Introduction

People rarely lie for the sake of lying. Deception is used to accomplish goals (e.g., appearing attractive or competent).1 Self-enhancing deceptions are common, and typically driven by the desire for positive self-presentation. In the self-presentational framework of deception,2 self-enhancing lies are part of an effort to manage how we convey ourselves to the world. In professional contexts, resume padding is an example that seems to occur frequently. One resume consulting service suggested that 43 percent of resumes evaluated contained significant inaccuracies.3 Though many of these lies seem like mere exaggerations, consequences for deception in resumes can be devastating. Take Janet Cooke, who lost the Pulitzer Prize in 1981 after being caught lying about her educational background.4 Cooke's case is extreme, but demonstrates the costliness of deception in organizations. Getting caught in a self-enhancing lie damages one's reputation, leading to social or material punishment. People also prefer to view themselves as honest, which is evident in research demonstrating that even with no chance of being caught, people tend to lie or cheat in small amounts.5 Factors encouraging or discouraging deception have been raised anew in the age of online profiles, in which individuals construct virtual self-presentations. These profiles have become surprisingly common with social networking Web sites linking profiles between friends, acquaintances, and colleagues. These services include professionally oriented sites, such as LinkedIn, in which people upload online resumes and form connections with colleagues and friends. Because social networking profiles are virtual self-presentations and are not physically connected to the self, these profiles offer novel opportunities for deception not possible in Face-to Face (FtF) settings. Walther6,7 argues that people can take advantage of affordances of computer-mediated communication (CMC) (e.g., reduced cues and editability) to enhance self-presentations. Though the online environment may facilitate deception, several factors should constrain deception and foster honesty. Social network profiles make self-presentations publicly available and link individuals to the profile (e.g., colleagues and supervisors) who can verify whether profile claims are deceptive or not. Researchers both on and offline have demonstrated the importance of social relationships in fostering honesty between individuals.8–10 For example, recommender systems on Web sites like eBay help ensure that transactions in these environments remain honest by providing users, who have no previous seller history, with information about sellers' trustworthiness. Affordances that establish links between the on and offline self should improve the likelihood of honesty online. In the case of resumes, how might LinkedIn, which allows people to post resumes and link with others online, affect deception? More specifically, how will LinkedIn affect the tension between the self-presentational motivation to be deceptive and the motivation to be honest, given that discovery of deception is reputation damaging? The current study explored how Linkedin resumes affect the frequency and type of deception produced in resumes. Self-presentation and deception in social networking Web sites Popular opinion holds that deception is prevalent online, with one study finding that 73 percent of individuals believe deception is widespread online.11 These are concerns about digital deception, or the deliberate control of a technologically mediated message to create false belief.12–14 Specifically, we are concerned with identity-based deception related to personal identity.15 Research suggests that identity-based deception occurs more in CMC than FtF.16 The major reason digital deception may be more frequent in online communication is because ''text-based interaction or virtual representations of self'' (p. 291)15 are not physically connected to an individual. Self-presentational goals, however, are a common and important motivator for deception2 regardless of medium. Online these goals range as widely as they do FtF and often

involve eliciting positive impressions.17–19 Research demonstrates that wanting to appear competent motivates deception.20,21 One study20 found that 90 percent of individuals admitted to lying on a resume-like scholarship application. When trying to appear competent, motivation to lie flows from the need to impress an audience, such as a potential employer. Social networking profiles are designed to convey impressions to an audience, whether it is the unknown general audience online or specific network connections.22 Self-presentational goals should drive deception in social networking profiles, especially in the case of Linkedin profiles, which are designed to convey competence for employment. While individuals are motivated to provide positive selfpresentations, the publicness of resumes makes people accountable for information shared online. When a person creates a Linkedin profile, the site provides default settings making the profile public, creating a potential audience to which the communication partner must explain deceptions (profiles can be made private upon request). Public settings should increase the possibility that an employer might discover deceptions. Traditional resumes, on the other hand, are confidential and are not widely shared outside organizations.23 Though it is common for employers to contact references to review truthfulness of resumes, traditional resumes are limited in their ease of accessibility to others, with far fewer potential viewers to verify veracity. The likelihood of being caught in a lie about previous employment should be higher for publicly available Linkedin profiles than for traditional resumes. Though profile publicness does not guarantee that relevant audiences will view profiles (e.g., supervisors), profile creators should alter deceptive behavior to be consistent with information known by potential audiences. For example, online dating profiles had fewer deceptive photographs when more friends knew about the profile.24 In another study, the more links a person had on a social networking site the fewer lies they reported in profiles.25 Socially connected displays of information on these sites should constrain deception, as being detected has serious consequences (e.g., exposure of deceptions by network members). How exactly should Linkedin affect deception then? On one hand, the perception that deception is widespread online is pervasive. This perception is partially fueled by the affordances of text-based communication, which allow for increased opportunities to edit self-presentations, and the reduction of the nonverbal cues, which are stereotypically used to detect lies.11,26 In the absence of these cues, which may provide ‘‘leakage’’ indicating deceptiveness, deception maybe perceived as less difficult.27,28 Recent research, however, has shown that the content of deception (rather than nonverbal cues) improves accuracy in detecting deception.29 Thus, concerns about being caught lying should be more important when making resume claims publicly available. Since both traditional resumes and Linkedin profiles are created without nonverbal cues and provide similar opportunities to craft self-presentations—but only Linkedin profiles are publicly available—lying should occur less frequently in Linkedin resumes: H1: Deception will occur less frequently in public social networking profiles than in private profiles or traditional resumes. Not all lies are created equally, however. A more subtle response to the pressure of making a resume public on Linkedin should also affect the types of lies people tell to accomplish self-presentational goals. For instance, deception should be affected by the verifiability of resume claims. The falsifiability heuristic suggests that when a person shares selfrelevant information that is more objectively verifiable (e.g., observable behaviors), it is viewed as less credible and people are more likely to classify it as deceptive.30 Deceptions about verifiable claims, such as educational background or experience, pose significant risks if made public and are more likely to be classified as lies. In contrast, when the veracity of resume information is difficult to assess objectively, such as hobbies or interests, not only is there less risk of being caught lying, but information is less likely to be classified as deceptive.30,31 Thus,

individuals should practice deception strategically, lying about different types of information depending on the publicness of the claims. Specifically, public resume creators should lie less about former employment, such as job responsibilities, because this information can be independently verified as deceptive.31 Indeed, cases involving discovery of deceptions about verifiable claims entailed consequences including loss of jobs and awards, and damage to reputation.32 To avoid consequences, people creating public resumes should lie about information that is not widely known to network members and therefore less job relevant. For example, when applying to a job involving travel, lies about interests in travel or learning new languages accomplish this goal without being verifiable by network members. Though unverifiable information is less directly relevant to obtaining a job, it can be used to accomplish self-presentational goals. Thus, deception should occur strategically based on a resume's potential audience.

Discussion

The public nature of LinkedIn shaped deception in our participants' resumes. Although overall rates of deception did not differ across the two types of resumes, participants lied differently depending on whether their self-presentation was a traditional or LinkedIn resume. Participants creating public LinkedIn profiles lied less about verifiable information, specifically responsibilities, and maximized their resume's attractiveness with minimal consequences by lying more about unverifiable information, specifically interests. Participants creating traditional resumes lied more about verifiable information that was central to the job, presumably because there is less threat of being caught. Traditional resume creators accomplished self-presentational goals via deceptions about verifiable information, and lied less about unverifiable information. While the effect sizes were small, these findings were consistent with the hypotheses, and have important theoretical and practical implications. First, these data are consistent with the idea that self-presentational motivations drive deception.1,37 Given that self-presentational motivations were equivalent across conditions, as indicated by our manipulation check, our expectation that LinkedIn would uniformly reduce deception was overly simplistic. Instead participants accomplished identical self-presentational goals (as indicated by the motivation manipulation check) using different forms of deception that matched the public nature of the claims. It is important to note that the effect size of the difference in the frequency of responsibility deceptions was relatively small. Given the grave consequences associated with deception in organizations, for both employers and employees,4 we argue that this small difference is nonetheless important. Second, our findings suggest that the assumption that the Internet is rife with deception11 is not necessarily correct. Our data from LinkedIn resumes reflect lower levels of deception compared with previous work exploring enhancement in paper-based resumes.20 The results suggest that the public nature of online resume information, rather than the distinction between on and offline deception, determines how lying takes place. Further, our data speak to the recent debate on the prevalence of deception in everyday communication, with some research suggesting most people lie a little each day38 and other research suggesting that only a few people lie a lot.39 In the current study, over 90 percent of participants lied at least once on their resume. This distribution of deception is more consistent with previous observations that most people lie a little.

Conclusion

Although counterintuitive, our data suggest that Web sites such as LinkedIn, which make resume information public and linked to one's network, can foster greater honesty for resume claims that are most important to employers, such as claims about experience and responsibility. Similar effects have been demonstrated in the context of recommender systems.8,10 Our research suggests that the public availability of information to social ties affects honesty in a more complex manner than previously assumed. Participants considered publicness strategically, adapting their lies based on whether information could be verified as deceptive by others online, suggesting that public availability of information does not guarantee honesty. Instead, the public nature of online self-presentations shapes how we use deception to achieve our goals.