Fitter with Twitter
Understanding Personal Health Activity in Social Media

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ceiling

???

5’3”
really?
November

January
I wish exercise was as easy as eating
Food Diary 21/01/09

0700 - Grass water
0730 - 0830 - Sliced 3x 500m
0830 - Protein shake
0930 - 2x crackers w/ Butter
0930 - Tea w/ Milk & 2 Sugar
1045 - Pint of water
1315 - Sainsbury's chicken & chorizo sandwich
- Fanta (Bottle 500m)
1400 - 1 Pint of water
1645 - Buttered Screen Malt Loaf
1600 - Cup of tea
1730 - Blank
technology
Are there types of health-related posts?
Identify practices and motivations?
What constitutes useful feedback?

research questions
kendall et al. (2011)
- content analysis of tweets
- qualitative work

newman et al. (2011)
- interviews with OHCs
- facebook
transtheoretical model of behavior change
(prochaska & velicer, 1997)
hyperpersonal model
(walther, 1996)
qualitative analysis of tweets
- types of content

interviews
- practices
- motivations
- feedback

two parts
- random sample of 1,000 tweets
- **keywords**: gym, workout, calories, diet, weight, healthy
- patterns and themes

qualitative analysis
plans and goals
“trying to lose weight before my next photo shoot hehe”

achieved
“according to weight watchers I have lost 26 pounds since I first started…go me!”

avoided
“another missed workout this morning”
positive
“i… am about to go workout. Oh yes!!!! :)”

neutral
“i spent 45 minutes on an elliptical machine. 542 calories burned.”

negative
“broke my diet and had Barry’s lobster, not good!”
• twelve interviews
• from hashtag communities
• mostly fitness focus
discovery → lurking

“i started finding commuter-related groups on twitter and just came across [a cycling hashtag] and thought this would be a fun challenge.”

filtering for ‘real life’

“to me the best ones are like ‘i just dropped a kettle bell on my toe but i’m still working out’… those are real life tweets.”

practices of...
lifestyle compatibility

“i don’t log in or out. it is ever present on my phone… and it’s kind of eternally logged in.”

accountability

“If you don’t feel good and you don’t end up running, and you can’t post it on facebook or twitter because you didn’t run, you feel like a schmuck.”

motivations
positive

“things like you’re motivational, inspirational, or that’s a great idea, or i want to do what you’re doing. that gives me motivation because i’m out there helping people.”

negative

“i tended to dislike was choosing to eat something and as soon as i tweeted it someone would criticize [me]. it had this feeling of my meal interrupted.”
ok, so what?
mutual inspiration

goals

<

upholding motivations

implications
individual autonomy

attentive audience

authentic feedback
“totally authentic. if you don't like it, don't follow.”
“here’s a good way to have that accountability, even though I don’t know who they are.”

individual autonomy

attentive audience

authentic feedback
“there are others out there just like me, that will support me or kick my ass, depending on what I need.”
personal control

motivations
content taxonomy
- actualization
- sentiment

practices
- discovery → lurking
- filtering for ‘real life’

motivations
- lifestyle compatibility
- accountability

feedback
- positive vs. negative
- helpful vs. unhelpful
• crafting messages and feedback
• behavior maintenance over time
• intention + actual outcomes
• process of adopting health practices
for you...
thank you!

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