discussed potential links between these self-presentation motives and others’ evaluations of the self. Acquisitive motives are expected to generate positive audience evaluations (Arkin, 1981; Arkin & Shepperd, 1990) to the extent that task-related self-enhancement (i.e., acquisitive agency) begets perceptions of task-related competence
(Schlenker & Leary, 1982) and acts of interpersonal agreeableness (i.e., acquisitive communion) invite reciprocal agreeableness (Carson, 1969; Moskowitz, Ho, & Turcotte-Tremblay, 2007). Evaluative protective motive endorsement implications, however, appear less clear. Conceptual expectations are that protective motives will not generate favourable impressions, but it is unclear whether they will necessarily facilitate unfavourable impressions. On the one hand, protective strategies are enlisted to mitigate potential negative evaluation (Snyder & Higgins, 1988), such that the audience should discount present social information (e.g., poor performance) when making evaluative judgements about the self-presenter. On this basis, it may be expected that unfavourable impressions will not be generated following protective self-presentation. On the other hand, the desire to avoid social disapproval may be a self-defeating strategy (Baumeister & Scher, 1988) and may correspond with negative peer evaluations (Hymel, Bowker, & Woody 1993). On this basis, it may be expected that unfavourable impressions will be generated following protective self-presentation. Thus, whilst our expectations are that acquisitive motives will facilitate favourable audience evaluations, we make no a priori hypotheses for protective motives so as to explore whether these latter motives help individuals ‘save face’ or are counter-productive and result in negative impressions being generated.

In addition to considering potential differences in the favourability of others’ evaluative perceptions, we also sought to account for prospective differences in the agentic and communal content of these evaluations. Whereas individuals focused on gaining approval for their athleticism or task competence (i.e., acquisitive agency) may be expected to generate a favourable agentic impression, individuals focused on gaining approval for their interpersonal competencies (i.e., acquisitive communion) may generate a favourable communal impression. This premise, that specific motives may align with their respective gains has been explored, and supported, by Strömmer, Inglede, and Markland (2015). These
researchers found strong and positive associations between exercise motives and gains, supporting Ingledew, Markland, and Strömmer’s (2013) view that individuals may be expected to experience gains (e.g., connect with others, increase physical fitness) in relation to the corresponding domains that they are motivated to pursue (e.g., affiliation, improve strength and endurance, respectively). As such, we predicted that acquisitive agentic motives would positively align with agentic evaluations and that acquisitive communal motives would positively align with communal evaluations.

The favourability of others’ impressions of an athlete may have important downstream implications for that athlete. Leary and Kowalski (1990) speculated that successful self-presenters may experience increases in well-being as a result of maximizing social and material outcomes, enhancing their self-esteem, and developing a desired identity. For example, athletes who are successful in generating a favourable impression when joining a new team may come to make friendships with their teammates, gain playing time, experience a boost in self-esteem, and identify more strongly with being an athlete and a member of the team. Others’ impressions of an athlete may also have important implications for that athlete’s self-concept. Researchers investigating the process of reflected appraisals have found that individuals’ self-concept is shaped by the views that they believe others hold of the self. For example, adolescent athletes’ appraisals of their teammates’ perception of their sport-related competence predicts their own self-perceived competence (Amorose, 2002). Similarly, researchers in sport and physical activity (Jackson, Gucciardi, Lonsdale, Whipp, & Dimmock, 2014; Jackson, Myers, Taylor, & Beauchamp, 2012) have found that individuals’ perceptions of others’ confidence in their task ability (i.e., relation-inferred self-efficacy; RISE) positively predicts their own confidence in their task ability (i.e., self-efficacy).
As well as predicting others’ evaluation of the self, 2 x 2 self-presentation motives are also thought to predict physical activity behaviour (Howle, Jackson et al., 2015). Drawing from the approach/avoidance theoretical paradigm (Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & McGregor, 2001), acquisitive agency is thought to be positively associated with approach-oriented task behaviour (e.g., involvement, effort, persistence) whereas protective agency is thought to be positively associated with avoidance-oriented task behaviour (e.g., task withdrawal and avoidance; Howle, Jackson et al., 2015). Similarly, acquisitive-communion is thought to promote approach-oriented social behaviour (e.g., seeking to interact and bond with others), whereas protective communion is thought to promote avoidance-oriented social behaviour (e.g., interpersonal hesitancy and reticence). Guided by this work, we predicted that acquisitive motives would positively align with behavioural indices of physical activity game involvement. We expected either a null association or negative association between protective motives and behaviour in light of evidence supporting both the former (Howle, Dimmock, Whipp, & Jackson, 2015b) and latter (Howle, Dimmock, & Jackson, 2016) of these views.

Thus far, we have reviewed support for the view that pathways may exist from self-presentation motives to others’ evaluation of the self and to physical activity behaviour. In addition to these pathways, we also expect that there are pathways between individuals’ behaviour and others’ evaluations of the self. In the physical activity domain, it is likely that the perceptions that others’ develop about self-presenters are shaped (at least, in part) by individuals’ physical activity behaviour. For example, individuals who score more points and are more involved in a basketball game are likely to be viewed as more competent than individuals whose performance and involvement is of a lower standard. Unlike individuals’ motivation, which evaluative others may only infer, individuals’ behaviour is readily observable and as such may be a particularly relevant and salient source of information. In
light of this information, we expect that physical activity behaviour will act as an
intermediary variable between self-presentation motivation and others’ evaluations.

In the present study, we also considered sex, age, and task experience as additional
predictors of behaviour and others’ evaluations. Including these additional factors allowed us
to examine whether 2 x 2 self-presentation motives had a unique predictive effect on
behaviour and others’ evaluations beyond the prospective effects associated with these
background factors. Sex and age were examined in light of possible post-pubertal physical
differences (e.g., speed, power, strength, endurance; Thomas & French, 1985) between males
and females and older and younger individuals that may impact basketball behaviour. In
addition, sex and age may influence evaluative perceptions. Agency and communion have
been proposed to be linked to stereotypical sex roles, such that males may be expected to be
more agentic and females more communal (Abele, 2003; Moskowitz, Suh, & Desaulniers,
1994). Older individuals may also emphasize the importance of communion rather than
agency relative to younger individuals (Smith et al., 2009). Task experience was also
examined as a predictor of behaviour and evaluations. We reasoned that higher quality
behaviour could be expected of more experienced basketball players and that these players
may be evaluated more positively during the game.

Method

Participants and procedure

A total of 112 participants (n_male = 53, n_female = 58, 1 did not provide sex; M_age =
20.43, SD = 3.71) were recruited from eight undergraduate kinesiology practical classes
where students were informed that they were to compete in a basketball game as part of their
regularly scheduled program of activity. Classes took place towards the beginning of the
semester (i.e., each class had only met on two prior occasions) when it was reasoned that
participant relationships and impressions would be less well-established. All games were
completed on a full-sized indoor basketball court. On average, participants had 2.02 (SD = 2.84) years of previous experience playing basketball.

After institutional ethics approval was granted, the lead author attended each class to inform participants about the nature of the study, the study procedures, and then to carry out data collection. This included informing participants that they could withdraw at any time, that their responses would be treated as confidential and would not impact their grade for the course, that their classmates and instructor would not be made aware of their responses, and that the game would be recorded for the purpose of the research. The course coordinator, who also acted as the referee for the game, randomly assigned participants to teams and informed participants that the management of playing time, substitutions, and tactics would be at the discretion of each team and that all other facets of the game would be refereed. Participants then completed a pre-game questionnaire in which they reported on their self-presentation motives for the upcoming basketball activity. Upon questionnaire completion, the instructor indicated the beginning of a five-minute pre-game period in which teams were encouraged to discuss game strategy. The basketball game began immediately after this five-minute period. The game consisted of two ten minute halves with a short break at half-time for participants to have a drink of water. Immediately following the game, each participant was asked to complete the post-game questionnaire in which they were asked to indicate their impressions of each of their teammates during the game.

Measures

Self-presentation motives. Participants’ self-presentation motives for the basketball game were assessed using the 16-item Self-presentation Motives for Physical Activity Questionnaire (SMPAQ; Howle, Dimmock, et al., 2015b). The item stem read, “Right at this moment in time, thinking about the upcoming basketball activity, I am focusing my attention on…” Five items assess acquisitive-agentic motivation (e.g., “having others admire me for
my physical ability at basketball”), four items assess acquisitive-communal motivation (e.g., “having others view me as friendly”), four items are used to measure protective-agentic motivation (e.g., “avoiding others viewing me as an incompetent basketball player”), and three items assessed protective-communal motivation (e.g., “avoiding others viewing me as unkind”). A seven-point response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) was used. Cronbach’s alpha values indicated no problems regarding internal consistency (i.e., $\alpha = .85, .90, .90, \text{ and } .96$ for acquisitive agency, acquisitive communion, protective agency, and protective communion, respectively).

**Behaviour.** Games were recorded so as to assess individuals’ behaviour during the basketball activity. Two video cameras were used with the purpose of more fully capturing the multiple behaviours that were occurring across the court at any given time period. The first camera was operated by the lead author on the sideline of the court. The second camera was stationary and mounted on a tripod located in the bleachers above the court. Following the games, a trained undergraduate research assistant (also a basketball player and blind to the study hypotheses) viewed the video footage and recorded each instance of the relevant behaviours enacted by participants. Relevant agentic behaviours included each individual’s total shots and the total time spent by each participant on the sideline (i.e., rather than in the game). Total shots and game time spent on (or off) the court by each player are commonly recorded metrics of performance and game involvement kept by professional basketball leagues. Relevant communal behaviours included physically praising teammates and retrieving the ball for the opposition when it went out of bounds (to be positively coded) and displays of anger and combative acts (to be negatively coded). These communal behaviour measures were drawn from existing sport-specific behavioural taxonomies (Patrick, Ward, & Crouch, 1998; Sage & Kavussanu, 2007). Behaviour scores were subsequently standardized.
Self-presentation motives

(i.e., Z scores) within each class to account for potential group-level influences (e.g., class size) on behaviour (Gest, Domitrovich, & Welsh, 2005).

**Evaluative ratings.** Participants were asked to evaluate the agentic and communal qualities displayed by each of their teammates during the basketball game. Three items (i.e., being active, competent, and dominant) were used to assess agentic qualities and three items (i.e., being likeable, supportive, empathic) were used to assess communal qualities. These items, along with the response scale that was used (i.e., ranging from 1 [*not at all*] to 9 [*very*]), were taken from previous work in which undergraduates were asked to evaluate others (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993). Participants’ scores for each item were calculated as the mean of each of their teammates’ ratings. Cronbach’s alpha values indicated no problems regarding internal consistency (i.e., \( \alpha = .95 \) and \( .94 \) for agentic and communal measures, respectively).

**Data analysis**

Inspection of the frequencies of communal behaviour revealed that very few of these acts occurred. No negative acts (i.e., displays of anger or combative physical contact) were coded, and positive acts were very infrequent (i.e., physical praise of teammates and retrieving of the ball each occurred a total of 11 times). Given the limited data available on communal behaviour, and to avoid capitalising on chance associations with self-presentation motives, these behaviours were subsequently dropped from the analyses. Missing data comprised 0.18% of total data and were replaced using the full-information maximum likelihood procedure (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). A single case identified as a univariate outlier was removed. Skew and kurtosis values and visual representations of the data were inspected for the self-presentation motive and evaluation items. Skewness values ranged from \(-.87\) to \(.38\) and kurtosis values ranged from \(-1.18\) to \(1.40\). Based on statistical guidelines (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), we proceeded with the analyses.
MPlus version 7.3 was used to examine the associations between pre-game 2 x 2 self-presentation motives, in-game basketball game behaviour, and post-game teammate evaluative ratings using a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. Structural pathways were specified from 2 x 2 self-presentation motives and the control variables to evaluative perceptions and to behaviour. Subsequent pathways were also specified from behaviour to evaluative ratings. These pathways are displayed in Figure 1. Self-presentation motives and agentic and communal evaluative perceptions were treated as latent constructs that were indicated by their respective items. All other variables (i.e., shots, time spent on the sideline, age, sex, experience) were treated as observed constructs. In addition to these direct associations, we also examined indirect associations from agentic motives to agentic evaluations via each behavioural metric and from communal motives to communal evaluations via each behavioural metric. Bivariate associations between self-presentation motives and between evaluative perceptions were also specified on the basis of previous findings that the 2 x 2 self-presentation motives and the agentic and communal dimensions may be correlated (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Howle, Dimmock et al., 2015b). Following statistical guidelines (cf. Muthén & Muthén, 2012), we employed a weighted least squares (i.e., WLSMV) estimator to deal with item-level categorical data (2 x 2 self-presentation motives) and implemented a correction (i.e., the “type = complex” command) to account for the potential non-independence of responses (i.e., students being nested within classes). Following an initial run of the model, item residuals and modification indices were inspected. This information indicated two minor changes to improve the measurement part of the model. First, a single negative (but non-significant) residual variance for a communal evaluation item was fixed to zero (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Second, we specified a covariance association between a pair of acquisitive agency item residuals (Kline, 2011). This modification was justified in light of the similar wording of the acquisitive agentic items and
following consideration of Meehl’s (1990) assertion that, to some extent, pairs of psychological variables are likely to be related. Model fit was assessed using the $\chi^2$ goodness-of-fit index, the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Guided by Marsh (2007), an excellent fitting model was judged to be one with CFI and TLI values $\geq .95$ and RMSEA value $\leq .05$.

**Results**

Visual inspection of self-presentation motive descriptive statistics showed that of the 2 x 2 motives, participants most strongly endorsed acquisitive communion (mean = 5.02, $SD = 1.07$), with the other motive mean scores falling around the scale mid-point (mean range 3.18 to 4.06, $SD$ range 1.20 to 1.60). This is consistent with previous findings (Howle, Dimmock, Whipp, & Jackson, 2015a). On average, participants took 5.06 shots ($SD = 3.75$) and spent 6.01 minutes ($SD = 3.30$) on the sideline, which corresponds to approximately 14 minutes spent in the game. Individuals were also generally perceived favourably, with means for the agentic ($M = 6.38$ to 7.29; $SD = 0.95$ to 1.35) and communal ($M = 6.91$ to 7.47; $SD = 0.68$ to 0.79 evaluation items) falling above the scale mid-point.

The re-specified model was found to be an excellent fit for the data, $\chi^2 (291) = 362.28$, $p = .003$, CFI = .969, TLI = .963, RMSEA = .047. Taken together, the variables in the model explained 38% of the variance in shots, 27% of the variance in time spent on the bench, 62% of the variance in agentic evaluations and 32% of the variance in communal evaluations. All items loaded strongly and positively (i.e., $> .62$) on their intended factors.

Standardized effects for the statistically significant ($p < .05$) direct structural pathways are displayed in Figure 2. Of particular note, acquisitive agency was found to positively predict both behavioural measures as well as agentic ratings. Additionally, acquisitive- and protective-communion predicted communal ratings in a positive and negative direction, respectively. Three indirect pathways (i.e., from self-presentation motives via behaviour to
evaluative ratings) were also found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$). Two positive pathways emerged from acquisitive agency to agentic ratings, via shots ($\beta = .19$) and sideline time ($\beta = .13$). The third pathway, which was negative in direction, emerged from protective communion to communal ratings via shots ($\beta = -.04$). In addition to these effects, a number of unexpected findings were also observed. For example, protective agency did not predict behaviour or agentic ratings. Additionally, age did not predict any outcomes of interest, whereas both sex and experience aligned with behaviour and agentic ratings (see Figure 2).

**Discussion**

The present study provides novel insight into the ways in which individuals are perceived by others within a physical activity setting. Whereas previous research (e.g., Martin Ginis et al., 2003) has demonstrated that exercisers, relative to non-exercisers, benefit from being perceived more positively, the present study indicates that mere involvement in group-based physical activity may not be sufficient to promote positive impressions in the eyes of one’s sport teammates. Rather, the current findings suggest that the favourability of these evaluations may stem, in part, from the type of image that individuals are motivated to create, and the physical activity behaviour with which these motives align. Taken as a whole, the findings provide support for a model in which self-presentation motives predict others’ evaluations of the self via a pathway through physical activity behaviour.

When it comes to the defining purpose of self-presentation (i.e., generating a desired impression), it appears that the 2 x 2 self-presentation motives are not created equal. Self-presentation success may depend (at least in part) on the type of self-presentation motive endorsed by the self-presenter and the behavioural strategies employed. We anticipated that acquisitive agency and communion would positively predict more favourable agentic and communal evaluations, respectively. These predictions were fully supported. In addition, protective communion negatively predicted communal ratings but protective agency did not
align with agentic ratings. These findings were not hypothesized, but indicate that a focus on
avoiding task-based social disapproval may at best help individuals ‘save face’ but may not
be sufficient to generate a positive impression of the self-presenter. However, a focus on
avoiding interpersonal-based social disapproval may actually be a self-defeating strategy
(Baumeister & Scher, 1988) and ironically align with more negative impressions of the self-
presenter.

Drawing from the 2 x 2 self-presentation motive framework, these findings also add
to extant work indicating differences in associations between 2 x 2 self-presentation motives
and physical activity behaviour. Previously, researchers have observed significant (but
indirect) pathways from agentic motives to physical activity task performance via task goals
(Howle et al., 2016) and bivariate associations between 2 x 2 motives and self-reported
engagement in physical education classes (Howle, Dimmock et al., 2015b). The present
findings, however, constitute initial evidence that 2 x 2 self-presentation motives may directly
predict physical activity behaviour, as we observed significant effects from acquisitive
agency and protective communion to behaviour. Variation in individuals’ in-game behaviour
also held important implications in terms of how they were perceived by others. Greater
game involvement and a higher standard of performance (i.e., more shots and less time on the
sideline) corresponded with more positive evaluative ratings. Given these evaluative ratings
also emerged as a function of 2 x 2 self-presentation motives, it is perhaps not surprising that
we also observed some indirect pathways between certain motives (i.e., acquisitive agency
and protective communion) via behaviours to evaluations (i.e., agency and communion,
respectively).

To the extent that different types of self-presentation motives may differentially align
with physical activity outcomes, we encourage researchers to consider exploring the
implications of endorsing different impression management drives. Self-presentation
Self-presentation motives

motivation within the physical activity domain has previously been operationalised as the
general drive to be seen as an exerciser (Conroy et al., 2000), but it appears that this useful
approach may be complemented by recent work in which researchers have sought to
distinguish between different types of self-presentation motives (e.g., Howle, Jackson et al.,
2015; Payne et al., 2013). Considered together, the findings support the proposition that
individuals may benefit more from the endorsement of acquisitive rather than protective
motives (Howle, Jackson et al., 2015). This view is broadly consistent with the notion that
approach-oriented drives, whether pursued in achievement or interpersonal contexts, facilitate
more positive outcomes compared to avoidance-oriented drives (Elliot, 2008). Importantly,
the pathways from self-presentation motives to behaviour and others’ evaluations emerged in
this investigation even after we accounted for the influence of other variables (i.e., sex, age,
and basketball experience). Of these variables, sex and experience predicted agentic ratings
and behaviour, but not communal ratings. These findings indicate mixed support for sex-
stereotyping based on agency and communion dimensions (Abele, 2003; Moskowitz et al.,
1994). It is possible that the way in which individuals are perceived may depend more on
their behaviour than their sex.

In the present study, we note that the communal behaviours that were coded occurred
very infrequently and were therefore not suitable for inclusion in the analyses. We encourage
researchers to consider alternate measures of communal behaviour that may be more suitable,
such as using wireless microphones to record verbal interactions (cf. LeCouteur & Feo,
2011). More broadly, we acknowledge that we did not fully explore the range of impression
construction strategies (e.g., the behavioural signatures) that individuals may have utilised
within the basketball activity. Although physical activity researchers have developed a
measure of impression construction as it pertains to being seen as an exerciser (Conroy et al.,
2000), this measure has been critiqued as assessing only some of the many tactics that may be
used to create this perception (Gammage, Hall, Prapavessis, Maddison, Haase, & Martin, 2004). Clearly, creating an exhaustive behavioural assessment tool is an extremely challenging task, in light of the myriad strategies that individuals may employ to shape others’ impression of the self. These strategies may be verbal or non-verbal (DePaulo, 1992), task-focused on interpersonally-focused (Howle, Jackson et al., 2015), and adopted consciously or non-consciously (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Nevertheless, researchers working outside the physical activity domain have developed behavioural taxonomies of self-presentational strategies (e.g., Jones & Pittman, 1982; Schutz, 1998) that may be applied to understand impression construction within physical activity settings. We suggest this to readers as a potentially profitable future research direction.

A further limitation of the present work was that we failed to account for the possibility that individuals may have held existing impressions about their teammates. Although we specified that participants should rate their teammates solely on the basis of the focal basketball activity, it is possible that because participants knew each other to some extent prior to the game (i.e., being members of an existing lab group) they held existing impressions of their teammates that (consciously or not) impacted their ratings. This limitation could be addressed by recruiting participants who had no history of interacting together prior to the study. Of course, this approach may negatively impact the generalizability of the findings. As such, and in the interests of external validity, we also endorse efforts to examine the relationships between self-presentation motives and evaluations in physical activity groups that naturally exist rather than in teams consisting of individuals being brought together for research purposes (as was the case in the present study).

Future work could also seek to broaden the pool of individuals used to evaluate participants. In the current study, we only considered evaluations made by participants’
Self-presentation motives

teammates. Although peer-focused comparisons may have important implications for individual outcomes, such as shaping motor learning (Ávila, Chiviacowsky, Wulf, & Lewthwaite, 2012), the evaluations of other individuals (e.g., coaches and parents) may also be important (Ornelas, Perreira, & Ayala, 2007; Saelens & Kerr, 2008) and should be considered going forward. Whereas teammate-based evaluations may have implications for outcomes such as friendship development and peer acceptance, it is possible that coach and parent evaluations have separate implications for outcomes such as selection to the team and continued sport involvement. In addition, it will be important to establish that others’ agentic and communal evaluations do have implications for the ways in which individuals subsequently come to view themselves. Although existing work addressing reflected appraisals (Amorose, 2002), RISE beliefs (Jackson et al., 2012), and self-presentation outcomes (Leary & Kowalski, 1990) appears to support the importance of others’ beliefs in shaping individuals own self-views, there is little previous work in which pathways from others’ agentic and communal evaluations to individuals’ own self-perceptions have been considered. We strongly encourage researchers to test this assumption, given our argument that these evaluative perceptions (and the motives that predict them) are important at least in part because of their prospective links with these self-views.

This study provides unique insight into the behavioural and evaluative outcomes of individuals’ self-presentation motive endorsements. Researchers have previously documented associations between self-presentation motivation and physical activity outcomes (e.g., behaviour and evaluative concerns; Martin Ginis et al., 2007) and have considered the types of impressions generated by physically active individuals (e.g., Martin Ginis et al., 2003), but the present work provides the first evidence that different physical activity self-presentation motives align with different evaluative outcomes via behaviour. More favourable evaluations may stem from a focus on gaining social approval (i.e., acquisitive motives) rather than
avoiding social disapproval (i.e., protective motives). Specifically, individuals focused on generating positive task-based competency impressions may benefit from acquisitive-agentic motive endorsement and individuals focused on generating positive interpersonal impressions may benefit from an acquisitive communal focus. Moreover, acquisitive agency seems to promote greater physical activity behaviour (i.e., game involvement and performance), whereas protective communion may have a suppressing effect on behaviour. In light of these links with behaviour, and considering the prospective implications of others’ evaluations on how individuals come to view themselves (e.g., self-concept, self-efficacy), the present results highlight an opportunity to facilitate positive physical activity outcomes by encouraging individuals to endorse acquisitive (rather than protective) motives in their self-presentational endeavours.

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References


Self-presentation motives


Self-presentation motives


**Figure 1.** Pathways specified for the structural model. Sex (coded 1 = male, 2 = female). Basketball experience measured in years. Time on the sideline measured in minutes. Ellipses represent latent variables and rectangles represent observed variables. Acquisitive agency, protective agency, acquisitive communion, and protective communion refer to the self-presentation motives that were studied.
Figure 2. Statistically significant ($p < .05$) pathways observed for the structural model. Sex (coded 1 = male, 2 = female). Basketball experience measured in years. Time on the sideline measured in minutes. Ellipses represent latent variables and rectangles represent observed variables. Acquisitive agency, protective agency, acquisitive communion, and protective communion refer to the self-presentation motives that were studied.