

# The Influence of Employers' Use of Social Networking Websites in Selection, Online Self-promotion, and Personality on the Likelihood of *Faux Pas* Postings

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**Employers' selection practices sometimes involve reviewing applicants' profile on social networking websites (SNWs) and invading applicants' privacy (e.g., asking for their passwords). Applicants can be eliminated because of *faux pas* (i.e., inappropriate content) they post online. Yet, little research has examined factors related to *faux pas* postings. The present study examines employers' use of SNWs in selection, participants' internet and SNWs use, personality, and SNWs self-promotion as predictors of the likelihood of *faux pas* postings. Results show lower likelihood of *faux pas* postings when participants are informed that a high proportion of employers use SNWs in selection, but mainly when it includes invasion of applicants' privacy. Moreover, participants' age, privacy settings, extraversion, and SNWs self-promotion are related to *faux pas*.**

## 1. Introduction

Given their growing popularity, social networking websites (SNWs) such as Facebook, MySpace, or LinkedIn have been increasingly studied in social sciences in the past years (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). Selection researchers have also started to investigate SNWs as an emerging instrument for employers to evaluate and select job applicants (Bohnert & Ross, 2010; Brandenburg, 2008; Brown & Vaughn, 2011; Clark & Roberts, 2010; Karl, Peluchette, & Schlaegel, 2010; Kluemper & Rosen, 2009; Roulin & Bangerter, 2013; Slovensky & Ross, 2012). SNWs allow employers to gather information that is often not visible in an applicant's resume or cover letter, such as interests and leisure activities, political views, sexual orientations, relationship status, or religious beliefs (Brandenburg, 2008). But it may also allow assessing applicants' personality (Kluemper, Rosen, & Mossholder, 2012). Researchers have also discussed the ethics of such practices (Brandenburg, 2008; Clark & Roberts, 2010).

Not all content on SNWs is perceived similarly by employers. Yet Karl et al. (Karl et al., 2010; Peluchette

& Karl, 2008) developed the notion of *faux pas* to describe information posted by potential applicants (e.g., students) on SNWs (e.g., Facebook) that may hurt their chances to get a job. Such postings include comments or pictures related to drugs, alcohol, and sexual activities or inappropriate photographs and are often mentioned by employers as reasons for not hiring an applicant (Bohnert & Ross, 2010; Careerbuilder.com, 2012; Roberts & Roach, 2009). Karl et al. (2010) focused on individual (i.e., personality and internet abuse) and cultural (i.e., US vs. Germany) differences explaining students' likelihood to post *faux pas* on their SNWs profile. They found more *faux pas* posted by Americans, males, people low in conscientiousness, or compulsive internet users. More recently, Newness, Steinert, and Viswesvaran (2012) showed that students' likelihood of *faux pas* postings was related to honesty and emotional intelligence. Newness et al. (2012) further suggested that older SNWs users may be less likely to post *faux pas* because of a higher level of maturity, but this proposition has not yet been empirically tested.

Moreover, other factors may be related to *faux pas* postings. For instance, employers' selection practices

may trigger adaptive strategies from potential applicants (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012). As such, the increasing use of SNWs by employers to gather information about potential applicants may pressure SNWs users to modify what information they post on their SNW profiles, such as being more careful about *faux pas*. On the other hand, SNWs can be used as an instrument to present oneself favorably to the members of one's network (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). SNWs users' self-presentation strategies oriented toward these *friends* may increase the risk of *faux pas* postings in order to create a positive online identity.

The objectives of the present study are thus threefold: first, to replicate Karl et al.'s (2010) findings about the relationship between personality (and internet abuse) and the likelihood of *faux pas* postings with a sample of older US participants; second, to examine how information about employers' use of SNWs in selection influences *faux pas* postings; third, to examine how users' self-promotion oriented toward their *friends* on SNWs relates to *faux pas* postings.

### 1.1. Employers' use of SNWs in selection and likelihood of faux pas postings

In the past years, media have largely reported employers' use of SNWs as part of their selection process (Cerasaro, 2008; Du, 2007). Some surveys of employers have showed that from 12% of employers who used SNWs in selection in 2006, and 45% in 2009, it decreased to 37% in 2012 with companies starting to prohibit this practice (Careerbuilder.com, 2006, 2009, 2012), while other surveys have suggested that up to 90% of employers may currently use SNWs in selection with 69% having rejected an applicant based on content found online (Swallow, 2011). Employers' efforts to gather information about applicants may not always be successful because such information may or may not be publicly available, depending on applicants' privacy settings/preferences. Yet some users may be less familiar with privacy options on SNWs and some websites (e.g., Facebook) have been criticized for the lack of transparency regarding such settings (Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, & Hughes, 2009). It has been argued that employers should ensure that recruiters' practices are not invading applicants' privacy or leading to discrimination against minority applicants (Brown & Vaughn, 2011). Yet some employers or recruiters have developed creative strategies to overcome barriers preventing them to access potential applicants' information, such as hiring students as 'alumni spies' to access their peers' profiles (Brandenburg, 2008), and asking applicants for their passwords or to *friend* human resource managers (McFarland, 2012). Overall, it is not clear what proportions of employers actually use SNWs (and creative strategies) to select applicants. But the large (yet incon-

sistent) diffusion of employers' use of SNWs in selection (e.g., through the media) may increase SNWs users' or potential applicants' awareness about what employers may do and thus impact their behaviors.

According to a signaling approach to personnel selection (Bangerter et al., 2012), applicants are motivated to discover employers' selection criteria and then adapt their behavior to increase their chances of getting hired. Therefore, if employers access applicants' SNW profiles and use the obtained information in their selection decision, this may trigger adaptive strategies from potential applicants who are informed about such practices. One of these strategies may involve modifying what information (e.g., *faux pas*) these potential applicants post on their SNW profiles. Initial evidence suggest that SNWs users (or potential applicants) are generally aware that employers may review their profiles (Clark & Roberts, 2010) and accurately perceive what type of information employers look for on SNWs (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013). Although they do not consider employers reviewing their profile as unethical per se (Clark & Roberts, 2010), they may still feel that their privacy has been invaded (Stoughton, Thompson, Meade, & Wilson, 2012). Moreover, SNWs users who have experienced privacy invasion are more motivated to modify their privacy settings in order to protect their information (Debatin et al., 2009). Educating students about the risks of *faux pas* can motivate them to modify what they post on their profiles (Saedi & Nguyen, 2011). Therefore, informing SNWs users about employers' use of SNWs in selection (i.e., about the proportion of employers using such information to select applicants or their use of creative strategies to invade applicants' privacy) may make them more aware of the risks associated with postings on their profile and make them more reluctant to post *faux pas* (i.e., as an adaptive strategy).

*Hypothesis 1:* People are less likely to post *faux pas* on SNWs (a) when facing information stating that a high (vs. a low) proportion of employers use SNWs as part of their selection process and (b) when employers strategies are described (vs. not described) as invading applicants' privacy.

### 1.2. SNWs self-promotion and likelihood of faux pas postings

SNWs allow users to control the way they present themselves more easily than in traditional face-to-face communication, making SNWs ideal for impression management tactics (Krämer & Winter, 2008; Siibak, 2009). Theories of impression management suggest that people may engage in self-presentation tactics to obtain desired social outcomes, such as approval or friendship (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Self-presentation tactics used on SNWs can be oriented toward two types of targets. The first targets of

such tactics involve members of users' online social network, such as actual friends, colleagues or family members (e.g., Facebook *friends*). These targets can be considered as the primary targets because SNWs profiles are created and updated to exchange information with these *friends*. Some users may thus be motivated to use online self-presentation tactics (e.g., self-promotion) to be perceived more positively by their *friends* (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011) and indirectly increase their well-being (Kim & Lee, 2011). This includes choosing what information, comments, or pictures to put on their profiles to promote themselves, make a good impression on *friends*, and create a positive online identity (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009; Siibak, 2009; Vazire & Gosling, 2004). But a side effect of self-promotion oriented toward primary targets may be an increased risk of posting content that is considered as *faux pas* according to Karl et al. (2010), such as pictures of a party involving alcohol. The second targets of SNWs self-presentation tactics include people outside of users' social network (or people who have infiltrated the network), such as employers gathering information about applicants. Some users may engage in self-promotion oriented toward employers, such as drawing attention to their skills, knowledge, abilities, or professional experiences on their SNW profile to appear highly qualified. These users may also be careful in how they communicate on SNWs and avoid posting *faux pas*.

SNWs users often engage in self-promotion oriented toward primary targets, but tend to be less directly concerned about unanticipated targets (Karl et al., 2010). As such, the present study will focus on self-promotion oriented toward primary targets, which may lead to posting content that is appropriate for unanticipated targets (e.g., talking about sports achievements), but also increase the risk of posting content that is inappropriate for unanticipated targets (e.g., posting pictures of alcohol abuse). Users engaging in more SNWs self-promotion oriented toward primary targets (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011) may thus be more likely to post *faux pas* on their profile.

*Hypothesis 2:* SNWs self-promotion is positively related to the likelihood of *faux pas* postings on SNWs.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

Data were collected from 330 US participants, who completed an online questionnaire (49% women, mean age 31.6 years,  $SD = 11.7$ ). Most (56%) were employed, 20% were unemployed actively looking for a job, 8% were unemployed not actively looking for a job, and 16% were students. Seventy-three percent were White, 7% Black, 7% Hispanic, 12% Asian/Pacific Islander, and

1% Native-American. The majority of participants held a college degree (55%) or had some college education (29%). On average, they spent 9.9 hr ( $SD = 13.0$ ) on SNWs weekly.

Data collection was conducted using Amazon Mechanical Turk, an online data collection system with several advantages over standard Internet samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010): It is relatively inexpensive, allows collecting high-quality and reliable data, and reaching samples that are significantly more diverse than typical American college samples. Participants completed a 10-min online questionnaire. First, they were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions and read a short text about employers' use of SNWs (see *Experimental design* section). Then they completed all measures. They were paid \$.40 for their participation.

### 2.2. Experimental design

A 2x2 experimental design was used, with descriptions of the proportion of employers using SNWs to select and eliminate applicants (low vs. high proportion) and degree of privacy invasion by employers (no information on invasion vs. information on invasion) as between-subjects factors. A short text was introduced with the sentence 'below is some information about social networking websites taken from the news'. The remaining of the text was adapted from two recent online articles describing employers' practices; one describing the proportion of employers using SNWs as part of their selection process (Swallow, 2011) and the other describing employers' practices potentially invading applicants' privacy (McFarland, 2012). In the 'high proportion' of employers using SNWs condition, the text described that '[...] 90% of recruiters and hiring managers have visited a potential candidate's profile on a social network as part of the screening process. And a whopping 69% of recruiters have rejected a candidate based on content found [...]'. In the 'low proportion' condition, the above percentages were changed to 15% and 9% respectively. For the degree of privacy invasion, in the 'information on invasion' condition, a second paragraph mentioned that some companies were '[...] asking to log in as the user to have a look around during an interview. Companies that don't ask for passwords have taken other steps, such as asking applicants to friend human resource managers'. In the 'no information on invasion' condition, there was no second paragraph.

### 2.3. Measures

#### 2.3.1. Faux pas postings

*Faux pas* postings were measured with the 10-item scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ) developed by Karl et al. (2010). Participants

rated how likely they would be to post 10 types of information on their SNW (e.g., Facebook) profile. All items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = very unlikely, 5 = very likely). Example items include: *self-photo with sexual props*, *self-photo drinking alcohol*, or *comments regarding use of illegal drugs*.

### 2.3.2. Self-promotion on SNWs

Self-promotion was measured with a 5-item scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ) taken from Rosenberg and Egbert (2011). Participants rated how likely they would be to engage in self-promoting behaviors oriented toward their friends on their SNW profiles. All items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = Very Unlikely, 5 = Very Likely). An example item is: *Tell people on my social network (e.g., Facebook) about my positive accomplishments*.

### 2.3.3. Internet abuse

The 14-item ( $\alpha = .92$ ) Compulsive Internet Use scale (Meerkerk, Van der Eijnden, & Garretsen, 2006) was used to measure Internet abuse. All items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = never, 5 = very often). An example item is: *How often do you continue to use the Internet despite your intention to stop?*

### 2.3.4. Personality

Participants' personality traits were measured with the 20-item Mini-International Personality Item Pool scale (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006), with four items measuring each big five traits. Reliability coefficients were acceptable and similar to those observed by Donnellan et al. for all five traits: extraversion ( $\alpha = .83$ ), agreeableness ( $\alpha = .74$ ), conscientiousness ( $\alpha = .68$ ), emotional stability ( $\alpha = .75$ ), and imagination ( $\alpha = .76$ ).

### 2.3.5. Control variables

Participants' age, gender, education level, SNWs use (i.e., number of hours spent on SNWs weekly), and current level of privacy settings on SNWs (i.e., rated on a 5-point scale with 1 = original settings and 5 = information available to a selected list of people among my friends) were used as additional control variables in our analyses as they may influence people's intent to post *faux pas* on SNWs.

## 2.4. Pre-test and manipulation check

A pre-test with 64 US participants was conducted on Mechanical Turk. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of the four texts describing employers' use of SNWs and then completed two measures: A 3-item measure of perceived proportion of employers using SNWs in selection ( $\alpha = .92$ , example item: 'a majority of employers/recruiters use social networking websites as part of their selection process'), and a 3-item measure of perceived invasion of privacy by employers ( $\alpha = .80$ ,

example item: 'when employers/recruiters look into applicants' social networking websites profile, it is an invasion of applicants' privacy'). All items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Analyses revealed that participants in the 'high proportion' condition ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = .72$ ) perceived employers to use SNWs more than those in the 'low proportion' condition ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ),  $F(1,63) = 23.28$ ,  $p < .01$ . Also, participants in the 'information on invasion' condition ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) perceived employers to invade applicants' privacy more than those in the 'no information on invasion' condition ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ),  $F(1,63) = 5.91$ ,  $p < .05$ . The same two measures were also included as manipulation check in the main study ( $\alpha = .88$  for proportion,  $\alpha = .80$  for invasion). Results confirmed that the manipulation worked, although differences were smaller than in the pre-test (i.e.,  $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = .61$  vs.  $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = .74$ ,  $F(1,329) = 38.18$ ,  $p < .01$  for 'high/low proportion' and  $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = .08$  vs.  $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = .08$ ,  $F(1,329) = 4.35$ ,  $p < .05$  for 'information/no information on invasion').

## 3. Results

Means, SDs, and correlations among study main variables are presented in Table 1. Intent to post *faux pas* on SNWs is low and correlates significantly with all study variables, except education level and emotional stability.

All hypotheses were tested simultaneously with error-in-variable hierarchical multiple regression analyses using STATA 12 (StataCorp LP, StataCorp. 2011 Stata Statistical Software: Release 12, College Station, TX, USA, see Table 2) to correct for measurement error. Model 1 included the control variables (i.e., age, gender, education level, use of SNWs, privacy settings) and Internet abuse. Personality traits were entered in Model 2, which closely correspond to Karl et al.'s (2010) model. Interestingly, only extraversion was a significant predictor of *faux pas*. SNWs self-promotion was entered in Model 3. Finally, the main effects of the experimental conditions (i.e., the proportion of employers described as using SNWs in the selection process and privacy invasion) were entered in Model 4, while the interaction was entered in Model 5. Hypothesis 2 (i.e., the positive impact of SNWs self-promotion on *faux pas* postings) was supported. Self-promotion on SNWs was significantly related to *faux pas* postings and explained an additional 4% of variance over control variables, Internet abuse, and personality. Hypothesis 1 (i.e., the impact of the proportion of employers using SNWs in selection and invasion of privacy on *faux pas* postings) was tested on Model 4. Results showed a main effect of proportion but no main effect of privacy invasion. These two predictors explained an



Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among main study variables

	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	31.63 (11.70)	—											
2. Gender	.49 (.50)	.10	—										
3. Education	4.46 (1.82)	.10	.02	—									
4. SNWs use	9.89 (13.01)	-.07	.01	-.02	—								
5. Privacy settings	3.72 (1.06)	-.14*	.12*	.09	.02	—							
6. Internet abuse	2.44 (.81)	-.26**	-.06	-.03	.18**	-.05	—						
7. Extraversion	2.63 (1.02)	.09	.00	.01	.18**	-.04	-.16**	—					
8. Emotional stability	3.47 (.87)	.18*	-.13*	-.06	-.06	.01	-.34**	.15**	—				
9. Agreeableness	3.72 (.77)	.10	.18*	.01	.05	.05	-.13*	.25**	.12*	—			
10. Conscientiousness	3.59 (.79)	.17**	.11	.04	-.02	.01	-.33**	.06	.28**	.21**	—		
11. Imagination	3.92 (.80)	.09	.07	-.05	-.21**	.08	-.17**	.16**	.22**	.19**	.03	—	
12. SNWs self-promotion	2.87 (1.09)	-.15**	-.12*	-.08	-.20**	-.04	.19**	.05	-.12*	.08	.03	-.16**	—
13. Faux pas postings	1.35 (.53)	-.17**	-.21**	-.03	.16**	-.16**	.15**	.12*	-.06	-.12*	-.15**	-.14*	.28**

Note: N = 330; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ ; Gender: 0 = Men, 1 = Women; SNW use = Number of hours per week on SNWs.

additional 3% of variance in *faux pas* postings. These results provide support for Hypothesis 1a, but not for Hypothesis 1b. Moreover, results from Model 5 showed a significant proportion $\times$ privacy invasion interaction, explaining one additional percent of variance.

To examine the actual difference in *faux pas* postings between the four experimental conditions, marginal effects were computed to obtain the predictive marginal means if all other variables included in the regression (i.e., in Model 5) are held constant (Figure 1). Results showed no significant difference between the 'low proportion' ( $M = 1.38$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI [1.27, 1.48]) and the 'high proportion' ( $M = 1.32$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI [1.21, 1.42]) conditions when there was no information about invasion of privacy. But there was a significant difference between the 'low proportion' ( $M = 1.49$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI [1.38, 1.60]) and the 'high proportion' ( $M = 1.21$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI [1.11, 1.32]) conditions when employers were described as invading applicants' privacy,  $F(1,314) = 4.06$ ,  $p < .05$ . Therefore, it seems that descriptions of a high proportion of employers using SNWs in selection reduce *faux pas* postings mainly when employers' strategies also include information on invasion of applicants' privacy.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study contributes to research on personnel selection and SNWs users' behaviors in several ways. First, it replicates and extends previous studies on students' *faux pas* postings on SNWs (Karl et al., 2010; Newness et al., 2012) with a sample of older individuals. Observed correlations between demographics, personality traits, or internet abuse and *faux pas* postings in the present study are similar to those obtained in past research (Karl et al., 2010; Peluchette & Karl, 2008), but the likelihood to post *faux pas* on SNWs is lower than the one reported in previous studies, that is,  $M = 1.35$  versus 1.75 in Karl et al. (2010) or  $M = 1.51$  in Newness et al. (2012). This difference can be due to samples dissimilarities. The present sample is, on average, 11 years older than in the original study and a majority of the participants here are employed. Also, results show a negative relationship between age and *faux pas* postings (see Tables 1 and 2). As suggested by Newness et al. (2012), *faux pas* postings may be an issue that mainly concerns students or young users/applicants, but less more experienced or mature individuals. Moreover, regression analyses suggest that the only personality trait significantly predicting the likelihood of *faux pas* posting was extraversion, while previous research (Karl et al., 2010; Newness et al., 2012) have reported conscientiousness or emotional stability as the most predictive personality traits. This can be due to different personality measures used, the correction for unreliability used

Table 2. Linear regression predicting likelihood of *faux pas* postings on social networking website (SNW) profiles

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Age	-.01** (.00)	-.01* (.00)	-.01* (.00)	-.01* (.00)	-.01* (.00)
Gender	-.19** (.06)	-.15* (.06)	-.11 (.06)	-.12 (.06)	-.10 (.06)
Education	.00 (.02)	.00 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)
SNWs use	.00* (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.03)
Privacy settings	-.08** (.03)	-.07* (.03)	-.06* (.03)	-.07** (.03)	-.07* (.03)
Internet abuse	.05 (.04)	.04 (.05)	.01 (.05)	-.00 (.05)	-.01 (.05)
Extraversion		.11** (.04)	.10** (.04)	.09* (.04)	.09* (.04)
Emotional stability		.01 (.06)	.03 (.06)	.04 (.06)	.05 (.06)
Agreeableness		-.07 (.06)	-.10 (.06)	-.10 (.06)	-.11 (.06)
Conscientiousness		-.08 (.07)	-.11 (.07)	-.12 (.07)	-.13 (.07)
Imagination		-.08 (.06)	-.06 (.05)	-.06 (.05)	-.07 (.05)
SNWs self-promotion			.13** (.03)	.13** (.03)	.13** (.03)
Proportion of employers				-.17** (.06)	-.06 (.08)
Privacy invasion				.01 (.05)	.12 (.07)
Proportion×Invasion					-.22* (.11)
Intercept	1.76** (.20)	2.31** (.39)	2.02** (.38)	2.19** (.38)	2.20** (.38)
F	7.46**	5.35	6.55**	6.41**	6.26**
R <sup>2</sup>	.12	.17	.21	.24	.25
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		.05	.04	.03	.01

Note:  $N = 330$ ; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ ; Error-in-variables regression correcting for measurement error; Values are unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in brackets); Gender: 0 = Men, 1 = Women; SNW use = Number of hours per week on SNWs; Proportion of employers: 0 = Low (i.e., 15%), 1 = High (i.e., 90%); Invasion of privacy: 0 = No information on invasion by employers, 1 = Information on invasion by employers (e.g., asking for applicants' passwords).

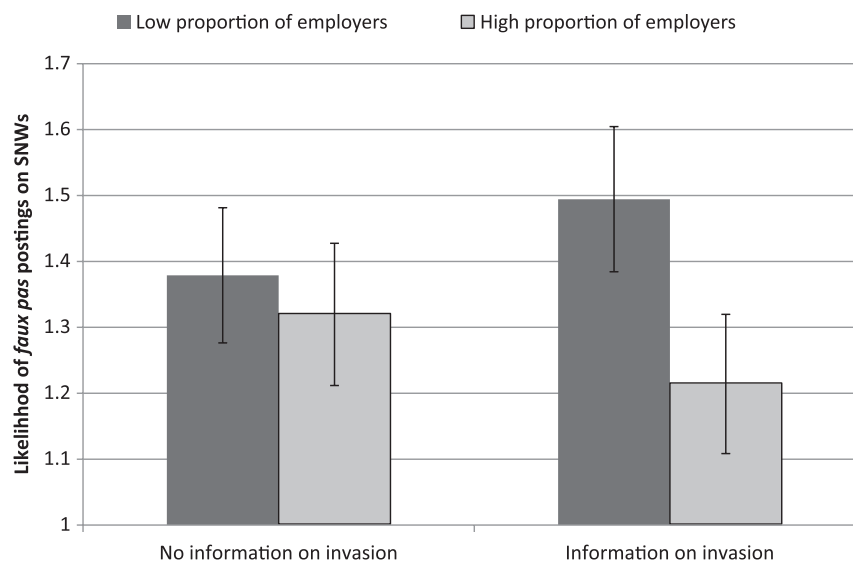


Figure 1. Regression margins for the likelihood of *faux pas* postings on social networking website (SNW) when descriptions involve a high versus low proportion of employers using SNWs in selection and information or not about invasion of applicants' privacy.

Note. Error bars represent the 95% confidence intervals.

here, or the relatively low extraversion scores observed in the present sample.

Second, descriptions of employers' use of SNWs in selection also influence *faux pas* postings. Likelihood to post such content is especially low when information provided involves a high proportion of employers reviewing applicants' profile as part of their selection process and the use of strategies that involve invading applicants' privacy. Therefore, in line with the signaling theory (Bangerter et al., 2012), potential applicants are

likely to adapt their behavior to match employers' selection criteria and strategies. When informed about employers' use of SNWs, users are likely to choose the adaptive strategy of posting less risky information or pictures. The present study thus offers a first examination using a controlled experimental setting of the adaptive behaviors that applicants may engage in (over time) once informed (e.g., through the media) about employers' use of SNWs. These results can further help understanding the lower likelihood of *faux pas* postings

observed here as compared with the earlier research (e.g., Karl et al., 2010). Employers' practices to visit applicants' SNW profile as part of their selection as been largely described in the media in the past years (Cerasaro, 2008; Du, 2007; McFarland, 2012; Swallow, 2011). Users may have thus been informed of the risks of posting such information on SNWs and adapted their behavior accordingly. There may thus be a tendency toward posting less *faux pas* on SNWs, which would also coincides with the overall tendency of SNWs users to become more private with their information (Dey, Jelveh, & Ross, 2012).

Finally, people engaging more in self-promotion oriented toward their *friends* on SNWs are more likely to post *faux pas*. In addition, participants' SNW privacy settings are related to *faux pas* postings, but not the number of hours spent on SNWs or compulsive internet use. As such, it is not those people who spend more time on SNWs who post risky content, but rather those people with lower concerns for privacy and/or wanting to make a good impression on their *friends*. As mentioned in previous research (Karl et al., 2010; Peluchette & Karl, 2008), users posting *faux pas* are those who care more about being perceived positively by their *friends* and who are more naïve about the impact such postings may have on unanticipated targets, such as potential employers.

This research has practical implications for personnel selection and especially for organizations using SNWs as part of their selection process. The results presented here confirm that the likelihood of *faux pas* postings is indeed related to individual differences (e.g., personality or online self-promotion intents), but suggest that it can be also influenced by situational factors (e.g., information about employers' strategies). As such, the present study concurs with previous research suggesting that employers may make valid inference about applicants' qualities based on the information provided on SNW profiles (e.g., Kluemper et al., 2012), including *faux pas* postings (Karl et al., 2010). Yet organizations may want to consider the ethical issues (and legal issues, but see Davison, Maraist, Hamilton, & Bing, 2012) associated with some of the most invasive selection strategies involving SNWs (e.g., asking applicants for their passwords or to friend human resource managers, McFarland, 2012). Moreover, the present results suggest that such strategies may indirectly (e.g., through their leakage in the media) lead to adaptive strategies by applicants, such as being more careful with the content they openly post online. In the long run, this may reduce the availability of applicant information online and make SNWs a useless selection tool for employers.

This research has limitations that provide opportunity for future research. First, this study examined the likelihood of *faux pas* postings, which correspond to what has been done in past research (Karl et al., 2010;

Newness et al., 2012), but not actual behaviors. Future research could try to replicate these findings with actual *faux pas* postings of applicants on the job market. Second, the present sample only includes US participants and the descriptions of employers' use of SNWs are based on media reports in the US. Previous research has already highlighted cultural differences in *faux pas* postings (Karl et al., 2010). Moreover, the use of SNWs by employers, and its description in the media, may also vary from one country to another, potentially leading to different adaptive reactions from applicants. Future studies should continue investigating the evolution of employers' strategies and applicants/SNWs users' reactions in different countries. Also, this research investigates the likelihood of *faux pas* on Facebook. Future research could examine other SNWs, such as LinkedIn. For instance, recent researches have examined deception in online résumés on LinkedIn (Guillory & Hancock, 2012). Future research should explore if SNWs users (especially those on the job market) tend to engage in more (honest or deceptive) self-presentation tactics oriented toward potential employers visiting their profile.

In conclusion, the present research highlights descriptions of employers' use of SNWs and online self-promotion as predictors of the likelihood of *faux pas* postings on SNWs and suggests a tendency toward users being more careful regarding what they post online. Such changes in behavior can be interpreted as a response to the increasing practice of employers to review applicants' SNWs profile and selecting them based on what they find.

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