#paleshaming: Social media messages and adolescents' perceptions

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Introduction

- **Indoor UV tanning (IUVT)** increases the risk of skin cancer and is prominent among adolescents and young adults (AYAs), particularly among white non-Hispanic females.

- Approximately one-third of adolescent and young adult (AYA) white non-Hispanic females report indoor tanning.
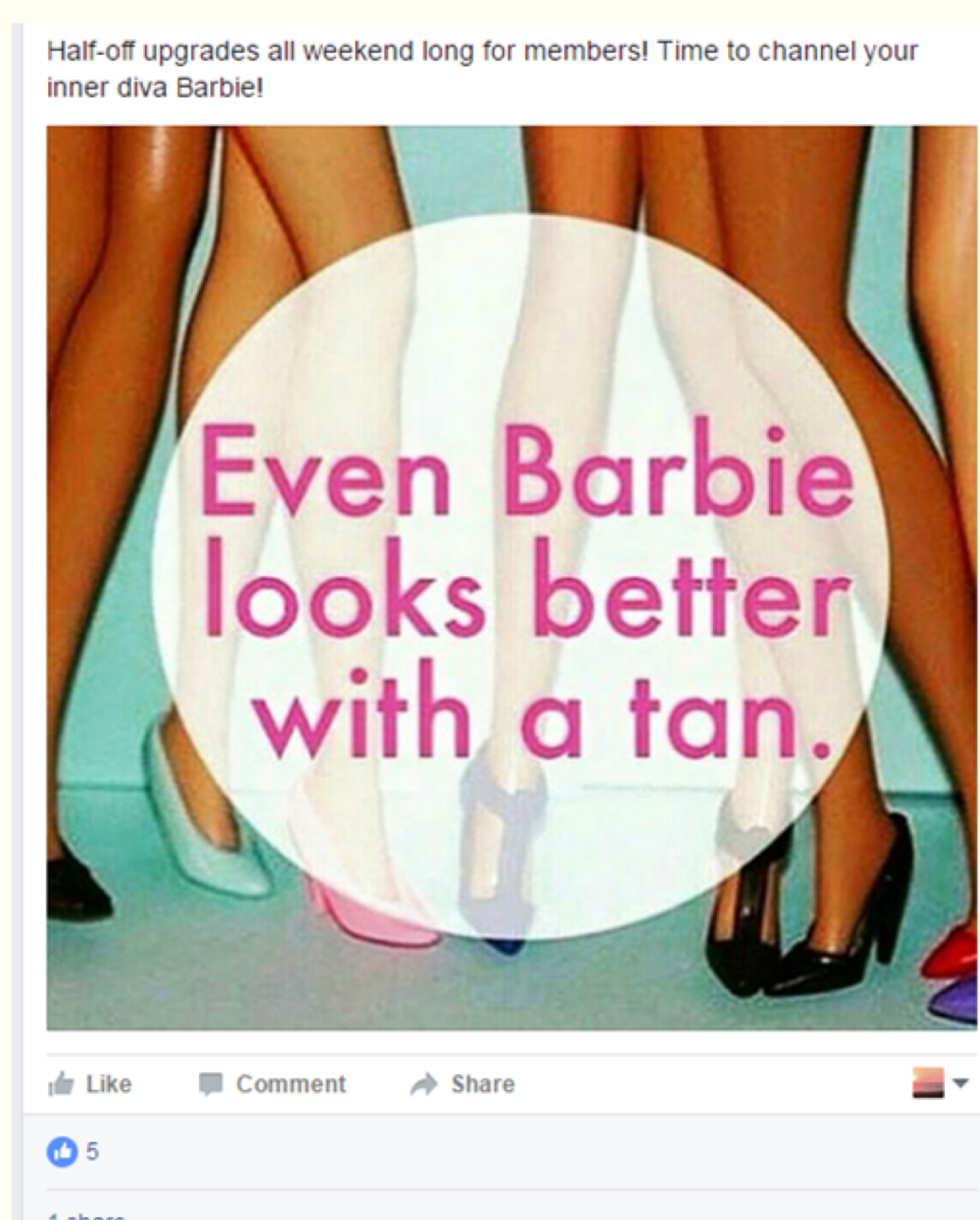
- **The construct of shame** develops in adolescence and can shape individual and social behavior.
  - Shame is typically characterized by a feeling of inferiority.

- Shame has an impact on health seeking and access to care.

- Indoor UV tanning salons may use their presence on social media to influence attitudes and behaviors about tanning, promoting either gain-framed or loss-framed messages to influence customer behavior.

- Little is known about their messaging techniques, and whether leveraging the concept of pale shaming is part of their messaging approaches.

Half-off upgrades all weekend long for members! Time to channel your inner diva Barbie!

Even Barbie looks better with a tan.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to
1) examine pale shaming social media messages by IUVT salons, and
2) understand perspectives of at-risk females in interpreting these social media messages.

Methods

Study Design: This mixed methods study included social media content analysis and participant interviews.
- This data collection was approved by the Seattle Children's Institutional Review Board and University of Wisconsin-Madison Institutional Review Board.

Content Analysis:
- *Setting*: Content analysis was conducted on the social media platform Facebook between the dates May 1, 2015 and April 30, 2016.

- Social media posts were evaluated for three tanning business profiles from all 50 US states.

- A theory-driven codebook was developed to identify pale shaming in social media posts.
  - Interrater agreement was 90.7%.

Codebook Categories	
Category	Definitions
Direct Pale Shaming	Includes the following two constructs: 1) Comments designed to promote embarrassment, shame or disappointment in one's self as pale 2) Explicit comparisons about the superiority of being tan compared to being pale.
Indirect Pale Shaming	Included tan as the ideal appearance/identity.

Telephone Interviews:
- *Setting*: Participant interviews were conducted after content analysis was complete in order to include observations from content analysis in our interview questions. These data were collected between May 8, 2017 and July 7, 2017.

- Telephone interviews were conducted with white non-Hispanic women ages 16-23 years, recruited nationally via a Facebook advertisement.

- Interviews focused on AYA women's interpretation of pale-shaming messages on IUVT social media posts. Qualitative analysis used the constant comparative method.

- Key question:
  - *We noticed that many indoor tanning salons posted in ways that seemed to almost be shaming of people who were not tan, like making fun of pale people. What do you think about that?*

Analysis: Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate prevalence of categories across businesses and interview participants.

Results

Content Analysis:
- A total of 4957 posts were evaluated from 150 indoor UV tanning businesses of Facebook.

| Coding Examples		
Category	N (%)	Examples
Direct Pale Shaming	1) 62 (1.3%)	*"it's better to arrive late than pale"*
	2) 29 posts (0.5%)	*"No one has ever said "you have beautiful white legs, I Love the color of your veins."*
Indirect Pale Shaming	394 posts (8%)	#sunkissed, #loveyourskin, #bronzedglow

Example of direct pale shaming:

WHITE BUNS ONLY LOOK GOOD ON HAMBURGERS

Telephone Interviews:
- Interviews conducted with 46 participants
  - Mean age 20 (SD =2.2)

REPORTED SEEING POSTS SUPPORTING SHAMING

■ Yes ■ No
25%
75%
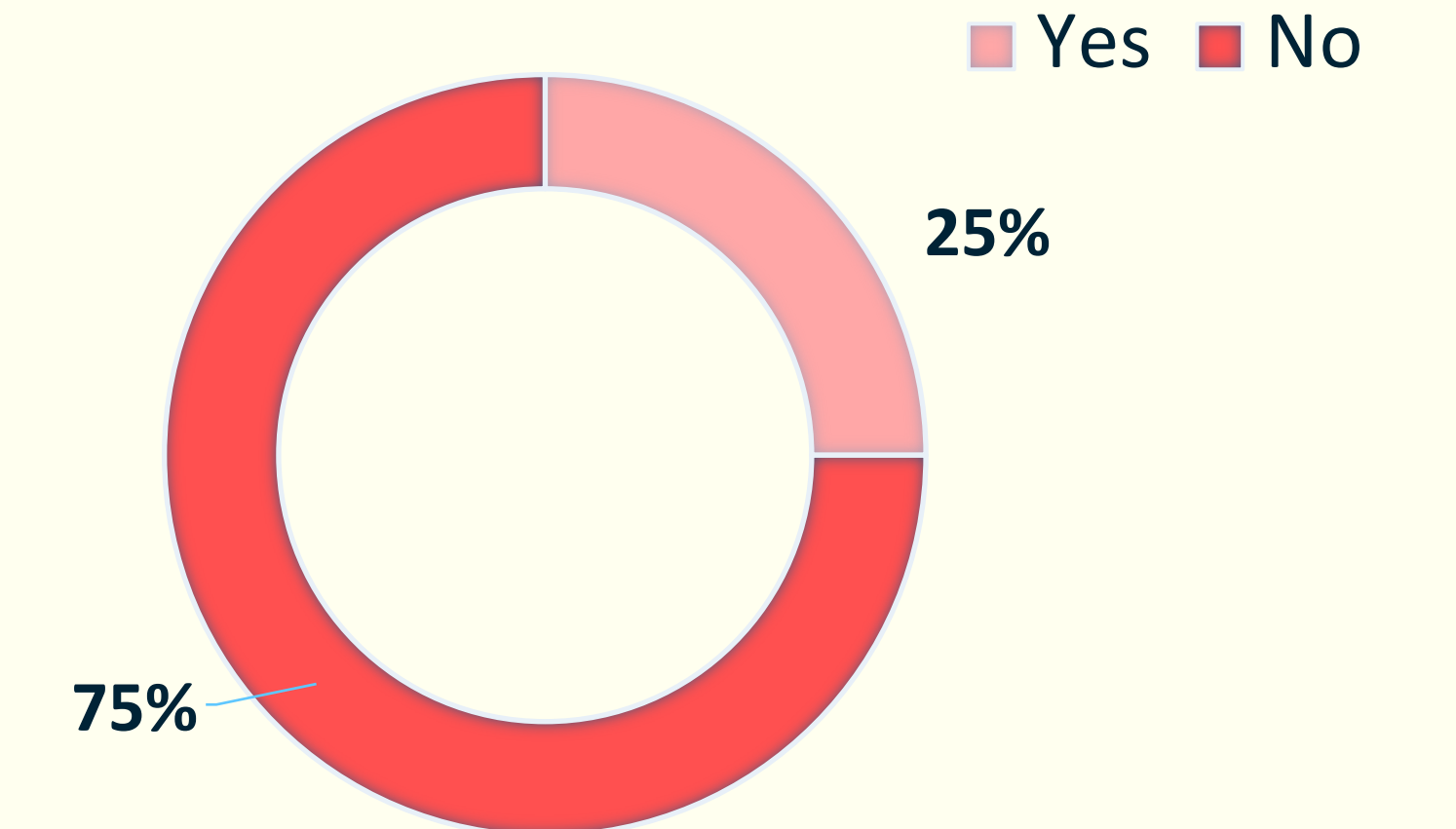
- 48% of participants reported seeing posts that leveraged shame to promote tanning.

- 54% of participants felt these posts may have negative impact on self-esteem or promote increased tanning behaviors.

> "I think that's true because they're always like 'you don't want to be too white.' I don't think it's right, but I also think they have to do it or they won't get as many customers."

Conclusions

- Several social media posts were identified that utilize pale shaming to promote tanning.

- While these posts were uncommon, many interview participants had noted the construct of shaming when viewing social media posts by IUVT salons.

- Findings illustrate that negative-framed messages such as shame may be perceived as motivating tanning behaviors.

Acknowledgements

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