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**Investigating The Influence of  
Non-Professional Social Media  
Sites on the Applicant Screening  
Process**

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## Investigating The Influence of Non-Professional Social Media Sites on the Applicant Screening Process

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### ABSTRACT

*Experts in the legal and Industrial-Organizational (I-O) psychology fields suggest that using information from casual social media to screen applicants can result in biased hiring decisions. The problem is that there are very few studies that examine discriminatory hiring decisions based on information gathered from non-professional social media sites, and no studies were found at the time this study was conducted that examined age discrimination from using such sites. The purpose of this study was to determine if human resource (HR) professionals' exposure to non-job relevant information on a non-professional social media website during the screening process and a job candidate's United States (U.S.) Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) protection status influences how HR managers perceive applicants' job-suitability, which may contribute to the likelihood of discriminatory selection decisions against applicants protected under the ADEA. Participants included 209 working HR professionals and 7 graduate students studying HR management not working in HR in the United States; participants were recruited through Facebook, LinkedIn, and Amazon's Mechanical Turk. A factorial ANOVA of the dataset, with and without outliers, revealed no statistically significant main effects for casual social media exposure ( $F(2, 210) = .52, p = .59$  and  $F(2, 199) = .39, p = .68$ ), ADEA protection status ( $F(1, 210) = .79, p = .37$  and  $F(1, 199) = 1.24, p = .27$ ), or interaction effect ( $F(2, 210) = 2.60, p = .08$  and  $F(2, 199) = .87, p = .42$ ). However, post hoc analysis by source of participant recruitment revealed a cross-over interaction ( $F(2, 160) = 3.32, p = .04$ ) for participants recruited through Mechanical Turk.*

### KEYWORDS

Social media, Cybervetting, ADEA, Age discrimination, Job-suitability, Employee Selection, Screening.

### INTRODUCTION

The rise of the internet has fundamentally changed how people communicate with each other and search for information. In a few short years, the internet has changed from a digitized archive with content that was created and maintained by a select few (also known as Web 1.0) to a highly interactive digital medium in which anyone can create and share content, which is known today as Web 2.0 (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008). A popular outgrowth of Web 2.0 is social networking sites. People use social networking sites or social media to communicate with others around the globe faster than ever before (Stone & Wang, 2018), with search engines almost instantaneously providing access to information available on the Internet (Aggarwal, 2018). A side effect of Web 2.0 is that the amount of personal information available for public consumption, such as race, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, or sexual orientation, has significantly increased over the years (Elzweig, Roberto, & Johnson, 2017; Sanchez-Abril, Levin, & Del Riego, 2012). As a result, human resource (HR) professionals have taken to using the internet to gather information on applicants beyond their résumés (Society for HR Management [SHRM], 2016); the act of gathering additional applicant data from the internet (especially for the purpose of confirming information on résumés and applications) is known as cybervetting (Berkelaar, 2014; Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015). For example, an applicant claiming to have spent a semester abroad in Italy on their résumé would most likely have pictures/posts from this time on their Facebook or Instagram accounts. During the cybervetting process, a recruiter or hiring manager would search for any online information about the applicant that could confirm or deny the claim of spending a semester abroad.

There are four main issues with cybervetting. The first issue is that much of the information available on social media sites is irrelevant to the job (Davis, 2006; Davidson, Maraist, Hamilton, & Bing, 2012; El Ouidi, 2016; Elzweig et al., 2017) and much of this data (such as race, religion, disability, national origin, sexual preference, pregnancy, and age) is protected by laws such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Title VII), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Davidson et al., 2012; Elzweig & Peebles, 2009; Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, & Thatcher, 2016). This irrelevant information can be problematic because of the potential for implicit biases (biases that people may have but are not consciously aware of)

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and their effect on decision making. For example, Rooth (2010) found that hiring managers in Sweden were able to discern an applicant's race (Swedish vs. Arab) by the name on the résumé and were more likely to select candidates with Swedish names. Although some of these hiring managers denied making hiring decisions based on race, the results of their Implicit Association Tests showed these hiring managers did have biased thoughts regarding applicants with Arab names (Rooth, 2010). The second issue is that some social media sites are intended for use as a networking instrument for recruiters and job seekers, whereas others are intended for casual communication between family and friends (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Kunzekoff, 2014; Liberman, 2014; Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning, 2014). For example, accessing an applicant's LinkedIn profile during the cybervetting process would be acceptable, because LinkedIn is intended for prospective employers to look at; however, viewing an applicant's Facebook profile may not be acceptable because it could reveal protected information that an applicant would not reveal to an employer. The third issue is that U.S. laws on privacy and data use have not evolved to cover online data, which means that HR professionals could potentially use information from social media sites (especially those not intended for professional networking) to discriminate against applicants without any legal ramifications. The fourth and most compelling issue is that the validity and reliability of using social media data to make effective hiring decisions have yet to be established (Hoek, O'Kane, & McCracken, 2016; Jeske & Shultz, 2016; Roth et al., 2016).

Researchers have made suggestions for how to handle social media data in the screening process to minimize the potential for bias or disparate impact. Some researchers suggest avoiding social media until its validity and reliability can be established (Jeske & Shultz, 2015; Roth et al., 2016; Van Iddekinge, Lanivich, Roth, & Junco, 2013), while others recommend only collecting job-relevant data (Chambers & Winter, 2017; Clark & Roberts, 2010; Thomas, Rothschild, & Donegan, 2014). Baert (2018) suggested that existing selection theories and methods should be updated and adapted to current practices of using social media for selection. Additionally, some researchers suggest examining social media sites later in the hiring process, such as after screening the résumé (Kluemper, 2013; Wheatcroft, 2016), or after conducting the initial interview (Lam, 2016; Slovensky & Ross, 2012).

The focus of this article is a study designed to test theories of using casual (or non-professional) social media sites (such as Facebook) for screening applicants as discussed in Zibulka-Horwath (2018). The goal of the study was to test the theory that exposure to social media information indicating the applicant is a member of a protected class (specifically, applicants over 40 years old protected by the U.S. Age Discrimination in Employment Act) and the timing of exposure to such information (i.e., no exposure, exposure *before* reviewing the résumé, or exposure *after* reviewing the résumé) will have any influence on HR professionals' perception of an applicant's job-suitability, which was used to determine the likelihood that the HR professional would hire the applicant. The aim of the study was to provide empirical evidence that will either support or refute experts' claim that (a) using social media sites that are intended for informal, non-professional social interaction with friends, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat, for screening applicants can contribute to discriminatory hiring decisions and (b) waiting to review social media until after the résumé is reviewed can minimize discriminatory decisions.

### Problem

HR professionals vet prospective hires during the selection process to evaluate whether they have the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) necessary to perform essential job tasks and to create a candidate pool that is easy to manage (Berkelaar, 2017). In some instances, HR professionals cybervet applicants to gather data that would not be included in a traditional third-party background check. For example, many use Facebook to find additional information on applicants because it is the most widely used social networking site among adults (Zurbriggen, Hagai, & Leon, 2016). Although some view cybervetting as an invasion of privacy (Elzweig & Peebles, 2009; Elzweig et al., 2017; Jeske & Shultz, 2016; Sanchez-Abril et al., 2012), Ebnert (2012) argued that the practice allows HR professionals to gather as much information as possible to make the best predictions of applicant's suitability for the job. HR professionals may justify cybervetting to avoid potential cases of negligent hiring by searching for evidence of illegal activities including drug use (Davidson et al., 2012), sharing trade secrets (Slovensky & Ross, 2012), engaging in violent acts (Peebles, 2012), theft, sabotage (Roth et al., 2016), and lying about qualifications (Chauhan, Buckley, & Harvey, 2013).

The general problem is that viewing non-job relevant applicant information during the screening process exposes HR professionals to data that can potentially be used to make biased hiring decisions (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017; Baert, 2018; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Sullivan, 2016; Williams & Almand, 2014). Researchers and experts differ in their

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opinions regarding when and what type of information hiring officials should gather on job candidates during the selection process to minimize the potential for biased decision-making. Several researchers and legal experts recommend that hiring managers should look at social media data later in the selection process after the applicant's KSAOs are evaluated (for example, see Chambers & Winter, 2017; Kluemper, 2013; Lam, 2016; Slovinsky & Ross, 2012; Vroman, Stulz, Hart, & Stulz, 2016; Wheatcroft, 2016). Others suggest that only job-relevant data found on social media sites should be considered during the selection process (for example, see Chambers & Winter, 2017; Clark & Roberts, 2010; Davidson et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2014). Another compounding general problem is that, while there are several laws in place that are aimed at preventing discrimination in the hiring process, such discrimination still takes place. One specific form of discrimination that occurs frequently is age discrimination in the hiring process (Abrams, Swift, & Drury, 2016); according to a survey conducted by the American Association of Retired People (AARP), six in ten American workers experienced some form of ageism (Lipnic, 2018). Neumark, Burn, and Button (2016) not only found that discrimination against older job seekers was prevalent in all 50 U.S. states, but also found that older women were more likely to experience hiring discrimination than older men.

The specific problem is that, while many experts have indicated that using social media for hiring decisions may influence HR professionals to make biased hiring decisions (For example, see Baumhart, 2015; Bentley, 2013; Brody, Perri, & Van Buren, 2015; Byrnside, 2008; Davis, 2006; Delaney, 2013; Ebnet, 2012; Elzweig & Peebles, 2009; Elzweig, et al., 2017; Lam, 2016; Pate, 2013; Peebles, 2012; Richey, Gonibreed, & Ravishankar, 2018; Russell, 2011; Sanchez-Abril et al., 2012; Strumwasser, 2014; Vroman et al., 2016; Wheatcroft, 2016; Whitehill, 2012), there is no empirical evidence from a true experimental study to support these suppositions (Chamorro-Premuzic, Winsborough, Sherman, & Hogan, 2016; Chauhan et al., 2013; Jeske & Shultz, 2016; Roth et al., 2016; Van Iddekinge et al., 2013). A consequence of the problem is the elimination of qualified older applicants from the hiring pool. For example, when hiring managers seek digital natives, or tech savvy people (typically born after 1980) who have used the Internet and computers from a young age (Prensky, 2001; Stockham & Lind, 2018), they automatically reject tech savvy applicants born before 1980. Such a practice can also have legal consequences. If the rejected applicants are equally or highly qualified in comparison to the digital natives and are older than 40, they are protected under the ADEA; therefore, the hiring manager and organization could be accused of age discrimination.

The study was guided by three research questions. The research questions are below:

*RQ1:* Is there a statistically significant difference in HR professionals' perception of two equally qualified candidates' job-suitability depending on their level of exposure to a job candidate's social media information?

*RQ2:* Is there a statistically significant difference in HR professionals' perception of two equally qualified candidates' job-suitability depending on the job candidate's ADEA protection status?

*RQ3:* Is there a statistically significant difference in HR professionals' perception of two equally qualified candidates' job-suitability depending on both their level of exposure to a job candidate's social media information and the job candidates' ADEA protection status?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

As of 2021, the total body of literature on social media is less than 20 years old, with the earliest academic writings on the topic dating back to 2006; there are also news articles and conference presentations on social media dating back to 2003 (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Social media sites are defined as internet-based platforms that a) allow people to create a profile (either public or semi-public), b) create a list of people on the platform with whom they share a connection, and c) access the connection lists of others on their connection list. The first social media network was a site called Six Degrees that launched in 1997 (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Thus, the literature analyzed for this study covered a significant portion of existing social media research. Previous research on the organizational use of social media information is divided among four areas: (a) monitoring existing employees, (b) predicting personality traits, (c) predicting job performance, and (d) recruitment, screening, and selection. The prior research on monitoring existing employees includes making disciplinary decisions based on employee social media posts that contain inappropriate language or images, especially if these posts put the employer in a negative light. Thomas et al. (2014) found that monitoring employee email and internet activity accessed from computers owned by the employer and any disciplinary action that comes from it is entirely legal. Lam (2016) found that such monitoring is prevalent among employers and often includes both on and off-duty hours. Another

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facet of employee monitoring is the request for employees' social media passwords. Several authors debate the legality versus the ethicality of requesting passwords (see Clark and Roberts, 2010; Ogenhaffen & Claey, 2017; Strumwasser, 2014). As of May 2019, 26 states have passed legislation prohibiting employers from requesting social media passwords from job applicants and employees (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019).

The prior research on predicting personality traits involves using social media data to determine organizational fit. This practice is justified by many employers to avoid negligent hires (Chauhan et al., 2013; Elzweig & Peebles, 2009; Lam, 2016). Research into the validity of using social media data for personality prediction is divided. Back et al. (2010) and Kluemper, Rosen, and Mossholder (2012) found that predictions based on Facebook profiles accurately matched self-reported personality assessments. Hall, Pennington, and Lueders (2014) found that these predictions were only accurate for three of the Big Five personality traits (i.e., extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness), whereas Ivcevic and Ambady (2012) found predictions based on social media profiles were accurate for online personas but inaccurate for offline personas. Prior studies on using social media profile information for predicting job performance also presents conflicting results. Kluemper and Rosen (2009) found that undergraduates in an employee selection class were able to accurately predict high and low performing employees from their social media profiles. However, Van Iddekinge et al. (2016) found recruiters' social media-based predictions of employees' performance were not accurate when compared to the employees' actual performance ratings. Additionally, when compared to traditional measures of performance (such as intelligence, self-efficacy, and personality assessments), social media-based assessments were less accurate predictors of job performance.

The literature on using social media data for recruitment, selection, and screening primarily consists of law review articles (see Ajunwa, 2019; Baumhart, 2015; Bentley, 2013; Byrnside, 2008; Davis, 2006; Delaney, 2013; Ebn, 2012; Pate, 2012; Peebles, 2012; Sanchez-Abril et al., 2012; Whitehill, 2012) or opinion papers (see Bohnert & Ross, 2010; Brown & Vaughn, 2011; Chambers & Winter, 2017; Chauhan et al., 2013; Davidson et al., 2012; Elzweig & Peebles, 2009; Jeske & Shultz, 2015; Kluemper, 2013; Ollington, Gibb, & Harcourt, 2013; Tufts, Jacobson, & Stevens, 2015) that examine the legality of the practice, the potential for social media data to be used for biased hiring, and the legal loopholes that would allow discriminatory hiring to go unpunished. Studies by Carr and Walther (2014), Goodman, Smith, Ivancevich, and Lundberg (2014), and Muscanell, Ewell, and Wingate (2016) examined how social media posts influenced perceptions of the poster. Besides the current study, there are only two known studies that examine the use of social media data for employee screening and the potential for bias. Acquisti and Fong (2015) created simulated résumés and false Facebook profiles for study participants to examine. However, the study was a quasi-experiment used to examine if an applicant's religion (Christian or Muslim) or sexual orientation (straight or gay) influenced the likelihood of a callback from prospective employers; the study did not include a control group with no exposure to Facebook data. Additionally, the researchers had no way of verifying if the subjects even accessed the false Facebook profiles because such data is not regulated or recorded (Acquisti & Fong, 2015). Williams and Almand (2014) created simulated résumés as well, but they used simulated Facebook profiles to ensure the participants reviewed the social media information. The authors focused on two areas: the effect confirming or disconfirming information from social media (that is, data that either confirms or conflicts with the information on the résumé) has on hiring decisions and the potential for gender bias. Like Acquisti and Fong (2015), Williams and Almand (2014) did not use a control group; thus, the study had a quasi-experimental design. Therefore, the current study is unique because it used a true experimental design with a control group to investigate the relationship between exposure to social media information and perceptions of applicants that may lead to discriminatory hiring decisions.

### Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for the current study used six theories to explain how information from casual social media sites and ADEA protection status influences perceptions of job suitability. Each of these theories describe the cognitive processes that occur when people interpret data (Zibulka-Horwath, 2018). Asch's (1946) theory of impression formation is the first theory in the framework. The main tenet of impression formation is that the overall positive or negative impression that is formed when looking at information is (a) often based on the first piece of information an individual notices, and (b) permanent: even when additional information that conflicts with the initial information is revealed later (Asch, 1946). The second theory in the framework is implicit bias, which Greenwald and Banaji developed in 1995. The principle of implicit bias theory is that people harbor attitudes and stereotypical thoughts (both positive and negative) that they are not consciously aware of, and that these biases influence decision-making and thought processes

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(Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Implicit bias theory explains how exposure to irrelevant applicant data can affect HR professional decisions by triggering such biases. Wason's (1960) theory of confirmation bias, the third theory used for the current study, is used to explain the permanence of initial impressions. The basis of confirmation theory is that once an individual forms an impression, he or she will actively look for data that supports the initial impression and reject any contradictory information (Wason, 1960). Accordingly, confirmation theory can be used to explain how social media data can be used to support a predetermined evaluation of an applicant instead of looking for objective information.

The fourth is prospect theory, which Kahneman and Tversky developed in 1979. Prospect theory is used to explain how people seek to avoid risky decisions by focusing on potential losses instead of potential gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Thus, prospect theory can be used to explain why a HR professional is more likely to use social media to seek information for removing an applicant from the candidate pool than to verify his or her credentials. Tversky and Kahneman also created the fifth theory, conjunction fallacy, in 1983. Conjunction fallacy occurs when an individual violates the probability rule, which states that the probability of two concurrent events cannot be more probable than either event occurring by itself (Tversky & Kahneman, 1983). Such fallacy is likely to occur when a person links extraneous information to relevant information and makes an erroneous decision. Further support for the effect of conjunction fallacy comes from Bartlett and Green (1966), who found that too much information about a person often causes the rater to make erroneous predictions, such as with the Linda problem (Tversky & Kahneman, 1983).

The final theory in the framework is impression management, in which people present certain data in an attempt to manipulate how others perceive them (Goffman, 1959). Impression management is based on James' (1890) theory that people have various personas; when they choose to display a specific persona depends on societal cues and norms. People who engage in impression management on social media may choose to post only information that paints them in a good light, or they may post false information.

## METHOD AND DESIGN

The method used to conduct the study was a quantitative between-groups, posttest-only experiment, which is a variation of a true experiment method (de Waal, n.d.; Salkind, 2010); the design was a 3 \* 2 factorial design. The purpose of the study was to investigate if exposure to an applicant's casual social media (Independent variable 1) and the timing of such exposure (Independent variable 2) has any influence on an HR professional's perception of job-suitability (the dependent variable). Quantitative experimentation was an appropriate choice of investigative method because it involves quantifying data (such as survey responses) and using inferential statistics to test hypotheses and draw conclusions about the larger population (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011; Neuman, 2011). The use of a factorial design was appropriate because it allowed for examination for multiple levels of the independent variables as well as any interaction effects. Table 1 shows the study design in detail identifying the six groups representing all combinations of the independent variables.

The strength of using a true experimental method is that the study contains a control group that allows the researcher to investigate the source of causation (Esfandiari, 2017; Vogt, 2011). Additionally, the between-groups, posttest-only design is advantageous in that each participant was exposed to one specific combination of the independent variables, which not only made comparisons between groups easier but also reduced the likelihood of participants discovering the experimenter's anticipated effects (Christensen et al; 2011; Frey, 2018). The strength of purposive sampling is that it ensured the sample group is a true representation of the target population, and therefore would make decisions that would be made by HR professionals in a real-world screening scenario. Although the study method and design have several strengths, they are not without limitations. The primary limitations were attrition, experimenter expectancy, and demand characteristics. The other limitations of the study are associated with the generalizability of the results. Because the sample was restricted to the U.S., the results are not generalizable to HR professionals in other countries. Additionally, the results can only be applied to one protected group, which is jobseekers over 40, because the simulated social media profiles were purposely created to control for gender, religion, and race. The same experiment conducted with a different protected status (i.e., religion, race, or gender identity) may have different results.

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**Table 1. Study design**

	<b>Independent Variable 2: ADEA Protected Status</b>	
<b>Independent Variable 1: Exposure to Non-Job Relevant Social Media Information</b>	<b>Candidate A: Not Protected under ADEA</b>	<b>Candidate B: Protected under ADEA</b>
<b>Level 1: No exposure to social media information</b>	Group 1: Résumé only <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Perception of Job-Suitability (score)	Group 2: Résumé only <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Perception of Job-Suitability (score)
<b>Level 2: Exposure to social media information before résumé review</b>	Group 3: SM for candidate A, then résumé <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Perception of Job-Suitability (score)	Group 4: SM for candidate B, then résumé <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Perception of Job-Suitability (score)
<b>Level 3: Exposure to social media information after résumé review</b>	Group 5: Résumé, then SM for candidate A <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Perception of Job-Suitability (score)	Group 6: Résumé, then SM for candidate B <b>Dependent Variable:</b> Perception of Job-Suitability (score)

### Population and Sample

The target population for the study was people who were responsible for screening and selecting new hires and located in the U.S. HR professionals and graduate students studying HR Management (HRM) were recruited through Facebook, LinkedIn, and Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The decision to recruit HRM students in addition to HR professionals was based on Rooth's (2010) report of a nearly 74% attrition rate among HR professionals. Carr and Walther (2014) found that while many HRM students already work in HR, those who do not work in the field have the required experience, such as understanding of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws. The non-probabilistic sampling method was used to find subjects for the study; the two sampling techniques used were purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Non-probabilistic sampling is appropriate because it ensures the sample is a true representative of the target population (Sturgis, 2015; Wilson, 2016). Subjects were recruited through posts on the researcher's personal Facebook and LinkedIn profiles that asked HR professionals and HRM students to participate and asked the people in the researcher's network to share the posts with others in their networks. MTurk was also used to recruit HR professionals and HRM students.

The number of subjects needed for the sample was dependent on the number of HR professionals in the U.S. As of 2016, there were 136,100 HR professionals (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2018). According to Raosoft Inc. (2004), a study with a confidence level of 95%, a 5% margin of error, and a population over 20,000 requires a sample size of 377 participants. An a priori power analysis for an ANOVA with fixed, special, main, and interaction effects was conducted using the G\*Power calculator (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Bucher, 2007). Assuming a medium effects size ( $f = .25$ ) and an alpha set to .05, a minimum sample size of 158 was needed to reach a power of .80. The final sample size of the study was 216 participants, which results in a calculated power of .91. Fifty of the subjects recruited through Facebook and LinkedIn and 166 of the subjects recruited through MTurk were qualified to participate in the study. Table 2 shows the participant demographics that were collected in Part I of the data collection survey.

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**Table 2. Participant demographics (N=216)**

Attribute	Participant response	Total n(%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	57(26.4%)
	Female	159(73.6%)
	Other	0
	Prefer not to answer	0
<b>Highest level of education</b>	High school	33(15.3%)
	Associate degree	39(18.1%)
	Bachelor's degree	104(48.1%)
	Master's degree	28(13.0%)
	Doctoral/Professional degree	8(3.7%)
	Prefer not to answer	4(1.9%)
<b>Participant description</b>	I work in HR management and am not a Graduate student	171(79.2%)
	I am a Graduate student studying human resource management and I also work in the HR field	38(17.6%)
	I am a Graduate student studying HR management and I do not work in the HR field	7(3.2%)
<b>Years worked in human resources</b>	1-5 years	133(64.3%)
	6-10 years	48(23.2%)
	11 years or more	22(10.6%)
	Prefer not to answer	4(1.9%)
<b>HR certification</b>	Yes	45(20.8%)
	No	156(72.2%)
	Prefer not to answer	15(6.9%)

### Instrumentation

Part III of the data collection survey included items to measure the dependent variable for the study-perception of job suitability. Perceptions of job-suitability were measured by having the participants complete Hosoda, Nguyen, and Stone-Romero's (2012) three-item summated job-suitability scale (see Appendix A). This instrument was selected on the principle that the higher ratings of a candidate's job-suitability indicates the HR professional is more likely to select that candidate for the position over other candidates. Each question was scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The scores for the three items were added for a possible max score of 21, with higher scores indicating a higher perception of suitability (Hosoda et al., 2012). The items in the scale originally contained the pronoun "he;" the items were modified to "she" instead of "he" to minimize confusion because the résumés and social media information the participants viewed belonged to female job candidates. Permission to use the scale was obtained through email from Dr. Hosoda.

When using an existing instrument, it is important the instrument has evidence of validity and reliability. To have evidence of validity based on test content, the items on an instrument must be representative of the attribute being measured. Hosoda et al. (2012) designed their instrument to measure job-suitability. Assessments of job-suitability are typically determined by evaluating if the applicants' work experience and education meet the qualifications for the job (Bohnert & Ross, 2010; Van Camp et al., 2016) and if the applicant has the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes required to perform the job (Hosoda, Stone, & Stone-Romero, 2003; Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010; Van

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Iddekinge et al., 2016). Therefore, the questions Hosoda et al. (2012) used to measure perceptions of job-suitability ask if the applicants have the requisite knowledge and skills to perform the job and if the applicant is qualified for the job, establishing evidence of content validity. One way of establishing evidence of instrument reliability is to calculate its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), which is appropriate for instruments with items that use a rating scale for answers (Miller & Lovler, 2015). The reported  $\alpha$  for Hosoda et al.'s (2012) job-suitability instrument is .87, which is considered to be in the very good range for coefficient values (Myers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2013). The sample used in the study consisted of 203 undergraduates (85 males, 117 females, and 1 undisclosed) from a university in Northern California; the sample was ethnically diverse, had a mean age of 19, and an average of 3 years working experience (Hosoda et al., 2012).

### Data Collection

The data for the study was collected using online surveys administered through SurveyMonkey. The social media posts contained a link that would take participants to a survey containing an informed consent form and a pre-screening survey was used to determine if individuals were qualified for participation (see Appendix B). Participants were also asked to provide their email address where the main data collection survey could be sent. Next, subjects were randomly assigned to either the control or experimental groups (see Table 1 for group descriptions) using random sequential assignment, which is used when the researcher does not have access to the entire sample population at once (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008).

There were six versions of the data collection survey, each containing four parts. Part I of the survey contained demographic questions (see Appendix C). Part II contained a job description (see Appendix D) and résumé (see Appendix E). The survey for groups 3 - 6 also included a simulated social media profile page; the profile for groups 3 and 5 featured Candidate A (see Appendix F) and the profile for groups 4 and 6 featured Candidate B (see Appendix G). Part III contained the job-suitability scale (see Appendix A), and Part IV contained the debriefing statement (see Appendix H).

After answering demographic questions, Part II of the survey contained directions based on the participants' random assignment to one of six conditions. Groups 1 and 2 served as the control groups, as they were not provided with social media information for the candidates they were asked to evaluate. Both groups were directed to (a) review the job description, (b) review the résumé, and (c) complete the job-suitability scale. Groups 3 and 4 reviewed the social media information for their respective candidates *before* they reviewed the résumé. Both groups were directed to (a) review the job description, (b) review the social media data, (c) review the résumé, and (d) complete the job-suitability scale. Groups 5 and 6 reviewed the social media information for their respective candidates *after* they reviewed the résumé. Both groups were directed to (a) review the job description, (b) review the résumé, (c) review the social media data, and (d) complete the job-suitability scale. After the job suitability scale was completed, the participants read the debriefing statement and ended the survey.

MTurk was also used to collect data from the target population. However, it is against MTurk policy to collect email addresses from Workers (Amazon Mechanical Turk, 2017). Therefore, the pre-screening survey and second data collection survey were combined into one survey and published on MTurk. Six different versions of the survey were created to match the six different conditions for the study groups as described in the previous paragraph. Participants were presented with the choice of six survey options and directed to choose one survey to complete, which allowed for random group selection since they could not be assigned to a group. Individuals provided informed consent and answered the pre-screening survey questions. Those who did not meet the participant criteria were disqualified from the study; qualified participants went on to access the questions and materials contained in the data collection survey.

### Data Processing and Analysis Procedure

After the data were collected, it was processed or "cleaned" to ensure it is ready for statistical analysis. First, the demographic questions were examined for any missing data. The demographic questions each contained the answer option *Prefer not to answer* to minimize the likelihood of missing demographic data for participants who do not want to share information they deemed too personal. Therefore, any missing demographic data were coded with the prefer not to answer selection. Next, the accuracy of the data values for the job-suitability scale was assessed by ensuring the values

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are within a reasonable boundary, which is a range of 3 and 21. The aforementioned range is reasonable because the job-suitability scale consists of three questions scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 - 7, the scores of the three questions are then added to obtain the final job-suitability score. Any score below 3 or over 21 was considered to be outside of the reasonable boundary and would be removed. All collected data for the job-suitability scale fell into the appropriate range; therefore, the collected scores were considered reasonable. The data were then reviewed for missing values. When the data were examined, it was found that job-suitability scale data were missing from 112 surveys. These participants completed the demographic data and then abandoned the survey at the point in which the job description, résumé, and social media information (if applicable) were to be reviewed and the job-suitability score was to be completed. Because the job-suitability score was integral to testing how the two independent variables may affect the dependent variables, listwise deletion was used to remove all cases that did not include a completed job-suitability scale.

The collected data were uploaded into IBM's SPSS version 24 statistical software for analysis. The first step was to analyze the collected data and report the demographics of the sample, which are nominal level data, using descriptive statistics. The factorial ANOVA (*F* test) was selected as the analytical procedure to examine the main effects for both independent variables and any interaction effects that may exist (Frey, 2018; Myers et al., 2013). Thus, the second step was to analyze the data to ensure they met the six assumptions for ANOVA procedures. Assumption 1 is that the dependent variable is measured at the interval or ratio level (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). The job-suitability scale used for the study contained three closed-ended items scored on a 7-point Likert scale. Likert scales are made of several Likert-type items that are combined to create one composite score and are treated as interval data (Boone & Boone, 2012; Carifio & Perla, 2007). Because the job-suitability scale produces a single suitability score, the data met the first assumption. Assumption 2 is that the independent variables contain two or more categorical, independent groups (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). Independent Variable 1 contained three categorical groups (no exposure to social media, social media exposure before résumé, and social media exposure after résumé) and Independent Variable 2 contained two categorical groups (no ADEA protection and ADEA protection), thus meeting assumption two. Assumption 3 is that there is independent observation among groups, meaning that participants cannot be in more than one group (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). The participants for the current study were assigned to only one of the six groups, so the third assumption was met.

Assumption 4 is that the data set contains no significant outliers, which can be identified during the two-way ANOVA process (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). Assumption 4 was violated as 11 outliers were found during analysis, all of which were job-suitability scale scores of 12.0 and below. Although the outliers do not have an explanation, they do fall within the range of the job-suitability scale (scores of 3-21). The decision to retain or remove outliers is often a judgement call on the part of the researcher (Zaiontz, 2019). While deciding to keep outliers can have a negative effect on the outcome of statistical analyses, deleting outliers can reduce a study's generalizability (Hair et al., 2010). Both Hair et al. (2010) and Myers et al., (2013) suggested that researchers should consider if the outlying scores represent the target population; if they do, they should not be deleted. Zaiontz (2019) suggested that researchers analyze their data with and without the outliers; if the results are similar, the researcher should report both analyses. Because the outliers fell within the range of the job-suitability scale and it is plausible such low scores could occur in the target population, the decision was made to run the ANOVA twice: once with outliers and once with the outliers removed.

Assumption 5 is that the data are *approximately* normally distributed, as ANOVA is a robust analysis that can handle small violations of normality (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). The mean, median, and mode of the job-suitability scale, including the outliers, were 17.9, 18.0, and 18.0 respectively; the mean, median, and mode for the job-suitability scale with the outliers removed were 18.4, 18.0, and 18.0 respectively. While the mean, mode and median, with and without outliers, indicate normality, the Shapiro-Wilk test resulted in rejecting the null hypothesis that the data were normally distributed ( $p < .000$ ) for both sets of analyses. Since the Shapiro-Wilk does not provide the degree of non-normality, the data may still be appropriate for ANOVA (Sheng, 2008), as data that are close to normal on a normal Q-Q plot is acceptable for ANOVA, even when the Shapiro-Wilk indicates a violation of normality (Kozak & Piepho, 2017). Thus, ANOVA is still considered to be an acceptable statistical analysis for the data even though the data distribution was not completely normal. The sixth assumption is existence of homogeneity of variances, which can be detected using Levene's test for homogeneity of variances (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). The result of Levene's test for the data with the outliers was .45 and the results of Levene's test for the data with the outliers removed was .89; therefore, the assumption of equal variances was met. Since all the assumptions were considered to be met, statistical analyses on the job suitability scores commenced.

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### RESULTS

A total of four factorial ANOVAs were conducted: the first ANOVA included all the data, whereas the second ANOVA was run with the outlier data removed. The post hoc analysis, not specified prior to data collection, was conducted to further analyze study results by source of recruitment. This analysis was conducted to determine if there was a difference in the answers provided based on the incentive for participation; the surveys for the MTurk participants had lower completion rates and faster completion times than the surveys completed by participants recruited through social media. Thus, there was sufficient evidence to question if the participants recruited through MTurk were taking the surveys seriously, or if they were just completing them as quickly as possible to receive the payment. MTurk participants received a small fee for their participation, whereas participants recruited from social media were entered into a drawing with 50-1 odds to win a \$25 gift card for their participation. Thus, the third ANOVA was conducted for data gathered from participants recruited through social media (i.e., Facebook and LinkedIn) and the fourth ANOVA was conducted on data gathered from participants recruited through MTurk.

#### Research questions 1 and 2

The first two research questions examined the individual effects of social media exposure (RQ1) and ADEA status (RQ2). The results of ANOVA for individual effects were non-significant for all four analyses and are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3. Results for research questions 1 and 2**

	RQ1		RQ2	
Outliers included	$F(2, 210) = .52$	$p = .59$	Outliers included	$F(1, 210) = .79$ $p = .37$
Outliers excluded	$F(2, 199) = .39$	$p = .68$	Outliers excluded	$F(1, 199) = 1.24$ $p = .27$
SM participants	$F(2, 44) = .88$	$p = .18$	SM participants	$F(1, 44) = .00$ $p = .99$
MTurk Participants	$F(2, 160) = .91$	$p = .40$	MTurk Participants	$F(1, 160) = .55$ $p = .46$

#### Research question 3

In the absence of individual effects among the independent variables, attention was turned to the third research question, which was used to examine the possibility of interaction effects. The first three ANOVAs conducted were non-significant. The result of the first ANOVA which included the outliers was  $F(2, 210) = 2.60, p = .08$ , whereas the result of the ANOVA with the outliers removed was  $F(2, 199) = .87, p = .42$ . The result of the ANOVA conducted on responses received through social media was  $F(2, 44) = 1.06, p = .36$ . However, the ANOVA conducted on responses received through MTurk was significant; the results were  $F(2, 160) = 3.33, p = .04$ . When main effects are absent, yet an interaction is detected, the result is a cross-over interaction. Cross-over interactions indicate that while the independent variables have no effect on the dependent variable individually, the presence of both independent variables at the same time does influence the dependent variable (Grace-Martin, 2019; Loftus, 1978). A test of simple effects using a Bonferroni-corrected *t*-test revealed the pairwise comparison for ADEA protection status and no social media exposure was significant ( $p = .02$ ).

### DISCUSSION

The discussion of the study's results can be divided into four specific areas. The first area for discussion is the suggestion that biased screening can be reduced by reviewing candidates' social media information later in the screening process (see Chambers & Winter, 2017; Kluemper, 2013; Lam, 2016; Slovensky & Ross, 2012; Vroman, et al., 2016;

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Wheatcroft, 2016) as examined by research question 1. The results for all four ANOVAs regarding RQ1 suggest there is no significant difference in ratings of job-suitability between no exposure to social media data, viewing social media data before the résumé, and viewing social media data after the résumé. Additionally, an examination of the results divided by exposure level revealed that the lowest job-suitability scores were in the control group who were not provided with any social media information. These results neither confirm nor conflict with previous research because there are no prior studies examining the timing of social media exposure.

The second area for discussion is age discrimination in the hiring process as examined by research question 2. The results of all four ANOVAs regarding RQ2 produced non-significant results for the influence of an applicant's ADEA protection status (and therefore, age) on the perception of job-suitability. This finding is not consistent with prior research on age discrimination in the hiring process. Prior research has shown that age-based stereotypes have a significant effect on how older workers are viewed in the workforce. Older workers are often considered to be resistant to change, slower to learn new concepts, or require more rest than younger workers (Tuckman & Lorge, 1952). As a result of stereotypical thinking, older job applicants often receive lower interview ratings than younger applicants (Avolio & Bennett, 1987), and are passed over by hiring managers for younger candidates (Abrams, et al., 2016). A 2017 survey of workers 45 and over revealed that 6 in 10 have experienced or witnessed age discrimination in the workplace (Lipnic, 2018). Neumark, Burn, and Button (2016) conducted an extensive correspondence experiment in which they submitted over 40,000 résumés representing three age groups: younger applicants (29-31), middle-aged applicants (49-51) and older applicants approaching retirement age (64-66). The results of the study not only revealed that the older applicant group received less callbacks than the other two groups, but also showed that middle-aged female applicants received significantly less callbacks than middle-aged male applicants received. The finding of the current study is surprising in light of prior research, but explanations do exist. One possible explanation for the finding is that the participants had a thorough understanding of EEO laws. One of the participation requirements for HR management students was to complete coursework in EEO law, so it is possible this requirement and the accumulated knowledge caused the participants to consciously avoid biased decision-making. Alternatively, another explanation is a reduction of negative stereotypes about older workers. It is possible that stereotypes about older workers are changing as life expectancy rises and many people are choosing to work past retirement age. Then again, we must remember that failure to reject the null hypothesis does not mean age discrimination did not occur.

Another explanation for a nonsignificant result to RQ2 is the presence (or lack thereof) of automated technology in the study's design. This explanation supports the third discussion topic: applicant tracking systems (ATS) as the source of age discrimination in the hiring process. The Neumark et al. (2016) study used an online job site in which résumés were submitted for open jobs, whereas résumés were directly provided to human resource professionals in the current study. Ajunwa (2019) identified several ways in which recruiting and hiring platforms (such as automated applicant tracking systems, job sites, and social media sites) enable age discrimination against older job seekers. One way is setting restrictions on job posting. It was revealed that Facebook allows companies to set age restrictions on their posts, which means employees can prevent job seekers over a specified age from seeing ads for open positions. Ageism may also be built into the user interface of automated online systems. Some job sites (such as indeed.com and Monster.com) and applicant tracking systems ask applicants for their birthdate but restrict the drop-down menu for the year; other sites use the year of high school graduation as a proxy for age (Ajunwa, 2019; Neumark et al., 2016; Neumark, Burn, Button, & Chehras, 2017). Many online systems will not let applicants bypass questions of age or high school graduation date. If an applicant is forced to enter the wrong year for date of birth the application would be rejected during the background check. Applicants forced to provide a high school graduation date allow potential employers to accurately estimate their age as most people finish high school between 16 and 18. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the finding of the current study suggests that age discrimination may not be caused by human resource professionals' access to age related data, but due to automated systems in which the bias was built in.

The results of research question 3 inspired the fourth topic of discussion: the influence of the HR professionals' education, experience, and attitudes about social media on applicant screening. When the study data were separated by recruitment source, post hoc ANOVA results for the MTurk participants showed a significant interaction effect, specifically between ADEA protection status and no exposure to social media information. Interaction effects that occur when there are no statistically significant main effects is called a cross-over interaction effect. No clues regarding the candidates' age were provided to the participants in group 1 (the group with the hypothetical younger applicant) and group 2 (the group with the hypothetical older applicant); neither group was given social media information for their

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respective candidates. However, there is a clear difference in how the candidate's job suitability was assessed in the absence of social media information; the candidate with ADEA protection (over 40) had a mean job-suitability score of 18.64 and the candidate without ADEA protection (under 40) had a mean job-suitability score of 16.63. The attitude toward social media, educational attainment, experience, and age of the sample may have had an influence on the results.

An examination of the descriptive statistics revealed several differences between participants recruited through Facebook and LinkedIn and the participants recruited through MTurk. The first difference was education, with participants recruited through social media holding higher degrees than MTurk participants. For the social media participants, 12% (n = 6) had high school diplomas, 8% (n = 4) had an Associate's degree, 34% (n = 17) held a Bachelor's degree, 32% (n = 16) held a Master's degree, 12% (n = 6) held a doctorate, and one person declined to answer. Among MTurk participants 16.3% (n = 27) had a high school diploma, 21.1% (n = 35) had an Associate's degree, 52.4% (n = 87) held a Bachelor's degree, 7.2% (n = 12) held a Master's degree, 1.2% (n = 2) held a doctorate, and three declined to answer. The second difference was the number of years working in HR. For the social media participants, 38% (n = 19) worked in HR between 1 and 5 years, 26% (n = 13) worked in HR for 6 - 10 years, 26% (n = 13) worked in HR for 11 or more years, 8% (n = 4) were HRM students that did not work in HR and one participant (2%) declined to indicate how long they worked in HR. For the MTurk participants, 68.7% (n = 114) worked in HR for 1 - 5 years, 21.1% (n = 35) worked in HR for 6 - 10 years, 5.4% (n = 9) reported working in HR for 11 or more, 3% (n = 5) were HRM students who did not work in HR, and 1.8% (n = 3) declined to report how long they worked in HR.

Social media screening is a common occurrence in the hiring process (Ollington et al., 2013) and digital natives expect others to have social media information. Thus, it is possible that the younger participants may have viewed candidates without social media unfavorably. It is also possible that the participants attempted to search Facebook for the candidate's information themselves and found information that was contradictory to the study's design. As of September 6, 2019, a Facebook search for Mary A. Johnson (the hypothetical candidate designed to be younger) yields three profiles of older looking women, whereas a search for Mary B. Johnson (the hypothetical candidate designed to be older) yields profiles for 3 younger looking women, three older looking women, and one profile that does not use a personal photo. The results of the Facebook search may explain why the younger hypothetical candidate was rated lower for job-suitability even though no age-related information was provided.

### Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations are based on the alternate explanations provided for the study findings. The first recommendation is to conduct a study that includes a sample that is more representative of the age and experience of the target population, which consists of HR professionals with an average age of 40.6 (Deloitte, MIT Media Lab, & Datawheel, 2019) and an average tenure of 4.9 years at their current employer (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). The sample for the current study matched that of the target population in terms of gender and education. The majority of the sample were female (73.6%) and held a Bachelor's degree (48.1%); as for the target population, 72.4% of HR professionals are female (Deloitte et al., 2019) and the majority of HR managers (37.1%), HR specialists (43.4%), and HR assistants (28.8%) hold a Bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). However, most participants were recruited from MTurk, where workers tend to be younger than the overall U.S. population, and therefore most likely to have less work experience in the HR field. It is important to recruit a sample that is similar to the target population to maximize generalization of the findings. Some ideas for recruiting a more representative sample would be to contact and recruit participants from the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) and graduate schools with HRM programs attended by working adults.

The second recommendation is to eliminate the requirement of having completed EEO law courses for HRM students to participate. This requirement may have provided participants with a clue that some form of bias or discrimination was being investigated. This requirement is also unrepresentative of the target population. As Carr and Walther (2014) stated, most HRM students already work in HR, so it is plausible that they can have the requisite knowledge and experience of EEO factors without having completed EEO law courses.

The third recommendation is to investigate age discrimination in the hiring process by comparing the processes used for sorting and selecting résumés for further review. A significant difference between the Neumark et al. (2016; 2017) studies and the current study, was that the résumés for the Neumark study were submitted through automated online

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systems and the résumés for the current study were provided directly to HR professionals. This recommendation is important for determining the actual source of the discrimination (i.e., either the automated system or the person reviewing the résumé), which will go a long way in developing less discriminatory hiring practices. One way to investigate the difference is to replicate Neumark et al.'s study with actual HR people or to replicate the current study by using the résumés to apply for actual open jobs.

The fourth recommendation is to replicate the current study with tighter controls on the study participants and a different study description that does not provide clues about the true nature of the project. This would involve conducting the study in a laboratory or similar place instead of conducting it online. Although deception must be used carefully in social science research, it is vital when investigating biases and discrimination to increase the likelihood that participants would behave similarly to a real-world scenario. Tighter controls would ensure that control groups who are not supposed to access social media do not attempt to research candidates on their own. It would also help to ensure that participants do not rush through reviewing the materials and completing the survey.

The fifth recommendation is to replicate the study with a different measure of hiring bias. It is plausible that a hiring official can feel a person is suitable for a position, but still decline to hire them for reasons that may or may not be biased. Replacing the job-suitability scale with a yes or no question such as “Based on the information you have reviewed; would you hire the candidate for the position?” may be a better measure of intent to hire. Including some form of the Implicit Association Test may also provide further insight on whether or not bias played a role in the decision.

The sixth recommendation is to replicate this study to investigate the possibility of hiring discrimination against other protected groups. For example, bias against transgender applicants could be investigated by using the same résumé and simulated profile for both hypothetical applicants, but one profile would include pictures and posts that indicate “Mary” was “Mark” at one time. Racial bias can be examined by using the same résumé and simulated profiles for both hypothetical applicants but with different profile pictures. Replicating this study with some of the aforementioned recommendations in place (i.e., tighter controls, including the Implicit Association Test, etc.) has the potential to uncover issues that are relevant to current job seekers.

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## Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

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### Appendix A

#### Part III: Job Suitability Scale

Instructions:

Considering the information you have reviewed about the candidate, on a scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements. When you have answered each question, click the *Next* button.

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel that she is suited for the job.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
I feel that she has the necessary skills and ability to perform the job.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
I believe she is qualified for the job.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

## Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

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### Appendix B

#### Pre-Screening Survey

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1. Do you currently work in Human Resources in the United States?
  - a. Yes (Programming note: Skip to Q5)
  - b. No
2. Are you a graduate student studying Human Resource Management in the United States?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No (Programming note: Exit individual from the survey, thanking him/her for his/her time)
  - c. him/her for his/her time)
3. Have you completed courses on employee selection/human capital management and Human Resources law?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No (Programming note: Exit individual from the survey, thanking him/her for his/her time)
  - c. him/her for his/her time)
4. Please enter a 5-digit code that only you would know. This 5-digit code will be the only link between you and your survey responses. If you decide to withdraw from the study after completing the survey, you will share this code with me so your responses can be located and deleted from the database.
5. Please provide your email address to participate in the study. \_\_\_\_\_

(Programming note: Skip to end page, thanking participant and informing participant that within the next few days he/she will receive an email from [REDACTED] with a link to a second survey.)

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## Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

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### Appendix C

#### Part I: Demographic Questions

Instructions:

Please provide some information about yourself by answering the following questions. If you do not wish to provide an answer to a question, please mark the *prefer not to answer* option. When you have finished, click the *Next* button.

---

1. What is your gender?
    - a. Male
    - b. Female
    - c. Other
    - d. Prefer not to answer
  2. What is your highest level of education?
    - a. High School
    - b. Associate degree
    - c. Bachelor's degree
    - d. Master's degree
    - e. Doctorate/Professional degree
    - f. Prefer not to answer
  3. Which of the following statements describes you? (Select one)
    - a. I work in human resources and am not Graduate student
    - b. I am a Graduate student studying human resource management and I also work in the HR field
    - c. I am a Graduate student studying human resource management and I do not work in the HR field
  4. How long have you worked in human resources?
    - a. Not applicable
    - b. 1-5 years
    - c. 6-10 years
    - d. 11 years or more
    - e. Prefer not to answer
  5. Do you have a certification in human resources (e.g., PHR, SPHR, SHRM-CP)?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
    - c. Prefer not to answer
  6. What state do you reside in?
    - a1-a50. Dropdown box for state
    - b. Prefer not to answer
-

### Appendix D

#### Part II: Review of Job Description and Job Candidate Information

##### General Store Manager Job Description

###### Summary and requirements

The ABC Company is seeking a general store manager to join our team and lead our new retail location in Manitou Springs, CO. The general store manager will be responsible for hiring and managing staff for the new location (including department managers and the assistant store manager), meeting sales goals, and ensuring customer satisfaction. Candidates should have at least three years of retail management experience at the store manager level and a B.S. in Business Administration or a relevant major.

###### Tasks

- Select, hire, and train department managers
- Implement organizational policies, procedures, and performance standards
- Review financial statements and performance data to measure goal progression
- Oversee day-to-day operations
- Budget allocation

###### Knowledge

- Personnel and human resources
- Customer and personal service
- Administration and management
- Marketing and sales
- Public Safety and Security
- Retail management

###### Skills

- Problem solving
- Time management
- Judgement and decision-making
- Negotiation and persuasion
- System evaluation and analysis
- Active listening
- Instruction
- Coordination and planning

###### Abilities

- Oral and written expression
- Problem sensitivity
- Information ordering
- Deductive and inductive reasoning
- Oral and written comprehension
- Selective attention

## Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

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### Appendix E

**Mary A. Johnson\***

7 Capital Hill Ave Manitou Springs, CO 80829 (719)555-5555

mjohnson@email.com

<b>Objective</b>	Highly motivated individual with managerial experience at the department, assistant and general manager levels seeks opportunity to build new store from the ground-up.
<b>Skills &amp; Abilities</b>	Problem solving, systems analysis, inductive & inductive reasoning, active listening, negotiation, instruction, decision-making, and coordination.
<b>Experience</b>	<p>XYZ Stores, Inc. – Denver, CO Store Manager: 2016 – Present Assistant Store Manager: 2014-2016 Responsibilities include: overseeing daily store operations, approving schedules, hiring &amp; selection, preparing monthly sales reports, conducting performance management reviews, ensured employee compliance with organizational policies &amp; procedures.</p> <p>Home Warehouse – Fort Collins, CO Department Manager: 2011 – 2014 Managed the paint department; on-boarded new hires, completed yearly performance reviews, created weekly schedules, helped employees contribute to sales and performance goals, addressed customer complaints.</p>
<b>Education</b>	<p>Colorado State University– Fort Collins, CO – B.S. in Business Administration with Concentration in Organization and Innovation Management, 2014 31 core curriculum credits, 35 business core credits, 33 elective credits, and 21 management concentration credits. 3.75 GPA</p>
<b>Achievements</b>	<p>Department Manager of the Year Award- 2012 Highest Sales of the Quarter Award- Q3 2016</p>

\*Note: The name on the résumé for groups 2, 4, and 6 reads “Mary B. Johnson”

## Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

### Appendix F

Mary A. Johnson



#### About

##### Overview

Word & Education

Places You've Lived

Contact & Basic Info

Family & Relationships

Details About You

Life Events

XYZ Stores, Inc.-

Store Manager 2016 to Present

Colorado State University-

B.S. in Business Administration- 2014

Lives In:

Manitou Springs

Single

Phone:

(719) 555-5555

Birthday:

March 1<sup>st</sup>

#### Friends



Jacob Steinman



MacKenzie Day



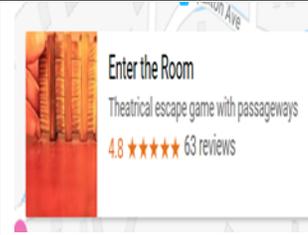
Sarah Sanchez



Danny Thompson

## Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

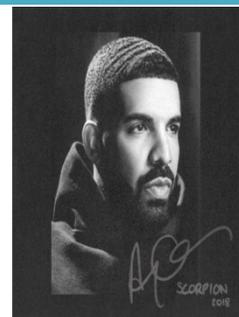
Photos			
			

Check-Ins			
			

## Sports

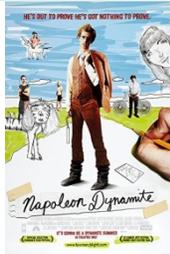
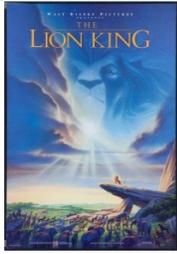


## Music



## Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

### Movies



### TV Shows



# Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

## Appendix G

Mary B. Johnson



### About

#### Overview

Word & Education

Places You've Lived

Contact & Basic Info

Family & Relationships

Details About You

Life Events

XYZ Stores, Inc.-

Store Manager 2016 to Present

Colorado State University-

B.S. in Business Administration- 2014

Lives In:

Manitou Springs

Married to:

Phone:

(719) 555-5555

Birthday:

March 1<sup>st</sup>



Robert Johnson

Friends	
	Jill Diaz
	Dorothea Turner
	Anthony Smith
	Bill Conner

## Investigating the influence of non-professional social media

### Photos



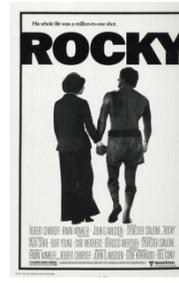
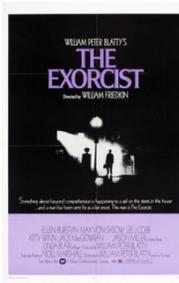
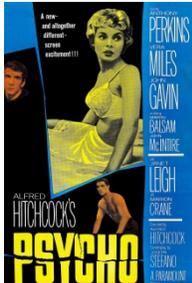
I LOVE MY  
GRAND  
KIDS



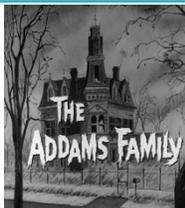
### Music



### Movies



### TV Shows



### Appendix H

#### Part IV: Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in my dissertation study. The purpose of the research study is to investigate how human resource professionals' assessments of candidates' job-suitability is influenced by the type and amount of information they have about people in the candidate pool. What you were not told at the beginning of the study is that an additional purpose of the study is to investigate if non-job relevant information from social media that provides clues to an applicant's age and Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) protection status has any influence on assessments of job-suitability and if this influence possibly results in discriminatory selection decisions.

The study is guided by three research questions:

- Is there a statistically significant difference in human resource professionals' perception of two equally qualified candidates' job-suitability depending on their level of exposure to a job candidate's social media information?
- Is there a statistically significant difference in human resource professionals' perception of two equally qualified candidates' job-suitability depending on the job candidate's ADEA protection status?
- Is there a statistically significant difference in human resource professionals' perception of two equally qualified candidates' job-suitability depending on both their level of exposure to a job candidate's social media information and the job candidates' ADEA protection status?

The participants for this study were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions. Groups 1 and 2 received a résumé for the hypothetical candidate. Groups 3 and 4 received a copy of the candidate's social media page before reviewing the résumé. The social media information provided to Group 3 suggested the candidate was in her late 20's, whereas the information provided to Group 4 suggested the candidate was in her late 50's. Groups 5 and 6 received social media information for the candidate after reviewing the résumé. The social media information provided to Group 5 suggested the candidate was in her late 20's, whereas the information provided to Group 6 suggested the candidate was in her late 50's.

Thank you again for taking part in this study. If you wish to opt out of the study, you can send your unique code and a statement that you want to withdraw to the primary researcher, Julia Zibulka-Horwath, at [REDACTED]. You can also contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. Please click the Done button to complete the survey.