Impression Management and Social Media Profiles

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Abstract*:*
There is ample evidence from the selection literature that job applicants engage in various forms of impression management (IM), for instance when completing personality tests or answering employment interview questions. Such behaviors can impact the selection process outcome and threaten its validity, particularly if applicants use deceptive IM. In parallel, research in cyber-psychology has examined how social media users engage in IM to create specific impressions on friends or family members, and achieve a positive online identity. However, with organizations increasingly relying on cyber-vetting, job applicants are also likely to engage in IM tactics oriented towards employers in their social media profiles. This chapter thus brings those two literatures together and proposes a framework of job applicants' IM in social media.

1. Introduction

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn have been described as a new way for organizations to obtain information about applicants' qualifications (Roth et al., in press, Roulin and Bangerter, 2013). Some early findings have suggested that applicants' characteristics, such as personality traits, could be reliably assessed based on social media content (Kluemper et al., 2012). Many organizations have already started relying on assessments of applicants through social media to make initial screening decisions. Yet, potential issues with such practices have been highlighted, including legal challenges (Brown and Vaughn, 2011) or lack of validity (Van Iddekinge et al., in press). In this chapter, we discuss another potential challenge associated with using social media to assess and select job applicants: impression management (IM).

Existing research on personnel selection has clearly highlighted that job applicants can (and do) engage in IM during the selection process, for instance when completing personality tests (Barrick and Mount, 1996) or answering employment interview questions (Levashina and Campion, 2007, Stevens and Kristof, 1995). Although some forms of IM are expected from applicants and can even be a valuable source of information for organizations (Kleinmann and Klehe, 2010), some deceptive forms of IM can be more problematic and are often an important source of concerns for organizations (Stewart et al., 2010). Indeed, there is evidence that IM can influence the ranking of applicants (Stewart et al., 2010) and potentially the validity of selection instruments (Komar et al., 2008, Peterson et al., 2011). However, both conceptual and empirical research on applicants' use of IM on their social media profiles is lacking. This chapter thus aims at proposing a framework for applicant IM on social media based on the existing literature on IM.

The chapter is structured as follows: First, we provide a brief review of the existing research on applicant IM the selection process, discussing the various forms of IM tactics, the important difference between honest and deceptive IM (or faking), the frequency of such behaviors, and their antecedents and impact on selection and job-related outcomes. Then, we review the existing literature surrounding the use of IM by individuals on social media, including honest and deceptive IM, to create a positive impression on other social media users (e.g., *friends*). We then propose to bring together those two literatures and describe a framework for applicant IM on social media. We discuss which IM tactics that applicants use in traditional selection situations (e.g., interviews) also apply to social media, what could be the antecedents of such behaviors, and what could be the impact for applicants and for organizations. Finally, we conclude with some suggestions for future research as well as practical recommendations for organizations using social media as part of their selection process.

2. Impression Management in Selection

The research on applicant IM on social media is still extremely scarce. Therefore, in this first section, we briefly review the exiting literature on IM with more established selection instruments like interviews or personality measures. We will use the types of tactics, antecedents, and outcomes from this literature (together with research on IM in online interactions) as the foundations on which we will build our framework of applicant IM on social media.

2.1. What is IM?

IM can be defined as a "desire to create particular impressions in others' minds" (Leary and Kowalski, 1990, p. 35). Such behaviors are particularly pertinent in evaluative situations, such as the selection process. Indeed, the objective of job applicants is to be perceived as a qualified for the job and be hired. Engaging in IM during the selection process is one strategy that applicants can use to achieve this objective. It is therefore not surprising that applicant IM has received extensive attention in the selection literature in the last few decades.

In the selection literature, various labels and terminologies have been used to discuss applicant IM, and IM has sometimes been assimilated with other concepts. For instance, in the testing literature, IM has been often labeled faking or socially desirable responding, and measured using social desirability scales (Griffith and Peterson, 2008, Levashina and Campion, 2006). Therefore, it seems important to understand the similarities and differences between those construct before exploring further applicant's use of IM. First, IM and social desirability differ in scope. Social desirability involves voluntary response distortion as well as involuntary self-deception, whereas IM only captures a voluntary, job- or organization-specific response strategy (Burns and Christiansen, 2011, Barrick and Mount, 1996). Moreover, faking represent deceptive tactics used by applicants to influence the outcome of the selection process, whereas IM involves both honest and deceptive forms of influence tactics. In other words, applicant faking has been described as a deceptive form of IM (Levashina and Campion, 2006, Leary and Kowalski, 1990). In summary, IM should be considered as the voluntary facet of social desirability, and can take both honest and deceptive forms.

Research has shown that applicants can use IM in multiple selection situations, including interviews (Levashina et al., 2014a, Roulin et al., 2014), personality tests (Barrick and Mount, 1996, Griffith and McDaniel, 2006), biodata inventories (Levashina et al., 2009), or assessment centers (McFarland et al., 2005, Klehe et al., 2014). However, the forms of IM that applicants use depend on the selection instrument (McFarland et al., 2003). In selection situations involving interpersonal interactions, like employment interviews and assessment center exercises, applicants can use a variety of IM tactics. They can use assertive tactics oriented to-

wards themselves, such as honestly highlighting job-related skills or past accomplishments (i.e., self-promotion; Stevens and Kristof, 1995), but also deceptively exaggerating or inventing such qualifications or experiences (i.e., image creation; Levashina and Campion, 2007). Alternatively, IM tactics can be oriented towards the interviewer or the hiring organization, through honest or deceptive forms of ingratiation to create a perception of similarity or person-organization fit (Chen et al., 2008, Levashina and Campion, 2007). For instance, applicants might emphasize values or hobbies that they share (or pretend to share) with the interviewer. Finally, applicants can use defensive tactics to repair or protect their image of good applicant, for instance by providing excuses or justifications for negative past experiences or simply hiding them (Tsai et al., 2010).

Applicant can also use IM in testing (e.g., when completing personality tests). In such situations, the choice of IM tactics available is more limited. Most of the time, the best strategy involves identifying the ideal personality profile for the position, deriving the expected or correct responses, and adjusting one's answer to fit the ideal profile (Klehe et al., 2012). For instance, applicants engaging in IM tend to use the extreme points of the scales more often (Levashina et al., 2014b). IM allows applicants to obtain higher scores on personality traits deemed valuable by the organization (Zickar and Robie, 1999). As an example, in experimental studies participants instructed to use IM scored 0.5 standard deviations higher than participants instructed to respond honestly (Viswesvaran and Ones, 1999). Meta-analytical results also highlight larger differences between applicants and non-applicant on personality trait scores for conscientiousness or emotional stability (Birkeland et al., 2006).

2.2. Do applicants use IM in selection?

To have a better understanding of the impact of IM in selection (and later on in the specific context of assessing applicants on social media), it is important to first examine how prevalent such tactics are among job applicants. Although field studies on applicant IM are still limited, research has accumulated evidence about the frequency of IM use in various selection settings and across different countries. We discuss below the use of IM with two selection instruments: employment interviews and tests.

In the interview context, it has been reported that up to 97.5% of job applicants used at least one IM tactic per interview, with self-promotion and ingratiation being more prevalent than defensive tactics (Ellis et al., 2002). When looking at honest vs. deceptive IM, a study highlighted that 81% of applicants used at least one deceptive IM tactic in their last interview (Weiss and Feldman, 2006). Levashina and Campion (2007) examined deceptive IM of undergraduate job applicants in three studies and found that 65 to 99% of them used various types of deceptive IM. The prevalence of these tactics was smaller in a sample of experi-

enced Swiss job applicants, with only 21-70% of them using deceptive IM (Roulin et al., 2014). Further evidence of country-to-country difference was provided by König, Won, and Cen (2012) who compared the use of deceptive IM in the U.S., Europe (Iceland and Switzerland), and China. They found such behaviors to be particularly frequent in US and Chinese applicants (e.g., about 40% of applicants in both countries reported exaggerating their past work experience and about 50% reported exaggerating their skills).

Obtaining frequencies of faking in tests using field studies can be difficult, mostly because of the difficulty to reliably capture IM (Burns and Christiansen, 2011). This is why many studies have focused on comparing applicant in a selection vs. non-selection context (Birkeland et al., 2006). Yet, some studies have demonstrated that a large number of applicants engaged in IM (Griffith and Converse, 2011). For instance, Griffith and colleagues (2007) compared personality test scores of individuals in a selection situation (i.e., where they were expected to put their best foot forward) vs. an honest condition (i.e., where participants were told to respond truthfully) and found that between 30 and 50% used deceptive IM. Levashina, Morgeson, and Campion (2009) examined applicants' use of deceptive IM when completing biodata inventories using bogus items. They found that 24% of applicants for entry-level US government jobs used such tactics.

2.3. What are the antecedents of applicant IM?

We showed above that a large proportion of applicants engage in IM. Yet, not all of them do (or do it to the same extent). The next logical step in our review of applicant IM thus involves understanding what factors makes some individuals engage in IM when applying for jobs. Numerous theoretical models and frameworks have discussed potential antecedents of applicant IM, and especially its deceptive form (e.g., Levashina and Campion, 2006, Marcus, 2009, McFarland and Ryan, 2006, Roulin et al., in press). Most models agree that applicants engage in IM if they have the motivation, the ability, and the opportunity to do so. The extent to which applicants' are motivated, capable, and perceived the opportunity to use IM then depends on their individual differences (e.g., personality traits, values, and beliefs), the type or format of selection instruments used by organizations, or the competition for jobs.

Some of those antecedents have been empirically examined as well. For instance, job applicants who are low in conscientiousness, agreeableness, or honesty, and high in extraversion, neuroticism, narcissism or Machiavellianism are described as being more likely to be motivated to engage in IM (e.g., Hogue et al., 2013, Kristof-Brown et al., 2002, Levashina and Campion, 2007, O'Neill et al., 2013). Applicants with more interpersonal skills and able to identify what selection criteria are used by employers are more capable to use IM (Ellingson and McFarland, 2011, Klehe et al., 2012). Finally, applicants have more opportunities

to use IM when specific selection instruments or formats are employed. For instance, applicants use more IM in unstructured vs. structured interviews or when the interviewer is asking situational vs. past-behavior questions (Levashina et al., 2014a, Levashina and Campion, 2007), but also when the organization is relying on tests where answers are easier to falsify, such as personality vs. cognitive ability tests (Converse et al., 2009, Lievens and Burke, 2011).

2.4. What are the outcomes of applicant IM?

The impact of applicant IM can be examined in two ways. First, one can look at how IM influences the selection process for applicants, for instance by examining the relationship between IM use and selection outcomes. In interviews, there is ample evidence that applicants engaging in IM tend to obtain higher evaluations from interviewers (Barrick et al., 2009, Levashina et al., 2014a). Interestingly, such results are not limited to honest forms of IM, but applicants using deceptive IM can also benefit from such a strategy (Levashina and Campion, 2007). One reason for why deceptive IM can lead to high interview evaluations is that interviewers cannot effectively detect when applicants use such tactics (Roulin et al., 2015). Similarly, applicants using IM in personality tests adapt their responses to items measuring valuable traits and thus tend to obtain higher scores overall (Birkeland et al., 2006, Levashina et al., 2014b). As a result, IM can significantly impact the ranking of applicants and their chances to obtain the job (Stewart et al., 2010). Altogether, using IM can help job applicants reaching more positive outcomes.

The other way to examine the impact of applicant IM is to evaluate how it affects organizations. First, IM can negatively impact the reliability of selection instruments like personality tests (MacCann, 2013). Relatedly, IM has often been described as potentially attenuating the validity of selection instruments (e.g., Gilmore et al., 1999, Marcus, 2006) although some researchers disagree with this statement (e.g., Hogan et al., 2007, Ones and Viswesvaran, 1998). In theory, if some applicants used deceptive IM in the selection process, organizations risk hiring less qualified applicants who may end up being lower performers (Roulin et al., in press). And there is indeed some evidence of a negative relationship between (mostly deceptive) IM and job performance (Donovan et al., 2014, Komar et al., 2008), although some researchers have also found positive relationships between (honest) IM and performance (Ingold et al., 2015, Kleinmann and Klehe, 2010). Applicants using deceptive IM in the selection process are also more likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors once hired (O'Neill et al., 2013). Taken together, the literature thus suggests that applicant IM, and especially its deceptive forms, can have negative consequences for organizations.

In summary, the selection literature (a) describes IM as tactics or response strategies used by applicants to increase their chances of obtaining a job, (b) high-

lights that IM can take various forms and can be honest or deceptive, (c) demonstrates that a large proportion of job applicants use IM, (d) describes IM as caused by a combination of individual differences and opportunities created by the selection instruments used by organizations, and (e) emphasize that IM usually leads to positive outcomes for applicants but potentially negative ones for employers. In the next section, we turn to the literatures on cyber-psychology and computer science to better understand the role and impact of IM on social media.

3. Impression Management on Social Media

Industrial-organizational psychology researchers have yet to examine how job applicants use IM on social media to influence selection decisions. Yet, researchers in computer-mediated communication and online psychology have already started to explore the IM tactics people used while interacting with other members of their online social network. In this section, we briefly review this (growing) literature, which we will later use to adapt our knowledge of applicant IM to the specific context of social media to build our framework.

3.1. Do people use IM in their social media profiles?

Social media have been described as an ideal platform for IM because they allow people to easily control or manipulate information and content (Krämer and Winter, 2008, Siibak, 2009). Contrary to interpersonal interactions where one has to quickly adapt one's behavior (e.g., decide what to say) to create a positive impression, one usually has plenty of time to do so on social media. Of course, some people can spontaneously post content on their profile, such as an impulsive comment on Facebook or tweets. Yet, in most situations, users can take their time to choose, adapt, and present information in order to create the desired impression.

Social media users can rely on a variety of IM tactics to achieve positive outcomes. While job applicants must generally rely on the responses they choose or the stories they tell in the selection process, social media users have the opportunity to use visual or multimedia content, including text, pictures, or videos. For instance, posting only very positive photos is a very popular online IM tactic to obtain social recognition (i.e., *likes*) from others (Dorethy et al., 2014). More specifically, users can spend time editing the pictures they post by cutting or cropping parts of the picture, using photographic filters, or editing pictures with software and applications (Fox and Rooney, 2015). IM tactics also involve how users present themselves in their profile main page or the types of updates or comments they post (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Pictures tend to have a larger impact than textual information on perceivers' judgments about the profile user (Van Der Heide et al., 2012). For instance, if pictures suggest that the user is extraverted, adding verbal disclosure suggesting introversion does not change perceivers' evaluations of the user.

When engaging in IM, users' objective is to create a particular impression on the members of their network. Yet, the type of IM used and the target of IM is different on personal vs. professional social media, where users want to present their social vs. their professional selves respectively (van Dijck, 2013). For instance, on personal social media like Facebook the goal of IM tactics is usually to impress their *friends* (Rosenberg and Egbert, 2011). The overarching goal of IM is to increase the number of *friends* in one's online social network, obtain higher status and social support, and indirectly increasing one's well-being (Kim and Lee, 2011). Growing a large social network is not only the outcome of online IM, but can also contribute to creating an online impression. Indeed the number of *friends* and what they look like or say about the user contribute to an online impression (Utz, 2010, Walther et al., 2008). For instance, if the user's *friends* make an extraverted and outgoing (vs. introverted) impression, the user is also perceived as more (vs. less) popular. Yet, because the main target of online IM on personal social media are *friends*, such tactics may lead to undesirable impressions on unintended targets. For example, users' willingness to impress friends my increase the likelihood of posting information or pictures that can be perceived negatively by employers, such as *faux pas* (e.g., self-photos drinking alcohol; Roulin, 2014) or badmouthing (e.g., criticisms and disparaging remarks; Stoughton et al., 2013). On professional social media like LinkedIn however, users tend to engage in more professional IM, for instance by building a narrative of competence and past job performance (van Dijck, 2013).

3.2. Do people use deceptive IM in their social media profiles?

We described in the previous paragraphs how social media users engage in IM to create a positive impression. However, similar to IM in the selection context, such tactics could be honest or deceptive. Recent studies have compared assessment of users based on their social media to both honest and exaggerated self-descriptions, and found stronger relationships with the honest self-description (e.g., Sievers et al., 2015). There is also evidence that social media profile can depict the true personality (Kluemper et al., 2012) and real-life activities (van Hoof et al., 2014) of their owners. This suggests that social media profiles may mostly reflect the true characteristics of their users, and not an idealized profiles boosted by deceptive IM. One reason for this is the ability of other users (i.e., one's online connections) to comment on someone's profile and sometimes even edit its content. Such a verification process can make social media profiles more likely to limit falsifications (Back et al., 2010, Walther et al., 2008).

Beyond verifying the veracity of information posted on social media profiles, some professional social media platforms such as LinkedIn allow users to list skills or areas of expertise. Members of their network, such as colleagues, supervisors, or classmates, can then endorse the user for those skills. This endorsement feature works like the reputation system in commercial websites (e.g., eBay) or

the reviews function in hotel booking websites. In the context of personnel selection, this feature can be comparable to recommendation letters from previous employers who would highlight the skills of their previous employee. It could also be used as a type of background checking, which is usually performed in addition to selection tests or interviews (Levashina and Campion, 2009). In part because of this endorsement mechanisms, some researchers have argued that deception on LinkedIn profiles is more likely to be caught than on a traditional resume (Guillory and Hancock, 2012).

Although IM on social media appears to be mostly honest, some people still engage in deception. People can engage in deception in online group discussions, for instance to hide their real age, gender or marital status (Caspi and Gorsky, 2006). Yet, only 29% of respondents in this particular study reported using deception online. Similarly, some people exaggerate or hide their physical attributes (e.g., height, weight, and age) on dating websites (Toma et al., 2008). Moreover, individuals may engage in deception to "look better" on social media. On personal websites like Facebook, users engage in deceptive IM in order to portray some personality traits more positively (e.g., being more outgoing that they truly are; Toma and Carlson, 2015). In some situations, extreme forms of deceptive IM can be used. For instance, in the case of *farcing attacks* people have created completely phony profiles to *friend* victims, communicate with them, and then steal information from them (Vishwanath, 2014).

3.3. Who uses more IM in their social media profiles?

Not all social media users engage in IM or do it to the same extent. For instance, online IM tactics are mostly used by individuals high on neuroticism, extraversion, and Narcissism, and low on conscientiousness or self-esteem (Fox and Rooney, 2015, Krämer and Winter, 2008, Mehdizadeh, 2010, Seidman, 2013). For instance, users higher on Narcissism tend to spend more time on social media, post more *selfies*, and engage in more photo editing. More extraverted social media users tend to post pictures of them that have a more original or artistic style. Users who are higher on neuroticism engage in more IM on their profile, including deceptive forms of IM. Interestingly, most of these personality traits are similar to those associated with applicant IM in the selection context. Yet, no research has investigated individual differences associated with deceptive IM on social media.

4. A framework of applicant IM in social media

In this section, we propose a general framework of applicant IM on social media. This theory-driven framework builds on the previously-reviewed literatures on IM in selection and social media. It describes the reasons why social media becomes a natural medium for applicant IM, the types of IM they can use, the impact

of social media platforms, and the antecedents and potential outcomes of IM. This framework is visually summarized in Figure 11.1.

To illustrate some of the key elements of our framework, we also conducted a small-scale survey with 31 senior students and recent graduates from various Canadian business schools. All our respondents were either recently hired (n=14) or actively looking for (full-time, part-time, or summer) jobs at the time of the survey (n=17), thus representing how (young) applicants may behave on social media. A research assistant contacted them by email and asked them to respond to three open-ended questions online. The first question measured if (and how) they considered the impression they would make on potential employers when posting or updating something on their social media profile. The second question asked them if (and if so, how) they ever posted, changed, updated, removed, or hidden something strategically from their profile, that is, with the specific objective to make a good impression on potential employers. Finally, we asked them if their strategy was specific to one social media or similar across all social media.

We present a number of examples of responses throughout this section, for instance to illustrate some of the IM tactics that applicants can use. We note that these examples are based on a short survey and a small sample and thus should only be considered as an illustration to our theory-driven framework.

4.1. Why applicants' should engage in IM on social media

As discussed above, job applicants extensively engage in honest but also deceptive forms of IM in the selection process. Applicants' motivation to engage in IM is related to their expectations about the potential benefits associated with such behaviors (Ellingson and McFarland, 2011). In other words, applicants use IM because they believe that it will improve their score or evaluation during the selection process, and thus increase their chances of obtaining the job. Or they may believe that using IM is one (or the only) way to outperform other applicants competing for the same job (Roulin et al., in press).

Recent studies have highlighted how cyber-vetting can become a new norm in the personnel selection process (Roth et al., in press), with HR managers reviewing applicants' profiles as part of the initial screening phase. As such, the logical reaction for applicants would be to adapt to this changing norm and apply the techniques they have been using in tests or interviews to social media, in order to pass the first hurdle of the screening process. Indeed, changing one's behaviors has been described as an adaptive mechanism used by applicants to meet organizations' changing expectations, as well as obtain a competitive advantage over other job seekers (Bangerter et al., 2012). As social media become a new way for applicants to signal their qualities to employers (Roulin and Bangerter, 2013), they also become a new platform for them to use IM.
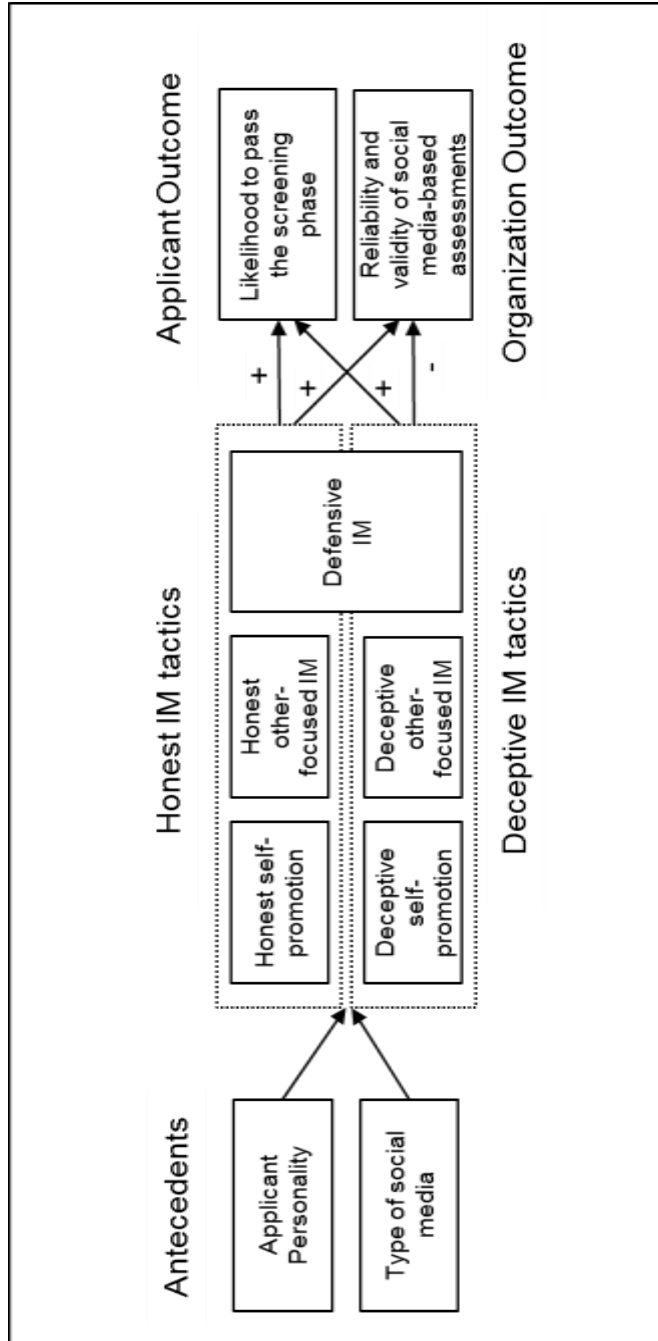
Fig. 11.1. Framework of applicant IM on social media

As a first exploration of how much job applicants value the image they portray on their social media profiles, we present below a few illustrative examples from our survey:

 "I consistently think of how I am shaping my *personal brand* to employers. For example, through Twitter I make sure there is a healthy balance between *professional tweets* (such as posting business articles I find interesting) and *fun/personal tweets* (such as tweeting about local sports or the woes of being a student)."

"I often try to look at my online profiles from a third party perspective and try to imagine what they would see, what judgements they would make and what conclusions they would come to about my personality, work ethic, etc."

"I am aware that recruiters and company representatives may view my public profile and information so I make sure that what I post reflects how I would like to portray myself. I view social media to be an extension of my portfolio."

"Potential employers will always look you up when deciding if you are the right fit for their company, so it's a way of creating a positive image in the employers' eyes."

"I always consider that potential employers could or will see what I am posting, and make sure I never post anything that would be compromising to my future or disrespectful to my future employers and their company reputations. In some situations, most particularly with LinkedIn and Twitter, I actually use social media with the hopes they will be seen by potential employers."

4.2. Forms of applicant IM relevant on social media

We have described the various forms of IM that people use on their social media profiles, such as selecting or editing text and pictures to create a positive impression, in the previous section. Yet, most of these tactics were oriented towards friends and not potential employers. And no research has yet examined how such tactics could be adapted to the selection context. Below, we propose to describe possible applicant IM on social media building on the three general types of IM tactics from the interview literature (Levashina and Campion, 2007, Stevens and Kristof, 1995): self-focused assertive tactics (i.e., honest or deceptive self-promotion), other-focused tactics (i.e., honest and deceptive ingratiation), and defensive tactics (i.e., image repair and image protection). We also highlight similarities with specific IM tactics within each of these categories, based on the more

detailed typologies described by Bolino and colleagues (2008) or Levashina and Campion (2007).

Yet, before describing specific IM tactics, it is important to understand a fundamental difference between employment interviews or tests and social media profiles. Applicants may participate in multiple interviews (or complete multiple tests) for different jobs and organizations. In each selection process, they can thus use different IM tactics that are adapted to the particular job requirements or the organizations' values. By doing so, they can resemble the ideal applicant (Klehe et al., 2012), and indirectly increase perceptions of person-job or person-organization fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). However, applicants will likely create only one social media profile (or one per platform) that will be potentially consulted by multiple employers or hiring managers. This particularity forces applicants to decide on a generic IM strategy to apply to their social media profile(s) that should be effective across all jobs/organizations they may apply for/to.

We describe below which IM types are more likely to be used by applicants on social media and how the specificities of social media can potentially impact those tactics. We also illustrate those IM types with concrete examples of tactics used by the senior Canadian business students and graduates we surveyed, when asked about situations where they posted, changed, updated, removed, or hid something strategically on/from their profile. We present some of their responses aligned with the three types of IM. Interestingly, the majority of responses highlighted defensive IM tactics, but only a handful of them described the assertive tactics they use. Although those responses represent only a small group of applicants, they suggest that defensive IM are easier to use, whereas assertive IM tactics may be more complex to implement on social media, especially for less-experienced applicants.

4.2.1. Self-promotion on social media

Self-promotion in selection involves using positive statements to describe one's qualities, past accomplishments, or future plans (Stevens and Kristof, 1995). Its deceptive equivalent, image creation, involves embellishing, exaggerating, or inventing such qualities or accomplishments to create a (falsified) image of a good applicant for the job (Levashina and Campion, 2007). Both types are very similar to the IM tactics used by social media users to present themselves in favorable ways online (Rosenberg and Egbert, 2011). Because self-promotion is the most frequent form of IM in both the selection context and on social media in general, we can also expect these tactics to be a prominent form of applicant IM on social media.

Yet, it remains unclear how frequently applicants would engage in deceptive self-focused IM (i.e., image creation) on social media, or how frequent it is in

comparison to other selection methods like interviews or, tests. On the one hand, earlier studies suggest that deception is as frequent on social media as in resumes (Guillory and Hancock, 2012). On the other hand, because profiles can be reviewed by friends or past employers (who can comment, endorse, etc.), deception can be flagged by others and is thus more risky for applicants (Back et al., 2010). We note that existing studies have not directly tested how friends, co-workers, or past employers engage in such a verification process, or its effectiveness. Altogether, we expect applicants to engage mostly in less severe forms of image creation (e.g., exaggeration, embellishment) because more severe forms (e.g., inventions of fact or borrowing experiences from others) are likely to trigger reactions by other members of one's online network. As an example, NBC anchor Brian Williams' largely exaggerated experience in the Iraq war in 2003 (i.e., he pretended to be in a helicopter hit by a rocket) was publicly exposed on social media by veterans involved in the mission. Although Williams' deceptive behavior was not social media-based, the online reactions illustrate how social media communities can act as a verification mechanism.

Social media users may selectively post information or pictures about themselves to increase their popularity (Fox and Rooney, 2015). In the IM literature, such self-promotion tactics refer to *self-enhancement*, that is, making one's best characteristics salient to potential targets (Bolino et al., 2008). Applicants could thus strategically post information, comments, or pictures allowing them to highlight personality traits that are universally valued by organizations (e.g., conscientiousness, emotional stability) or required for jobs they may apply to (e.g., extraversion for job involving interpersonal interactions). They could also illustrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities by posting information about their past professional and personal accomplishments (e.g., degrees earned, work experience, volunteering activities). If deceptive IM is used, it is likely to be oriented towards information that is less widely known to network members and therefore less verifiable. For instance, when instructed to create a LinkedIn profile to position themselves as applicants for an attractive job, students used on average 2.87 deceptive IM tactics. Although, they engage in deception to improve their abilities (e.g., language, software), they mostly exaggerated their interest and involvement in job or other activities, which is more difficult to verify (Guillory and Hancock, 2012).

Social media users can build a large network of connections, ideally with a profile that corresponds to the image they want to create, to boost their social attractiveness (Utz, 2010). In the IM literature, such self-promotion tactics could be assimilated to *boasting* about one's positive connections with favorable others (Bolino et al., 2008). Job applicants could therefore try to accumulate connections to appear agreeable and extraverted, or more generally to signal social or interpersonal skills. Similarly, they could try to obtain positive comments or endorsements from their connections for activities or areas of expertise, to highlight knowledge, skills, or abilities that are likely to be required for future jobs.

Below are some examples of self-promotion tactics used by our surveyed business students and graduates on their social media profiles:

"I definitely post about academic accomplishments whenever possible. Or anything that shows I am helping out in the community."

"My LinkedIn profile is solely used with the idea of impression potential employers with past work and volunteer experience."

"On LinkedIn, I use quite a bit of strategy and try different things to showcase different abilities I have. I think it has worked well, I get head hunters asking me about various roles every now and then… so I have a feeling that it is working."

"I like to post both personal and academic accomplishments with potential employers in mind. Hopefully it will impress them!"

"On LinkedIn I will really invite anyone that I would have free connection to within my network."

4.2.2. Other-focused IM on social media

Ingratiation in the selection context involves tactics designed to evoke interpersonal attraction or liking, such as praising the target, conforming with their opinion, or highlighting similarities between one's and the target's values (Stevens and Kristof, 1995, Bolino et al., 2008). Applicants can also insincerely praise the target or express values similar to those of the target (Levashina and Campion, 2007). Social media users can use similar ingratiation tactics to create an impression of similarity with members of their network and gain popularity (Hong et al., 2012). Yet, because applicants' profiles are not organization- or job-specific, there are less opportunities for other-focused IM aimed at enhancing the perceived fit between the applicant and a particular organization (or their representative) than in an interview for example.

Social media users can post comments about their *friends'* online activities (or use *likes*) to create an impression of similarity and gain popularity (Hong et al., 2012). Applicants can thus engage in ingratiation by directly *following* or *liking* companies they are interested in on social media or try to connect with employees of those organizations. Moreover, they could highlight specific interests, hobbies, or beliefs in their profiles trough comments, pictures, etc. to create an impression of similarity with the values of organizations they are interested in. This can be done honestly, but also deceptively. For instance, students instructed to create a LinkedIn profile for a job did exaggerate their involvement in activities or societies to appear more attractive to the organization (Guillory and Hancock, 2012).

As a more advanced strategy, applicants can join interest groups that match the values of those organizations, participate in the group's discussion, and eventually become a top contributor in the group.

As expected, other-focused IM tactics were mentioned far less often than the other two forms of IM by our surveyed business students and graduates. We present below some rare examples of other-focused IM tactics that they used on their social media profiles:

> "On Twitter, I follow many companies and professionals I would like to work with."

> "I make sure I am *following* all sorts of potential employers' social networking sites".

4.2.3. Defensive IM on social media

Defensive IM can be used by applicants to repair their image when it has been damaged either by their own behavior or by information made available to the organization, such as a recently lost job (Stevens and Kristof, 1995). Justifications, excuses, or burying are examples of such tactics (Bolino et al., 2008). Applicants can also proactively protect their image by hiding or omitting negative information or distancing themselves from negative events in their past (Levashina and Campion, 2007). Because social media allow users to select what information they post vs. do not post on their profile (Krämer and Winter, 2008, Siibak, 2009), similar defensive tactics are readily available.

There is an important difference between defensive IM on social media and selection situations like an interview: In interviews, applicants may use defensive IM as a reactive strategy, for instance when asked to talk about something negative in their past. In such situations, the applicant can decide to use honest IM (e.g., justify what happened or apologize for it) or deceptive IM (e.g., intentionally hide what really happened). However, on social media, applicants are not asked to provide specific information about undesirable traits they possess or negative events in their past, but they decide what to post (or not post) on their profile. It is therefore more difficult to draw a clear line between honest and deceptive defensive IM. As a result we describe below examples of defensive IM on social media, but do not define them as being honest or deceptive tactics.

As a general defensive IM strategy, applicants can use restrictive privacy settings, selecting what sections of their profile (if any) would be visible to the public, thus preventing organizations to access the information (Schneider et al., 2015). Similarly, they could use an online alias or create two profiles, one *clean* profile for professional purposes and one with accurate information to interact

with friends using slightly different names (e.g., their middle name instead of their first name). Such tactics would prevent organizations' searches using their real name to access their real profile.

Applicants can also engage in more specific types of defensive IM tactics on social media. For instance, omissions can involve purposely not including information that could potentially hurt the impression applicants are trying to make online. Although, incomplete profiles could be viewed negatively by HR managers as compared to complete profiles (Zide et al., 2014), some information could be more risky to include than to omit or remove from one's profile. For instance, comments or pictures that involve drugs or alcohol consumptions, sexual, or rule violations could be considered as *faux pas* by employers, and could strategically be removed from profiles (Roulin, 2014). Similarly, people can be judged by the company they keep on social media (Walther et al., 2008), suggesting that employers can assess applicants based on the number of friends an applicant has, who those friends are, and how they interact with applicant on social media (e.g., what they post on the applicant's Facebook wall or Timeline). As such, applicants can also decide to distance themselves from members of their network whose posts can damage their impression. For instance, they may realize that a friend's posts (or comment on their own posts) they once found fun could actually be perceived negatively by potential employers. The short-term defensive tactic involves deleting or hiding that particular post. The more long-term (and drastic) tactic would be to decide to *unfriend* people who regularly post comments threatening the image the applicant wants to create. In a similar way, applicants could also decide to leave groups they don't want to be perceived as being affiliated with.

As mentioned above, defensive IM tactics were cited extensively by our surveyed business students and graduates. Below are some examples of defensive IM tactics they used on their social media profiles:

> "I make it as difficult as I can for employers to find me on my social media platforms, i.e. not using my last name, enhanced privacy settings, etc."

> "I deleted an entire Facebook profile from when I was in high school. It was too much of a chronicle of any mischievous thing I had said or done before I was 18."

> "I have gone through my Facebook account and deleted pictures and posts that involve a lot of alcohol and partying. The pictures were old, from a few years prior, but it can still leave the impression that you don't take your work seriously when you are out drinking many nights of the week."

"I have hidden photos from my [Facebook] timeline that I did not want seen by others, and deleted past tweets and status updates that I posted from when I was young and lacked better judgement."

"I have deleted photos where I have been intoxicated from Facebook to prevent them from being seen by potential employers. I have also limited my privacy settings. I have deleted tweets that contained inappropriate comments or language."

"I have hidden/untagged myself in images where I was with individuals who were partaking in excessive partying, even if I was not. I have also removed friends from my pages who I went to high-school with but no longer want to be acquainted with because of their current actions."

"I have removed old photos or posts which at the time I thought were funny or appropriate but now see how others could find them offensive or inappropriate. You never know who will be looking at your social media and the earlier you get the embarrassing or inappropriate posts hidden away, the more likely someone will not have saved a screenshot or have memory of that particular post. It is especially crucial if in future I ever find myself in a position where I am in the public eye."

"I also updated or removed past experiences that I did not want employers to think about when they evaluate me. For example, I removed my experience as a manager at a fast-food restaurant on my LinkedIn profile. It was a great experience and I learned a lot, but it was a long time ago and isn't extremely transferrable to my desired line of work."

4.3. Differences in applicant IM between social media platforms

As we have highlighted above, job applicants can engage in a variety of IM tactics on their social media profiles. Yet, it is possible that they engage in different forms of IM (or to a different extent) on different social media. Indeed, social media could be positioned on a continuum with primarily personal ones (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Tumblr, Snapshat) at one end, and primarily professional ones (e.g., LinkedIn, GitHub, ResearchGate) at the other. Other social media, such as Twitter, fall somehow in the middle as they can be used to achieve both personal and professional goals. It is also possible that some individuals use primarily personal social media like Facebook mostly in a professional way, for instance artists or entrepreneurs building a Facebook presence to advertise their activities. However, from an applicant's perspective, taking into account the type or role of different social media is important to understand what types of IM tactics can be used.

To illustrate how job applicants may perceive different social media as ways to achieve different IM objectives, we asked our sample of business students and graduates if their overall IM strategy was platform-specific or not. Although many students reported using a broad approach across social media, some described different strategies they used depending on the platform. Below are some examples:

> "I would consider my LinkedIn profile my primary social media for employer evaluation, but knowing that recruiters often do a social media background check, I consider Twitter to be my secondary social media for employers to evaluate me. I see my LinkedIn as a means to establish my credibility, and my Twitter as a glimpse into my personality and interests. However, my Instagram and Facebook is entirely personal (but publicly accessible), and my Snapchat is entirely private."

> "On LinkedIn, I log on once in a while and look at posts on my newsfeed and update my profile every now and then. On my Instagram account, I usually post pictures that I think my followers would find interesting such as vacation pictures and pictures of my dogs. On Facebook, that is where I can play around a little bit more and post random stuff such as music I like and have conversations with friends."

> "On LinkedIn obviously I do very little, as that is viewed much more by current or future employers and colleagues in the business community. That is the social media platform that I care about my image the most. But Facebook and Twitter are expected to have a bit of your personal life on them and they are less frequently checked by employers."

> "I only update my LinkedIn profile to accurately capture recent achievements and job placements. I rarely use Facebook, as it's mostly a communication tool for me."

Employers and applicants alike recognize that some social media are primarily personal and others primarily professional, and perceive each type of social media to highlight different pieces of information about applicants (Roulin and Bangerter, 2013). For instance, personal social media are a potential antecedent of Person-Organization fit information about applicants, such as personality traits, values, or interests. Professional social media are a potential antecedent of Person-Job fit information, such as skills, competencies, or job experiences. Similarly, we can expect applicants to use different forms of IM on personal vs. professional social media. We describe those differences below and summarize them in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1. Summary of potential IM tactics per social media platform

IM tactic	Personal social media	Professional social media
Honest self-promotion	• Highlighting one's true positive personality traits and values through one's main profile, posts, and pictures • Accumulating *friends* to appear more social	• Highlighting one's true knowledge, skills and abilities through education and past experiences • Connecting with professionals and getting one's skills endorsed by them
Deceptive self-promotion (i.e., image creation)	• Selectively posting information and comments that would enhance one's image of a good applicant • Using photo editing software before posting pictures to enhance attractiveness or positive personality traits	• Exaggerating one's skills or areas of expertise • Embellishing one's past academic or professional accomplishments
Honest other-focused IM	• Liking organizations' posts • Joining interest groups to highlight one's core values	• Following organizations • Joining professional groups
Deceptive other-focused IM	• Liking posts or comments by (or related to) organizations only because one plans to apply there • Exaggerating one's interest in causes or topics viewed positively by employers (e.g., ecology, a new technology)	• Trying to create an impression of similarity by connecting with employees one does not know in organizations one plans to apply to • Joining professional groups only to appear interested in issues valued by potential employers
Defensive IM	• Changing privacy settings so that one's profile (or parts of it) is accessible to friends only • Removing comments or pictures that could be seen as *faux pas* by employers • Unfriending close friends whose online activities may have a negative impact on one's image • Creating separate profiles for potential employers and friends using different names	• Justifying negative professional experiences in the past or highlight how one's learn from it • Intentionally omitting or removing past job experiences or associations with organizations having a negative reputation from one's profile

Personal and professional social media profiles have different primary objectives, which influences what self-promotion IM job applicants can use. Personal social media profiles are generally created to interact with friends and family. They are extensively used for self-presentation tactics oriented towards *friends* to increase one's online popularity (Rosenberg and Egbert, 2011). It is therefore easy to use similar self-promotion tactics aiming at creating an image of sociability in the eyes of potential employers, for instance by highlighting or exaggerating personality traits like extraversion, agreeableness, or openness to experience through one's main profile, comments, or pictures. Moreover, on personal social media, accumulating a large number of connections is often seen as a good way to demonstrate social skills. In contrast, professional social media profiles are built like extended online resumes for career-related purposes (Guillory and Hancock, 2012). Self-promotion tactics will thus be oriented towards creating an image of competence or expertise, for instance by highlighting or exaggerating one's skills, past experiences, and accomplishments, or by creating an impression of being conscientious through a professional-looking profile pictures and written statements. Applicants engaging in IM are not likely to blindly accumulate connections on professional social media, but instead decide to selectively connect with individuals that may help them in their career and/or job search. For instance, they may connect with individuals likely to endorse their skills.

Other-focused IM tactics used by applicants are likely to be quite similar across personal and professional social media. In both cases, applicants can show their interest in specific organizations by *following* their activities on the network and *liking* their news post. Indeed, most large organizations have profiles on both personal and professional social media to describe their activities, present their new products, or job opportunities. Applicants can also join groups to highlight the values that organizations they like (or their members) have in common with them and create a perception of similarity. The type of groups may differ by platform, focusing more on interest groups on personal social media vs. on professional groups or associations on professional social media, but the mechanism will be similar.

The type of defensive IM tactics is also likely to vary by platform. On personal social media, *friends* are the main target of the information posted. Employers or HR managers trying to access their information can be perceived as privacy invaders (Stoughton et al., 2015). To protect their personal information, most of the defensive IM tactics described above can be used. This may include changing one's privacy settings so that employers cannot access their profile or creating two separate profiles, one that looks professional for employers to see and one being kept secret to employers using another name. Yet, some job applicants may want to strategically use their personal profile to create a good impression on employ-

ers, which would be incompatible with a *no-access* strategy. Job applicants can thus decide to protect their image by cleaning their profile, that is, proactively decide to remove pictures or comments that where oriented towards their friends but that could be perceived negatively by employers. For instance, job applicants informed that personal social media profiles are frequently visited by employers are more likely to limit their *faux pas* postings (Roulin, 2014).

On professional social media, individuals actively looking for jobs want their profile to be visited by employers. Restricting access to their profile is thus not a pertinent strategy. Yet, applicants can control or justify the information published to defend their image of a good applicant. Like in a job interview, they can try to justify negative events in their past, such as losing a job or staying unemployed for some time, or describe how they benefitted from this experience, for instance by taking classes or simply learning from the past. Alternatively, they can decide to voluntarily leave such negative experiences off their profile.

4.4. Antecedents and outcomes of applicant IM on social media

Are all job applicants likely to use IM on their social media profiles? If not, then what are the characteristics of job applicants likely to engage in IM on social media? Although this particular research question has not yet been examined empirically, we have described earlier the extensive literature discussing the antecedents on applicant IM in selection and the initial attempts to identify the specificities of social media users engaging in IM. We propose that some of the individual characteristics of applicants identified as antecedents on IM in the selection process (e.g., in interviews or tests) will also predict who will use IM on social media. We rely on two pieces of evidence for this assertion. First, studies comparing applicant IM across selection methods have highlight some level of consistency in IM use, especially for other-focused tactics (McFarland et al., 2003, McFarland et al., 2005). Second, many personality traits associated with honest or deceptive IM in selection (e.g., Hogue et al., 2013, O'Neill et al., 2013) have also been described as predicting users' IM on social media (e.g., Fox and Rooney, 2015, Seidman, 2013). These traits include some of the Big-5 personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness) as well as some of the dark traits (e.g., narcissism, Machiavellianism). We thus expect those traits to be predictors of applicant IM on social media, such as applicants high on neuroticism, extraversion, Narcissism, and Machiavellianism but low on conscientiousness being more likely to engage in more IM.

What is the impact of IM on social media for applicants and organizations? Recruiters and HR managers increasingly rely on social media cyber-vetting to screen job applicants. For instance, recruiters can make inferences about applicants' person–job fit and person–organization fit based on how they present themselves on LinkedIn, which influences their hiring recommendations (Chiang and

Suen, 2015). Such inferences are similar to those made in employment interviews, where applicant IM tactics impact evaluations (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2002, Levashina and Campion, 2007). Overall, we can thus expect applicant assertive IM on social media to have similar effects as in interviews. Using IM will improve applicants' chances to move forward in the selection process. For organizations, the impact on applicant IM on the quality of hiring (or screening) decisions will depend on the veracity of the tactics used. Similarly to the interview context (Ingold et al., 2015, e.g., Levashina and Campion, 2006), honest IM can potentially improve decisions by making the true qualities of applicants available to evaluators, but deceptive IM can bias decisions by manipulating the information provided.

The effect of some defensive IM tactics on social media can have a quite different impact for applicants and organizations. Most importantly, privacy settings or aliases preventing employers to access their profile can potentially eliminate applicants if organizations have cyber-vetting as a required step of their selection process. For instance, a recent study showed that 57.87% of applicants would refuse to provide full access to their profile to recruiters (i.e., provide their password), thereby removing themselves from the applicant pool (Schneider et al., 2015). This could obviously have negative consequences for both applicants (i.e., being eliminated) and organizations (i.e., overlooking potentially qualified applicants). Fortunately, legislations are evolving and some U.S. states (e.g., California, Maryland, Michigan, Oregon, etc.) have passed new laws prohibiting organization to ask applicants for their password of social media access. It is likely that more states will pass similar laws in the near future. Yet, it is unclear what would happen if an organization includes cyber-vetting as a formal step of the selection process but cannot find anything about an applicant on social media, for instance because the applicant uses another name (or alias) online.

Other defensive IM tactics, such as *cleaning* one's profile of content that may be perceived negatively by employers can also impact the validity of social media-based assessments, and thus the quality of hiring decisions. For instance, studies suggesting that Facebook profiles can potentially provide reliable information about users' personality (e.g., Kluemper et al., 2012) have used students' (and not applicants') profiles. Such profiles were arguably free from defensive IM, and it is likely that removing (negative) information will reduce the reliability of personality assessment and, indirectly, their potential predictive validity.

5. Conclusion

The antecedents, types, mechanisms, and outcomes of applicant IM in the selection process have been extensively examined in the past decades. But there are still a number of unknowns that future research should explore (e.g., Levashina et al., 2014a). In parallel, research on social media is still in its infancy. Studies on

using social media profiles for assessing job applicants' qualities or users IM have only begun to scratch the surface. Bringing those two literatures together, this chapter suggests that examining applicant use of IM on social media and the potential impact of such tactics on organizations' assessments needs to be part of the agenda for future research. We therefore present below some suggestions for researchers to generate novel studies in this area. Moreover, we outline some practical recommendations for organizations, recruiters, or managers already using (or planning to use) social media as part of their selection process.

5.1. Future research directions

We described above the types of IM tactics that job applicants can potentially use on their social media profiles to influence recruiters' evaluations. We also presented some illustrative examples based on the experiences of a small group of senior business students or graduates. But there are multiples ways to continue exploring this in future studies. For instance, one could empirically examine the extent to which applicants engage in self-promotion, other-focused, and defensive IM on their social media profile, and what specific tactics they use. Moreover, studies could differentiate honest from deceptive IM tactics or compare IM use across social media platforms (e.g., personal vs. professional sites).

Furthermore, research could empirically examine the antecedents and outcomes of applicants' use of honest vs. deceptive IM on social media. For instance, our review of the literature on IM on social media and in selection pointed towards some of the Big-5 and dark personality traits as potential predictors of IM. Previous models of IM have also highlighted the importance of situational factors, such as interview formats, on applicants' opportunity to use IM (e.g., Levashina and Campion, 2006). Similarly, some social media platforms may favor vs. impede the use of specific IM tactics. For job applicants, studies could test if using IM can positively influence recruiters' assessments and increase their chances to pass the first hurdle of the selection process. We suggest examining the impact of various IM types separately, as assertive (i.e., self-focused and other focused) and defensive tactics could have quite different consequences for example. For organizations, studies could explore how honest and deceptive IM tactics influence assessments of applicants' qualities. For instance, although research suggests that one can reliably assess personality through a Facebook profile (Kluemper et al., 2012), the actual validity of such assessments appears to be minuscule (Van Iddekinge et al., in press). Maybe applicant assertive IM does bias recruiters' evaluations and thus reduces the potential validity of social media assessments. It is also possible that some profiles have limited information, possibly because of defensive IM tactics that prevent recruiters from making a comprehensive assessment of applicants.

5.2. Practical recommendations

Cyber-vetting applicants using their social media presence can be seen as a valuable screening tool for organizations because of its low costs and potentially extensive amount of information about applicants available. Yet, beyond the legal or ethical issues associated with such practices (e.g., Brown and Vaughn, 2011), this chapter suggests that organizations should also consider the potential impact of applicant IM. If applicants realize that organization are checking their social media profiles, the logical reaction would be to start to proactively using social media to create a positive impression (Roulin, 2014). This can involve honest self-promotion tactics allowing applicants to showcase their true personality, skills, or past accomplishments. Such tactics would likely benefit organizations, by providing them valuable information to assess applicants. But applicant IM can also involve deceptive tactics aimed at manipulating their online image to appear a better fit with the job or organization. Moreover, defensive tactics could include hiding or omitting negative information, possibly biasing recruiters' evaluations. Or, perhaps even more damaging, strategies to prevent organization to access applicants' information such as changing one's privacy settings or using an alias online. In conclusions, organizations may want to carefully weigh the pros and cons of relying on social media assessments to make decisions about job applicants.

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