



# Self-monitoring, honesty, and cue use on Facebook: The relationship with user extraversion and conscientiousness<sup>☆</sup>



Jeffrey A. Hall<sup>\*</sup>, Natalie Pennington

University of Kansas, Communication Studies Department, Bailey Hall, 1440 Jayhawk Blvd., Rm. 102, Lawrence, KS 66045-7574, United States

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## ABSTRACT

The present study explored the relationship between Facebook (FB) users' self-monitoring and self-reported FB honesty and the content of users' profiles. It was anticipated that high self-monitors would construct a more extraverted profile and honest FB users would construct a more conscientious profile. A content analysis of 53 cues on participants' FB profiles ( $N = 100$ ) was conducted. Supporting evidence was shown in a lens model analysis of FB user profiles and strangers' ( $N = 35$ ) impressions of users' personality. User self-monitoring was uniquely associated with three FB cues: posting a profile picture at a younger age, posting more frequently, and using more shorthand in status updates. These three cues informed strangers' estimations of user extraversion, but were unrelated to estimations of users' conscientiousness. Honesty on FB was uniquely associated with three cues that informed strangers' estimations of user conscientiousness: expressing positive affect and talking more about family in status updates, and having FB friends who expressed support in response to status updates. This study demonstrated that FB use and profile page construction were associated with FB users' personality, and the construction of profiles affected strangers' perceptions of FB users.

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## 1. Introduction

Facebook (FB) has become a ubiquitous and consequential component of millions of people's lives. When joining the FB community, the platform requires users to compose an online self, which is viewed by users' self-selected and mediated audience. This composition is inherently an act of self-presentation, which is "the goal directed activity of controlling information of self in order to influence the impressions formed by audiences" (Schlenker, 2004, p. 492). Although face-to-face (FtF) self-presentations are also directed toward the goal of creating and maintaining a stable and favorable impression, in social networking sites (SNSs), self-construction is particularly strategic and deliberate (DeAndrea & Walther, 2011; Livingstone, 2008). The self-presentational affordances of online environments create dialectical tensions between an accurate and an ideal self (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006) and between a truthful and a deceptive self (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008). In response to these tensions, users maintain a fairly accurate presentation of self on personal web pages (Marcus, Machilek, & Schütz, 2006) and on online dating profiles (Toma et al., 2008). In fact, strangers can accurately estimate user personality by examining only a FB profile (Hall & Pennington, 2012) or a personal web

page (Marcus et al., 2006). Although some self-aggrandizement, misrepresentation, and outright deception occurs on mediated platforms, on the whole, users present themselves online in a manner that approximates their offline self (Gosling, Gaddis, & Vazire, 2007; Toma et al., 2008).

Past research has explored the degree or type of online deception (e.g., Hall, Park, Song, & Cody, 2010; Toma et al., 2008), but the link between user personality and self-presentational acts in online environments is nascent. Self-monitoring (Snyder, 1987) shows promise in explaining variance in online misrepresentation. A recent article on deception in online dating profiles (i.e., Hall et al., 2010) suggested that self-monitoring was the strongest and most consistent predictor of strategic misrepresentation – far more predictive than users' gender, age, and education. However, one limitation of Hall et al. was there was no way to determine if or how deception affected strangers' perceptions. The present study directly addresses this shortcoming by examining strangers' perceptions of FB users' profiles.

Research on FtF self-presentation has long acknowledged that there are various strategies for presenting a favorable self (Jones & Pittman, 1982) and that self-monitors privilege self-presentations that are more social and extraverted (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009). The present investigation will argue that although a high self-monitor is more likely to admit to being deceptive on their FB profile page, high-self monitors will seek a balance between the need to self-promote and the need to be reasonably honest. To find this balance, a high self-monitor will reveal and promote aspects

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<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 785 864 1082; fax: +1 785 864 5203.

E-mail addresses: [hallj@ku.edu](mailto:hallj@ku.edu) (J.A. Hall), [natpen@gmail.com](mailto:natpen@gmail.com) (N. Pennington).

of self that are both accurate and valued on FB. Because extraversion is strongly associated with self-monitoring (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000), we will argue that high self-monitors will promote an extraverted self on FB. By way of comparison, an honest FB user will also attempt to promote personality traits that are associated with honesty, specifically conscientiousness (Dunn & Guadagno, 2012). The present study will demonstrate that the high self-monitor promotes extraverted aspects of their personality on FB, while an honest FB user promotes a conscientious self-presentation. Additionally, we will offer evidence that the use of cues associated with extraversion and honesty influence the impressions of strangers. The primary contributions of the present study are threefold: the present study extends prior work on self-monitoring on FB (e.g., Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011) by demonstrating that self-monitoring is uniquely associated with the use of certain cues on FB; the present study demonstrates that the self-presentational acts associated with both self-monitoring and honesty on FB have measurable consequences on the impressions formed by strangers; and that the impressions formed are consistent with the self-presentational goals associated with both self-monitoring and honesty. This is the first study to link self-monitoring and FB honesty with both profile content and strangers' impressions of targets.

To offer supporting evidence, the present study employs the Brunswik (1956) lens model, which has gained renewed prominence in person perception research due to its ability to account for the behaviors diagnostic of actors' personality and the cues used by others to form impressions of the actor (Gifford, 2006; Hall & Pennington, 2012). To show evidence that self-monitoring and honesty are related to the use of certain FB cues, discrete FB cues will be linked with user personality. To show evidence that these cues influence the impressions of strangers, this manuscript will show the relationship between these cues and strangers' estimations of user extraversion and conscientiousness.

### 1.1. Dispositional strategy

Lens model researchers (e.g., Gifford, 2006) adopt a dispositional strategy of personality, which maintains that individuals' enduring traits are manifested in a set of predictable and consistent social behaviors. Individuals' social behaviors are then used by others to judge and interpret personality. That is, individuals look for valid behavioral evidence of trait dispositions from which to form impressions of one another. In investigating how individuals' dispositions are also manifested in their personal environments (e.g., bedrooms and offices), Gosling, Ko, Mannarelli, and Morris (2002) developed this perspective. Gosling et al. (2002) argue that people actively create their social environments to match and reinforce their dispositions and attitudes. Consequently, individuals' "personal environments may contain an abundance of potentially informative cues about an individual and therefore provide rich information to observers" (Gosling et al., 2002, p. 383–384). In bedrooms and offices, people leave behind behavioral residue of their personality, which then provides clues about their dispositions. For example, alphabetized books on a shelf provide evidence that a person is organized and tickets to the opera are indicative of their openness to experience. Applications of the lens model to online impression formation by Gosling and colleagues (Gosling et al., 2007; Vazire & Gosling, 2004) have suggested that online behavioral residue accurately reflects user personality and can be used to accurately judge user personality.

On a FB profile, FB users attempt to convey an image of self that is both consistent with their underlying personality and strategically managed to promote positive or desirable aspects of self (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008). FB users modify their profiles according to whatever aspect of self that is

most appealing to their perceived audience (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). For example, because popularity is seen as attractive, users accept and request friend requests online that they would not accept offline (boyd, 2010). However, the relationship between users' underlying dispositions and self-presentational acts on FB is a nascent topic of research. Self-monitoring is a trait that may help to explain how FB user disposition, self-presentational acts, and self-presentations goals may coincide.

### 1.2. Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring is the regulation of self-expressions for the sake of the demands and norms of an audience or context (Snyder, 1987). The high self-monitor is characterized as a person who behaves strategically to obtain desired outcomes by regulating public presentations. In comparison, low self-monitors present themselves in ways that reflect their authentic attitudes, values, and beliefs. Particularly relevant to the present investigation, the high self-monitor shows a great deal of consistency in chronic self-presentation. Specifically, high self-monitors appear friendly and outgoing regardless of context or audience, which is a consistent reflection of their underlying extraversion (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009). As a consequence, we predict:

**H1.** Self-monitoring will positively correlate with presentations of extraversion on FB.

Self-monitoring has also been empirically linked to deception (e.g., McLeod & Genereux, 2008). Because self-monitors actively and strategically seek social prominence and likability, deception may help them achieve those goals. McLeod and Genereux (2008) suggest that self-monitoring is strongly related to both the acceptability and likelihood of lying for the purpose of self-gain. In online dating environments, there is much to gain by presenting attributes particularly valued by potential partners, including physical attributes, education and wealth, and fitness (Toma et al., 2008). Hall et al. (2010) found that self-monitoring was associated with misrepresenting all of those characteristics. Users of online dating sites who are high in self-monitoring are sensitive to the desires of others, and thus, they are more likely to take advantage of the malleable aspects of computer-mediated communication (CMC) to modify their self-presentation and attract a partner. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**H2.** Self-monitoring will be negatively associated with an honest portrayal of self on FB.

Given the above hypotheses, the question becomes, in what ways will high self-monitors represent themselves? One way to approach this question is to consider the goals and qualities of the self-monitor in relation to what is considered desirable on FB. The high self-monitor is particularly motivated to present a self that cultivates status and demonstrates social cachet (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009). When using FB, high-self monitors are particularly concerned with interaction-oriented goals, which focus on gaining and maintaining attention from others (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). When given the opportunity to engage in a range of self-presentational strategies, high self-monitors will pick strategies that elevate their status, enhance their social connectedness, and emphasize their likable and engaging qualities. However, online self-presentations strike a balance between the honest and the ideal (Ellison et al., 2006). Given that many of the FB friends a user has are also offline friends (Ellison et al., 2007), blatant deception on FB can have dire social consequences for a user (DeAndrea & Walther, 2011). As a result, individuals typically manage their online profiles within the parameters of their offline characteristics and personality (Vazire & Gosling, 2004).

Thus, the question becomes, what qualities do high self-monitors possess that are likely to have social cachet in the FB domain? It would stand to reason that a high self-monitor would reveal and promote aspects of self that are both truthful and desirable on FB. Although a distinct personality trait, extraversion is strongly correlated with self-monitoring (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Like in all social contexts, there are particular self-presentations on FB that are likely to be favored over others. Appearances of popularity, social attractiveness, and extraversion are strongly related on SNS (Utz, 2010; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008). Therefore, in the context of FB, extraversion is both a valued FB trait and a trait that a high self-monitor is likely to possess. Thus, past research would suggest that promoting extraversion on FB would be an effective self-presentational strategy for high self-monitors because in promoting a more extraverted self, FB users appear more popular and socially attractive.

However, to promote the perception of possessing an extraverted and socially attractive self, a high self-monitor would need to work within affordances of the FB platform. There are several cues on web pages and SNS that are associated with extraversion: the number of FB friends (Antheunis & Schouten, 2011; Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008), having more friends in photos on personal web pages (Marcus et al., 2006), and having a more animated profile picture (Utz, 2010). These strategies are also intuitively connected to the self-presentational goals of the high self-monitor (i.e., to develop social status/connection) (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). If a high self-monitor requested and accepted more FB friends and posted pictures with more friends in the photo, the high self-monitor could promote a more extraverted self. Although research has identified some FB cues that are perceived to be indicative of user extraversion, no study to date has demonstrated what FB cues are uniquely related to users' self-monitoring. To proceed, we pose two questions:

**RQ1.** What FB cues are uniquely related to (a) self-monitoring and (b) extraversion?

**RQ2.** What is the association between the cues uniquely associated with self-monitoring and observers' estimations of targets' personalities?

### 1.3. Honesty and conscientiousness

People with an honest disposition avoid lying and misrepresentation in general, even when lying could benefit or protect others, provide greater social acceptance, or promote self-gain (McLeod & Genereux, 2008). In taking a trait-based approach to the study of online misrepresentation, researchers must consider what aspect of self an honest individual would attempt to promote on FB. Past evidence suggests that trait conscientiousness is related to honesty (Horn, Nelson, & Brannick, 2004). Conscientiousness is associated with possessing an interpersonal orientation, an adherence to social norms, and engaging in positive, pro-social behaviors (Roberts, Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds, & Meints, 2009). In studies exploring the relationship between personality and authenticity, conscientiousness has been associated with authentic behavior (Gillath, Sesko, Shaver, & Chun, 2010). That is, being honest or authentic is a characteristic often found in a conscientious person. The honesty-conscientious link has been established in several online contexts as well. Dunn and Guadagno (2012) explored the construction of avatars in video games in relation to user personality and found that conscientious users made more true-to-life avatars. In the context of online dating, Hall et al. (2010) demonstrated that conscientiousness is associated with less deception on online dating profiles. Together, these studies further demonstrate that

individuals who possess a high level of conscientiousness will more often be honest or authentic both online and offline. Therefore, FB users who are conscientious are more likely to construct a profile that is more true-to-life, similar to online gaming and dating sites.

The question then becomes, how might honest users present themselves on FB? Applying the same reasoning used to consider the high self-monitor, honest FB users may attempt to promote positive characteristics of themselves that they also possess. As a result, they may choose to promote their conscientiousness. People generally like to have conscientious friends (Roberts et al., 2009). As such, honest FB users may seek to provide *good information* about their conscientious disposition (Funder, 2001). Past research offers several clues to how honest FB users might achieve the goal of promoting conscientiousness. Marcus et al. (2006) suggest that a personal web page of a more conscientious user is likely to be factual, organized with sitemaps and counters, and to contain a CV and mailing address. These features are unlikely to translate to the FB platform, given its more personal and less professional nature. Without further empirical evidence, it is difficult to know what specific FB cues might promote a more conscientious profile. We pose two research questions:

**RQ3.** What FB cues are uniquely related to user honesty?

**RQ4.** What personality traits do observers perceive those FB cues to indicate?

### 1.4. The lens model

To test hypotheses and answer RQs, the present study will employ a Brunswik (1956) lens model analysis of FB user profile pages. The purpose of lens model is to document the behaviors associated with targets' (i.e., profile owners) personality and the cues used by observers (i.e., strangers) to form impressions of the targets (Gifford, 2006). There were three steps undertaken in the present study. First, targets' profiles were recorded and targets' personalities were assessed. Second, independent coders classified and quantified important cues on targets' FB profiles using content analysis. The associations among target personality and FB profile content are called *cue validity* correlations. By evaluating which cues on a FB profile were correlated with targets' self-reported personality, the relationship between profile content and target disposition was determined. In the final step of this lens model analysis, strangers estimated the personalities of the targets. The association between profile cues and observers' aggregated estimates of targets' personality are called *cue utilization* correlations. These associations documented the relationship between perceptions of targets' personality and the content of their FB profile. When all three steps were completed, the lens model analysis provided answers to three questions: What cues were related to target personality (i.e., cue validity); what cues were being used to judge target personality by observers (i.e., cue utilization); and to what degree are these cues in agreement (i.e., functional achievement)? This final step illustrates diagnostic cues, or those that link the personality and self-presentation goals of the profile owner to the perceptions of strangers.

A recent push has brought the lens model to the study of online communication (Gosling et al., 2007; Marcus et al., 2006). These studies explore the degree to which user personality can be known by examining a web page or FB profile. However, no prior study has explored self-monitoring or honesty as characteristics that might explain additional variance in both the impressions of strangers and the behavior of targets while accounting for the underlying personality of the targets.

## 2. Materials and method

### 2.1. Overview

Thirty-five observers were given screen shots of 100 FB targets' (i.e., profile owners) profile pages in PDF format, including the main profile page, the 8 most recent profile pictures, recent news feed, and the entire Info page. Observers were required to estimate all 100 targets' personalities from this information. Personality was measured using the Big Five Factor inventory (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008) for targets' self-report and for observer estimates. A total of 53 cues from targets' FB pages were coded by up to four independent coders. These data were part of a larger research project spanning different conceptual domains, including questions related to warrants of target personality, observer accuracy, and humor use.

### 2.2. Profile owner targets

One hundred targets participated in this study. Targets were recruited from introductory communication courses at a large Mid-western university and by snowball sampling to get a quota sample of participants that matched the demographics of FB users' age and sex in March 2010. Participants who were students ( $n = 28$ ) chose to complete this study from several possible studies in return for partial course credit (<.5% of final grade). Non-student participants ( $n = 72$ ) volunteered and were not compensated. Mean participant age was 32.3 ( $SD = 12.23$ , range 18–62,  $mdn = 29$ ). Female participants accounted for 57% of the sample. The majority of participants were white (88%), yet other race/ethnicities were represented: 5% mixed race, 4% Asian-American, 2% African-American, and 1% Latino/Hispanic.

#### 2.2.1. Target measures

Targets gave written consent to download their FB profile and match it with a personality assessment. University IRB approved all procedures. After being consented, targets completed a personality inventory on a 7-point Likert-type scale (John et al., 2008). Target personality measures were reliable: *extraversion* ( $\alpha = .88$ ) and *conscientiousness* ( $\alpha = .85$ ). *Self-monitoring* (Snyder & Ganges-tad, 1986) was measured using the original 25-item T/F self-monitoring scale. The measure was reliable ( $\alpha = .73$ ). Finally, a 5-item measure of *Facebook honesty* was created for this study. Items measured honesty in several FB domains (e.g., I am always completely honest on my status updates; I change or modify my true thoughts when I comment on friends' status updates and wall posts (reverse coded); I have posted misleading information on my Facebook profile (reverse coded); I construct my Facebook profile so that what you see is an accurate representation of who I am.) The measure was reliable ( $\alpha = .76$ ). Items were averaged to create a FB honesty measure with high scores indicating greater honesty. Target means, standard deviations, and a correlation matrix provided on Table 1.

### 2.2.2. Target procedures

After targets completed study measures, they assisted study authors in downloading their FB profile page, Info page, and the first page of wall posts and status updates to a secure computer. These pages were converted in PDF files. Afterward, all references to targets' name and contact information were blacked out to ensure confidentiality. A unique numerical ID matched PDF files to target personality data. Due to FB formatting as of March 2010, the first 8 profile pictures were displayed under the photo tab. Only these first 8 pictures were saved, no "tagged" photos or photo albums were saved.

### 2.3. Independent profile coding

Up to four independent coders coded all 100 targets' FB profile pages for 45 of the 53 cues. Cues were identified from past research using the lens model and online impression formation. Four coders were trained as a group for 30 h on sample profile pages that were not a part of the data set. During the training, the coding scheme was modified and clarified to increase reliability. Once training was complete, coders independently assessed all 100 FB target profiles. Cues coded by only one coder were objective measures with clear verifiability (e.g., were movies listed on Info section? Y/N). A random set of 25 profiles were later coded for all 10 yes/no codes by a second independent rater. Reliability estimates for 9 of 10 yes/no cues were 1.00 (profile picture at younger age = .97). Cues coded by two coders included counts of information on profiles (e.g., number of likes on status updates; number of quotes in Info section). The cues coded by 3 or 4 coders were interval scaled (e.g., profile picture attractiveness; activeness of hobbies in Info section). Reliability was calculated using Hayes and Krippendorff's (2007) alpha macro for SPSS. Mean reliability for all cues was .75, which is above the mean reliability reported by Gosling et al. (2002) (all reliabilities and cues available upon request). Disagreements between coders were resolved through discussion when consensus was not reached. Finally, status updates were coded for the final eight objective cues using Diction (Hart & Carroll, 2011). All status updates and wall posts were copied into text files that were analyzed via Diction to get word and character counts. To create counts of online text features, such as emoticons and laughter, a dictionary was created and a program search function was used.

### 2.4. Observer ratings

Thirty-five observers began evaluating targets' PDF FB profiles, and 30 observers completed all 100 targets. Observers evaluated a target profile for 5–10 min each. After examining the profile pages, observers estimated the personality of each target using John et al.'s (2008) inventory with the stem reworded to refer to the profile owner (e.g., "Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to this profile owner..."). Five student observers dropped out after evaluating between 6 and 33 target

**Table 1**  
Means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix.

	Profile owners' self report ( $n = 100$ )		Observer estimates ( $n = 3019$ )					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	2	3	4	5
1. Extraversion	4.84	1.03	4.59	0.48	−0.01	−0.08	.32***	0.09
2. Agreeableness	5.10	0.82	4.74	0.38		.22*	0.05	0.07
3. Conscientiousness	4.87	0.94	4.54	0.37			−0.18	.26**
4. Self-monitoring	0.54	0.18						−.36***
5. FB honesty	5.66	1.05						

Note: All measures on 7-pt. Likert-type scale, except self-monitoring (1 = true, 0 = false).



profiles ( $M = 17.8$ ). All observer estimates were included in analyses because each observation was a complete evaluation of the profile. In total, the evaluation of each target took between 8 and 15 min, resulting in a total of approximately 12–16 h per person. To prevent fatigue, observers signed up for several small time blocks, and after 10 targets were evaluated, observers took a 10-min break. Observers were paid \$75 upon completion. Observers were primarily students at the same university as target participants ( $n = 32$ ), but some were community members who responded to advertisements ( $n = 3$ ). If observers knew a target, they were asked to skip evaluation of that target and continue to the next target. Observers' aggregate estimates of targets' personality are listed on Table 1.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Cue validity for self-monitoring

H1 predicted a positive correlation between self-monitoring and presentations of extraversion on FB, and RQ1 queried which FB cues are uniquely related to self-monitoring and extraversion. The correlation matrix on Table 1 demonstrates that trait self-monitoring and extraversion were significantly associated,  $r = .32$ ,  $p < .001$ . To test RQ1, targets' extraversion and self-monitoring were correlated separately with all 53 cues in the content analysis. Significant correlations are reported on Table 2.

Table 2, column 1 demonstrates that extraverted targets had more people in profile pictures and had more FB friends. Extraverted targets wrote status updates that employed more positive affect, and used more emoticons and extended letter/word use on their status updates and wall posts. Table 2, column 2 lists the cues associated with self-monitoring. A high self-monitor was more likely to have a profile picture at a younger age. Self-monitoring was related to total number of posts, as well as how many words and characters and how many different words were used on status updates and wall posts. The high self-monitor also used more shorthand on status updates (e.g., FTW, R, U, WTF, ZOMG). Self-monitoring was related to FB friends clicking "like" in response to the targets' status updates and to the number of

unique friends who commented on targets' updates. Finally, similar to the extraverted target, high self-monitors had more FB friends and used more emoticons.

To establish which cues were uniquely related to self-monitoring (RQ1), partial correlations between self-monitoring and FB cue use were run controlling for targets' extraversion and conscientiousness. Cues reported on Table 2 column 3 are uniquely related to self-monitoring accounting for two personality traits. This is a considerably more strict test of the relationship between cue utilization and target personality than is conducted in traditional lens model research, which uses bivariate rather than partial correlations (Gifford, 2006). Results indicate that many of the significant correlations with self-monitoring remained significant when other personality traits were accounted for. Accounting for the personality of the target, self-monitoring was uniquely related to posting a profile picture at a younger age, the total number of posts, the number of different words in status updates, as well as the use of shorthand in status updates. Finally, higher self-monitors had more FB friends who had clicked "like" in response to their status updates. The total number of FB friends was the only cue uniquely related to both self-monitoring and extraversion.

#### 3.2. Cue utilization for self-monitoring

When using the lens model, the cue used by observers to make personality judgments can be linked to the cues on the targets' profiles identified during content analysis. To establish these relationships, the aggregate observer estimates of the targets' personalities were correlated with the presence and rate of cues on targets' FB profiles. This analysis answers RQ2, what impressions of users' personality are associated with the cues used by high self-monitors? The answer can be found by comparing the cues significantly associated with self-monitoring with the cue utilization correlations. By examining the cues associated with self-monitoring and the cue utilization correlations with extraversion, there is evidence that self-monitors are effective at conveying an extraverted impression. The total number of friends, the use of shorthand in status updates, and the number of "likes" by FB friends were all

**Table 2**  
Cue validity and cue utilization for self-monitoring.

	Cue validity			Cue utilization	
	Extraversion	Self-monitoring	Self-monitoring partial	Extraversion	Conscientiousness
Profile picture younger age	−0.06	.23*	.21*	0.06	0.07
Past 8 profile pictures					
Number of friends in photos	.21*	0.01		.30**	−0.09
Information page					
Total number of friends	.23*	.31**	.22*	.47***	−0.02
Text use					
Total words	0.12	.21*	0.18	0.19	−0.04
Total characters	0.12	.22*	0.18	0.19	−0.03
Number of different words	0.12	.23*	0.19	0.2	−0.05
Emoticon use	.22*	.20*	0.15	0.07	−0.01
Short-hand use	0.04	.20*	.20*	.24*	−0.12
Extended letter/word use	.21*	0.15		.20	−0.09
Status updates					
Status update positive affect	.26**	0.19	0.09	.27*	0.17
Wall activity					
Total number of posts	0.05	.19*	.20*	0.05	−0.06
# Of others' likes	0.06	.26**	.26**	.21*	0.06
# Of unique friend comments	0.07	.22*	0.17	.27**	0.06

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

significantly associated with observer estimates of target extraversion. In using these three cues, the high self-monitor successfully promotes an extraverted self-presentation.

### 3.3. Cue validity for honesty

We hypothesized that self-monitoring would be negatively associated with FB honesty. A strong negative correlation was found,  $r = -.36$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 1). Examining the correlation matrix, honesty was also significantly associated with target conscientiousness,  $r = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Following the same steps as those conducted with self-monitoring, we examined the cues associated with greater conscientiousness (see Table 3). Conscientious targets had more friendly looking profile pictures. Conscientious targets updated their status less frequently overall, using fewer words overall and fewer different words. Conscientious targets were less likely to list movies and books in the Info section, and had fewer FB friends overall. Importantly, FB friends who commented on conscientious targets' status updates tended to show more support or agreement with target users' comments. Those who did comment on the target users' status updates tended to be a small cluster of FB friends, that is, fewer unique FB friends commented on conscientious targets' status updates. Overall, conscientious users posted infrequently, and when they posted, they did so using fewer words than their less conscientious counterparts.

There were several cues related to targets' self-reported honesty. Honest FB targets were less likely to use a profile picture of something other than themselves (i.e., cartoon character). Honest targets' status updates contained more positive affect, and had more status updates about their families. The friends of honest FB targets tended to show more support or agreement with target users' status updates. RQ3 inquired, what FB cues are uniquely related to user self-reported honesty? Once extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were accounted for, only three cues were uniquely related to profile owner self-reported honesty: positive affect expressed in status updates, family talk in status updates, and friends' agreement with targets' posts.

### 3.4. Cue utilization for honesty

By examining the three right-hand columns of Table 3, which represent the cue utilization component of the lens model, we can answer RQ4: What personality traits do observers perceive those FB cues to indicate? Of the three cues uniquely related to profile owners' self-reported honesty, we find support for the idea that honest targets promote a conscientious self. Targets who had FB friends expressing more agreement with their posts were perceived to be more conscientious, and targets that talked about their families more in status updates were considered more conscientious. Interestingly, targets who expressed more positive affect were considered more extraverted, but not more conscientious. This suggests that when an honest FB user promotes a more conscientious self, they also present a more extraverted self as well, albeit to a lesser degree.

## 4. Discussion

This manuscript proffered a model of self-presentation on FB that argued that due to the overlap between offline friends and FB friends, FB profile construction is highly strategic yet it is tempered by the need to present a reasonably accurate self. Therefore, FB users balance these self-presentational goals by creating an online self that strategically promotes their underlying personality traits. The results of this lens model investigation suggest that for high self-monitors, this act of self-construction successfully conveyed an extraverted self, and that honest FB users successfully conveyed a more conscientious self.

### 4.1. The self-monitoring tradeoff

The high self-monitor seeks to cultivate status and publically demonstrate social cachet (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009). One way of demonstrating popularity and social attractiveness on FB is to demonstrate a more outgoing self (Utz, 2010; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008). Therefore, we anticipated that high self-monitors would both be more extraverted and would use cues on FB that would promote extraversion on FB. In line with past research (e.g.,

**Table 3**  
Cue validity and cue utilization for honesty.

	Cue validity			Cue utilization	
	Conscientiousness	Honesty	Honesty (partial)	Extraversion	Conscientiousness
Profile picture not of owner	0.01	.19*	−0.17	−0.17	0.01
Past 8 profile pictures					
Picture friendliness	.24*	0.03		0.12	.24*
Information page					
Total number of friends	−.26*	−0.17	−0.14	.23*	−.26*
Movies listed	−.23*	−0.07		−0.01	−.23*
Books listed	−.27**	−0.07		−0.05	−.27**
Text use					
Total words	−.21*	−0.04		0.12	−.21*
Total characters	−.21*	−0.04		0.12	−.21*
Number of different words	−.22*	−0.04		0.12	−.22*
Status updates					
Status update positive affect	0.16	.27**	.26**	.26**	0.16
Status update family talk	0.18	.22*	.21*	0.15	.19*
Wall activity					
Total number of posts	−.20*	−0.07		0.05	−.20*
Others' agreement with posts	.23*	.26**	.21*	−0.07	.23*
# Of unique friend comments	−.27**	−0.02		0.07	−.27**

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Gangestad & Snyder, 2000), extraversion was associated with self-monitoring in the present study. Yet, the results indicated that there were several FB cues uniquely associated with self-monitoring. Accounting for the personality of the user, self-monitoring was uniquely related to posting a profile picture at a younger age, the total number of posts, as well as the use of shorthand in status updates. High self-monitors' FB status updates received more "likes" from FB friends. The total number of FB friends was the only cue related to both self-monitoring and extraversion. Taken together, these findings suggest that although a high self-monitor is more extraverted, it is not the case that a FB users' underlying extraversion accounts for how they construct and maintain their FB profile. This leads to the question, what image is the high self-monitor projecting?

We argued that in the context of FB, extraversion is both a valued FB trait and a trait a high self-monitor is likely to possess. In promoting an extraverted self, a high self-monitor balances the need to be reasonably truthful yet self-promoting and, in doing so, increases the chance of achieving social status goals. Evidence in support of this claim can be found by documenting how the above cues are related to strangers' estimations of the users' extraversion. Examining the cue utilization correlations, results suggest that the total number of friends, the use of shorthand in status updates, and the number of "likes" by FB friends are all significantly correlated with observer estimates of target extraversion. These cues are associated with online impressions of extraversion in past research. Strangers' judgments of user extraversion are related to number of FB friends (Antheunis & Schouten, 2011; Tong et al., 2008), and impressions of extraversion are associated with the behavior of FB friends in response to users' status updates (Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel, & Shulman, 2009). "Liking" a FB users' status update is a way of showing agreement and support for the message (i.e., an online thumbs up). By eliciting more "likes" from their FB friends, the user may appear to be more popular and socially attractive (Walther et al., 2009). In effect, the high self-monitor is successfully promoting an image of extraversion by using these three cues.

Beyond the number of friends, what impression might be conveyed by more status updates in general and using shorthand and posting pictures at a younger age? More status updates with more shorthand give off the impression of a FB user who is energetically constructing their FB profile. The high self-monitor also shows contextual knowledge by deploying shorthand, which shows knowledge of specialized linguistic formulations of CMC text, such as LMAO, OMG, and BTW. These textual conventions reintroduce emotional content lost in a lean medium, like status updates (Walther, 2006). The use of energetic and emotional shorthand, like "laughing my ass off," may help to draw attention to and promote the high self-monitor's social attractiveness. Results also show this energetic profile maintenance subsequently influences the behavior of FB friends. That is, high self-monitors are more likely to have their status updates "liked" by friends. Finally, photographic displays of self show that high self-monitors were more likely to post pictures of themselves at a younger age, which is unsurprising given their willingness to misrepresent themselves for social gain (Dunn & Guadagno, 2012).

#### 4.2. The presentation of honesty

Although it was anticipated and confirmed by the results of the present investigation that honesty on FB would be negatively associated with self-monitoring, the analyses conducted in this study treated honesty as a separate concept of interest. Although it is accurate to say that a low self-monitor is more likely to be honest on FB, we were also interested in establishing how an honest FB user would use the medium in unique ways to promote their

underlying personality. The same principles that guided the analysis of the self-monitor were used for analyses of honesty. Correlation analyses confirmed that because honest users were more conscientious, they promoted a conscientious self to their FB public. That being established, what cues were related to profile owners' self-reported honesty? Results suggested that once user personality was accounted for, only three cues were uniquely related to honesty: the amount of positive affect expressed in status updates, the amount of family talk on FB status updates, and other FB friends' support expressed in response to targets' posts.

What impression might these three cues convey? First, it is notable that these three cues are all also associated with both conscientiousness and honesty. Although the unique variance associated with target conscientiousness was accounted for, it appears that the honest FB user tends to promote a particularly conscientious self. One of the specific cues used by honest targets was expressing more positive affect in status updates. Although it may seem dubious to claim that in expressing more positive emotion on FB a person is being more honest, a meta-analysis of personality suggests that conscientiousness is related to experiencing more positive emotion (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Therefore, it stands to reason that more positive expressions on FB would also be consistent with a conscientious disposition. Furthermore, it is consistent with the warranting principle (Antheunis & Schouten, 2011; Walther et al., 2009) that more honest FB users should generate more agreement from their FB friends. Because FB friends often have access to offline behavior by which to judge FB claims, when FB friends show more agreement with status updates, they support the claim. Therefore, it is reasonable that more honest FB users would generate more agreement with their status updates from FB friends. Similarly, DeAndrea and Walther (2011) argue that friends monitor FB presentations for signs of dishonesty and may call out dishonesty. If this were done on FB itself, it would result in lower levels of agreement from FB friends on status updates. Finally, the role that family talk plays in honesty is intriguing. Due to the inclusion of a wide range of ages in the present study (i.e., range = 18–62 years), which was done in hopes of better representing the FB community, many of the participants were older adults and sometimes parents. Although family talk may be an honest expression of targets' lives, why it is uniquely related to both honesty and conscientiousness is unclear, and this relationship should be replicated and further explored in future investigations.

#### 4.3. Limitations

A primary limitation of the present study is there was no clear-cut measure of target honesty beyond self-report. This limits the claim that high self-monitors are less honest. The items used to assess honesty tapped into global profile construction, rather than particular functional tools of FB (i.e., pictures, status updates). Nonetheless, the present study uncovered two pieces of evidence to support the validity of this measure: agreement from FB friends and presentations of self at a younger age. As the present investigation revealed, an honest user was more likely to have his or her claims of honesty warranted by other FB users than a dishonest one. This provides other-warranted evidence of target honesty. Secondly, cue utilization correlations suggested that a dishonest FB user is more likely to use a profile picture at a younger age. This has been used as evidence of online dishonesty in prior studies (e.g., Toma et al., 2008).

A second limitation is that many of the FB cue measures were general counts, which were not sufficiently detailed or specific. To more clearly understand the role of status updates and agreement by FB friends, greater depth of analysis is needed. Perhaps the importance of family talk in conveying an honest and conscientious image as well as being regarded as a conscientious person could be

better understood by exploring which family member was mentioned and how the family was discussed. Indeed, the present study suggests that in addition to looking at discrete cues like number of FB friends, which continued to show relevance in this research, a more detailed investigation of the use of other cues including shorthand, profile pictures that are not of the user, and expressions of positive affect deserve further scrutiny. Finally, the functionality of emoticons and shorthand is poorly understood in online impression formation research (Walther, 2006). FB only started using status updates in 2008. The present study suggests that looking at the use of these cues is a useful avenue for future work.

## 5. Conclusions

Although many first interactions are FtF, early impressions are increasingly formed through some form of digital mediation (Utz, 2010; Walther et al., 2009). In fact, SNS are much more likely to be used to gather information about strangers and new acquaintances than old friends (Westerman, Van Der Heide, Klein, & Walther, 2008). What is presented on FB profile pages is particularly important in forming these new impressions because, unlike friends, strangers do not have access to offline information from which to make judgments. The results of the present investigation offer some evidence that beyond conveying characteristics of self that are related to underlying personality (Marcus et al., 2006; Vazire & Gosling, 2004), FB users have self-presentational goals that amplify and modify the presentation of their underlying dispositions and that these presentations do, in fact, influence the impressions formed by strangers. This suggests that FB may function as a mediated microphone that allows users to amplify the communication of their existing and favorable traits to their mediated audience.

This study offers clear support that inasmuch as self-monitoring and honesty are factors that influence self-presentational goals, the unique effects of each trait on online impression management and formation are interpretable through those goals. A high self-monitor will attempt to present the best reflection of the person called for by a given context. Because a high self-monitor is motivated by social capital and cachet, they attempt to be the ideal FB friend – extraverted, popular, and socially attractive. Given the relationship between cue use and impressions formed by strangers, the results of this study suggest that high self-monitors are quite successful at achieving these goals.

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