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MAKING THE RIGHT IMPRESSION:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF JOB APPLICANTS' SOCIAL NETWORKING
SITES

A Thesis

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The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San José State University

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Master of Science

by

Ka Weng Sitou

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MAKING THE RIGHT IMPRESSION:
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by

Ka Weng Sitou

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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December 2013

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ABSTRACT

MAKING THE RIGHT IMPRESSION:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF JOB APPLICANTS' SOCIAL NETWORKING
SITES

By Ka Weng Sitou

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether job applicants manipulated their Facebook pages for employment purposes and the specific characteristics on their pages that were purposely altered to attract potential employers. A total of 50 interviewees participated in the study. Results indicated that job applicants did manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes for various reasons with the most common reason being to avoid misperceptions by potential employers. Another goal of this study was to examine job applicant beliefs on employer and job applicant use of Facebook for employment purposes. The study results indicated that job applicants supported as well as opposed employers' use of Facebook to make employment decisions. Conversely, the majority of the job applicants who were interviewed were in support of job applicants manipulating Facebook pages for employment purposes because they were trying to present the best image to potential employers. Given the findings of the study, organizations need to be aware that the information they find on Facebook might not be accurate representations of job applicants and they should not rely on Facebook to determine whether job applicants are qualified to perform a job.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Ever since the Internet has been immersed in people's lives on a day-to-day basis,

the number of people using social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and

MySpace has increased tremendously (Madden, 2011). Initially, people used SNSs to

maintain existing relationships, meet new people, and establish professional networks.

But as organizations began utilizing these sites to monitor the behaviors of current

employees and to gather information about potential employees, job applicants started

using SNSs for career development (Eddy, 2012). Although previous research has

examined how organizations use SNSs for employment purposes, it is unclear how job

applicants use their SNSs pages to attract potential employers. Because job applicants

are becoming more aware that employers are using information found on SNSs to screen

candidates, it is possible that job applicants alter information on their pages in order to

increase their number of job opportunities. The purpose of this study was to evaluate

whether job applicants manipulate their SNSs for employment purposes, and if they do,

which characteristics of their pages they purposely alter as a way to attract potential

employers.

Social Networking Sites: Definition and Features

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), SNSs are web-based services that allow

individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; 2)

articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; and 3) view and

traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Users have

their own unique pages consisting of information such as age, location, and interests, and

an "about me" section in which they are given the opportunity to describe themselves in their own words. The content of pages varies depending on how much information users want to share with the public; some people have a page with detailed information, whereas others only include the minimum information required to create a page.

SNSs are structured as personal networks, allowing users to make visible their social connections, and to view their own social network as well as the networks of others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Lampe, & Steinfield, 2009). Once their pages have been created, people have the capability to establish connections with people they already know. In addition, SNSs provide the opportunity for people to reconnect with people with whom they have lost touch by searching for their names or by contacting mutual friends for more information. SNSs can also be utilized as a communication tool for users to leave public or private messages for other users, to chat or video chat within their own networks, and to describe their daily lives and happenings by posting real-time updates of their thoughts or actions (Bateman, Pike, & Butler, 2010; Brown & Vaughn, 2011).

History and Background Information

SixDegrees.com was the first recognizable SNS that allowed users to create pages, list their friends, and view their friends' lists (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The initial purpose of SNSs was for young people to connect with each other; however, it eventually evolved into a channel for social and commercial exchange (Clark & Roberts, 2010). Currently, the most popular SNSs include Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Twitter; although there are differences in the features and design of these platforms, their basic

elements remain the same (Smith & Kidder, 2010). For example, Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn are all SNSs that allow individuals to initiate and maintain connections with people whom they already know, but LinkedIn provides the capability to create a bigger professional network by developing second-degree connections (friends of friends) and third-degree connections (friends of friends of friends).

One of the primary ways that SNSs differentiate themselves from each other is the structural variation around visibility and access. MySpace, for example, only gives users the option to choose whether pages will be shared to the "public" or "friends only," whereas users on Facebook who are part of the same "network" are able to view each other's pages unless the owner of the page denies permission to those in their network. In addition, LinkedIn controls what a viewer may see depending on whether he or she has a paid account (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Employers' Use of SNSs: Non-Employment Related

Although the primary purpose of SNSs is for people to develop and maintain personal relationships, organizations are now using these sites to advertise products or to create a brand. In the past, companies promoted their products and services primarily through television and newspaper ads. However, because of advances in technology and increased Internet usage, companies began to communicate with their targeted audiences and customers through other channels. Results from a survey conducted by Deloitte (2009) indicated that 29% of the companies surveyed said they utilized SNSs as a tool to manage and build a brand. In addition, companies are developing social media identities by creating Facebook Fan Pages; these pages enable companies to communicate with

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their customers, enhance brand attractiveness, and attract customer attention (Lin & Lu, 2011). Customers who "like" companies' Fan Pages are able to receive special promotions not available to the general public as well as share company product reviews or experiences. The information on these Fan Pages is beneficial to companies because it provides access to their customers' values and opinions that could help companies improve certain aspects of their businesses.

Employers' Use of SNSs: Current Employees

Given the increased popularity of SNSs, as well as the information SNSs provide about individuals, organizations are beginning to use these sites to monitor the behavior of their current employees. A recent survey showed that there was great reputational risk associated with SNSs in that 74% of employed Americans believed it was easy to damage a company's reputation by posting information on SNSs (Davison, Maraist, & Bing, 2011). Negative comments about a company on SNSs can lead to damages such as loss of trust and confidence from customers, investors, and employees. As a result, organizations are trying to see if their employees are disclosing harmful or confidential information that may harm the organization.

In order to prevent potential losses, organizations are looking closely at the content of their employees' SNSs to identify those who might be causing harm to the organizations. Organizations treat this type of behavior seriously by enforcing disciplinary action on those who post negative comments on their companies' SNSs. For example, an employee who worked at ABC Company was fired from his job after several of his managers read a post on his SNS discussing how much he hated his job and that

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ABC Company was a horrible employer (Davison et al., 2011). After realizing the

potential damage that can be caused by current employees, organizations are taking

precaution by reviewing the content of potential employees' SNSs to prevent future harm

to the organization.

Employers' Use of SNSs: Potential Employees

As mentioned earlier, organizations are looking closely at the content found on

current employees' SNSs to prevent harm to the organization. However, it is also

becoming a common practice for employers to use SNSs as a screening tool during the

selection process. This is because these pages provide information about job candidates

that is not revealed in their resumes or interview process (Slovensky & Ross, 2012; Smith

& Kidder, 2010). SNS pages are believed to present a more honest view of applicants

because the content of resumes and cover letters are written to highlight the best

characteristics of applicants and may be exaggerated or falsified by the applicants, and

applicants tend to present themselves as favorably as possible in their interviews.

According to a survey by Careerbuilder.com (2008), 22% of hiring managers in 2008

said that they used SNSs to research job candidates compared to 11% in 2006. In

addition, 9% of the hiring managers that were surveyed indicated that although they were

not currently using SNSs as a screening tool, they planned on using it in the future.

As it is believed that past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior, the

discovery of illegal activities on SNSs may prevent organizations from hiring people who

will endanger or embarrass the organization, employees, or customers (Slovensky &

Ross, 2012). Of the hiring managers who were surveyed, 34% reported that they found

content such as drinking alcohol or using drugs, provocative and inappropriate photographs or information, criticisms about previous colleagues and employers, and poor communication on applicants' SNSs, and that this information influenced them to dismiss candidates from the selection process (Brown & Vaughn, 2011; CareerBuilder.com, 2008).

When reviewing information on SNSs, hiring managers are hoping to find negative as well as positive information about candidates that are not revealed in resumes or interviews. One way employers are accessing this information is by looking at users' posts and comments as well as comments made by users' friends. These posts and comments can indicate the level of communication skills based on the structure and type of language that are used. For example, poor grammar, misspellings, and slang found on SNSs may leave employers the impression that the user is unprofessional or has poor communication skills. However, information collected from SNSs may also make candidates more attractive to employers by uncovering positive attributes as potential employees, such as skills not apparent on resumes and background information that supports their qualifications (CareerBuilder.com, 2008; Smith & Kidder, 2010).

Even though the information found on SNSs may be useful to organizations when reviewing job applicants, it could also be detrimental to use this information because it does not accurately reflect what the applicant will be like as an employee. The way people behave on SNSs may differ from how they behave in the workplace because many people post information to conform to social norms, even if it does not reflect their actual behavior in other situations. For example, ever since the "tagging" feature became

available on Facebook, mistaken identity has become a common problem because users can erroneously tag pictures and posts on pages without confirmation by another user (Slovensky & Ross, 2012). Once individuals are "tagged" by other users, it is assumed that these posts and pictures are accurate representations of those being "tagged"; however, organizations should not rely on these assumptions because users may be falsely associated with pictures and posts made by others.

Lastly, screening out job applicants by searching for their SNSs is not reliable because pages found in the search might not actually belong to the applicant. For example, searching for a common name like "John Smith" is likely to return with a long list of results without knowing whose page actually belongs to the applicant. If organizations are eliminating applicants based on information found on the wrong pages, it is possible that they may mistakenly let go of qualified applicants who potentially could be a great asset to the organization. In conclusion, organizations should be careful when utilizing SNSs as a screening tool because even though they can be easily accessible and valuable, there are also limitations and potential risks associated with them.

Applicants' Use of SNSs

Initially, users primarily used SNSs to maintain existing relationships or develop new connections. But as users are becoming more aware that potential employers are evaluating their pages, they are using SNSs for career development and are structuring their pages in an effort to be viewed more favorably by employers (Ellison et al., 2007; Kluemper & Rosen, 2009). Job applicants are making their pages more attractive to employers by modifying content on their pages to present a more professional and

acceptable image. For example, a junior from Michigan State University changed his Facebook display name to keep his personal life from potential employers while applying for summer internships even though there was nothing overly incriminating on his Facebook page; similarly, many students and graduates are changing their names or tightening privacy settings on Facebook to hide photos and wall posts from potential employers (Goldberg, 2010).

Even though many students believe there is no incriminating content on their pages, some students are removing pictures from their pages because they are afraid of what potential employers will think of them if they see pictures of them partying and drinking. One student specifically stated, "I don't have any tagged pictures available to the public just for precautionary measures, not because they are inappropriate. I would just like to remain somewhat private" (Goldberg, 2010, p. 3).

The Present Study

Because job applicants are using SNS pages to attract potential employers, it is important to understand the types of information applicants are specifically including and excluding from these pages. Although previous studies have examined how employers are using SNSs in their selection process, there has not been research that specifically examined what job applicants are doing to their pages for employment purposes. Because individuals are aware that employers are looking at employees' and job applicants' SNS pages when making employment-related decisions, it may be useful to learn what people are doing to their Facebook pages in order to look more marketable and favorable in the hopes to increase job opportunities.

The present study used an interview approach to explore which aspect of a Facebook page job applicants altered to attract potential employers. The goal of this study was to understand whether job applicants deliberately modified information on their Facebook pages to increase their chances of being hired. Because Facebook is primarily used for personal uses and networking with friends, and LinkedIn is used for building professional networks, Facebook is chosen to be included in this study because users are more likely to alter information on their Facebook pages when there is more personal information made available to the general public.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand whether job applicants have ever altered their Facebook pages for employment purposes and the reasons why they did or did not alter their pages. Given that there will be participants who have and have not altered their Facebook pages, it is important to identify whether their views differ on employers' uses of SNSs to make employment decisions and on job applicants manipulating their Facebook pages for employment purposes. Lastly, all participants are asked about their privacy settings to see if there are differences between the two groups. Thus, the present study posits the following research questions:

RQ1a: Do job applicants manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes?

RQ1b: What do job applicants do to manipulate their pages?

RQ1c: Why do job applicants manipulate their Facebook pages?

RQ1d: Do job applicants who manipulate their Facebook pages believe it is effective?

RQ1e: If job applicants do not manipulate their Facebook pages, why haven't they done anything?

RQ1f: For job applicants who do not manipulate their Facebook pages, have they thought of doing anything?

RQ2: Do job applicants think it is wrong for employers to make decisions using information found on Facebook pages?

RQ3: Do job applicants think it is wrong to manipulate Facebook pages for employment purposes?

RQ4: What do job applicants do to their privacy settings?

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 50 participants obtained through the researcher's professional and social networks. Because this study examined whether job applicants manipulated their Facebook pages for employment purposes, participants were required to have a Facebook page and were seeking employment at the time of data collection. The average time participants had been using their Facebook was 6 years and 5 months with an average of 608 friends in their social network.

Table 1 reports demographic information of the sample. Respondents' age ranged from 21 to 62 ($M = 28.60$, $SD = 9.93$). The sample consisted of 56% ($n = 28$) female and 44% ($n = 22$) male. The ethnic composition of the sample consisted of 72% ($n = 36$) Asian/Pacific Islander, 16% ($n = 8$) White, 4% ($n = 2$) Hispanic, 4% ($n = 2$) African American/Black, and 4% ($n = 2$) who classified themselves as Other.

The industries in which participants worked at varied with 22% ($n = 11$) Professional/Business Services, 18% ($n = 9$) Other, 16% ($n = 8$) Health Care, 16% ($n = 8$) Government, 12% ($n = 6$) Educational Services, 10% ($n = 5$) Retail, 4% ($n = 2$) Leisure and Hospitality, and 2%($n = 1$) Manufacturing. The majority of the respondents reported their tenure at their current organization as one to three years (34%), followed by less than six months (30%), more than 5 years (16%), six months to one year (14%), and three to five years (6%).

Table 1
Demographic Information

	n	%
Age	M = 28.60	SD = 9.93
Gender		
Male	22	44.0%
Female	28	56.0%
Length of time using Facebook (in years)	M = 6.42	SD = 1.89
Number of friends in network	M = 608	SD = 407.35
Ethnicity		
Asian/Pacific Islander	36	72.0%
White	8	16.0%
Hispanic	2	4.0%
African American/Black	2	4.0%
Other	2	4.0%
Industry		
Professional/Business Services	11	22.0%
Other	9	18.0%
Health Care	8	16.0%
Government	8	16.0%
Educational Services	6	12.0%
Retail	5	10.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	2	4.0%
Manufacturing	1	2.0%
Organization Tenure		
One to three years	17	34.0%
Less than six months	15	30.0%
More than five years	8	16.0%
Six months to one year	7	14.0%
Three to five years	3	6.0%

Measures

      Interview. Although previous research has examined how organizations use information found on SNSs to make employment decisions for current and potential employees, there is no direct research on how job applicants use SNSs to attract potential employers. Therefore, interviews were conducted in order to better understand job applicants' beliefs and behaviors on Facebook for employment purposes.

      The interviews were structured and consisted of nine open-ended questions developed by the researcher to examine whether individuals manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes and what specific characteristics are altered in order to attract potential employers. Four questions were identical to all participants and the five remaining questions varied depending on the participants' answers to previous questions.

      In order to identify whether individuals have ever done anything to their Facebook page for employment purposes, all participants were asked, "Recent news have found that employers are screening out job applicants by looking at information found on Facebook pages. Have you ever done anything to your Facebook page because you were concerned about an employer looking at it?" Participants who answered "yes" were asked two follow-up questions, "What exactly did you do to your Facebook page?" and "Why did you do something to your Facebook page?" to see what they had done to their Facebook pages and what they were concerned about that influenced them to make changes to their Facebook pages. They were also asked "Do you think it has been effective in terms of more job opportunities, interviews, or call backs? Why or why not?" Participants who answered "no" to "Recent news have found that employers are

screening out job applicants by looking at information found on Facebook pages. Have you ever done anything to your Facebook page because you were concerned about an employer looking at it?" were asked "Why haven't you done anything to your Facebook page" followed by "Have you thought of doing anything? Why or why not?" to examine why they had chosen not to do anything to their Facebook pages, and if they were considering doing anything in the future.

To understand whether participants believed it is immoral for employers to use information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions, all participants were asked, "Do you think it is wrong for employers to make decisions using information found on job applicants' Facebook pages? Why?" In order to find out what participants think about job applicants manipulating their Facebook pages for employment purposes, all participants were asked, "Do you think it is wrong for applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes? Why?"

With increased capabilities of privacy control on Facebook, it is important to identify participants' privacy settings to determine if there is a connection between the level of privacy control and the amount of content that is manipulated on a Facebook page. For example, even though job applicants may be concerned about employers looking at their Facebook pages, they might not modify content on their pages because their privacy settings are so high that it puts a restriction on the information that is shared to the general public. Lastly, to better understand the relationship between privacy settings and the amount of content job applicants modified, all participants were asked,

"What have you done to your Facebook page's privacy settings to control what other people can see?"

Demographics. In addition to learning about participants' behaviors on Facebook pages for employment purposes, beliefs on employers' use of Facebook to make employment-related decisions, and beliefs on job applicants' manipulations of Facebook pages for employment purposes, the researcher also wanted to learn about the participants' demographics in order to describe the sample. Therefore, participants were asked to report their age, gender, ethnicity, length of time they have had their Facebook pages, number of friends in their Facebook networks, tenure, and job industry.

Procedure

Participants who were interviewed were recruited through the researcher's professional and social networks. Participants had the choice of being interviewed in person or by phone. Those who were interviewed in person were given a consent form to read and sign at the time of the interview. Participants who were interviewed over the phone received the consent form by email and were asked to email a signed copy to the researcher before the interview. Interviews lasted about 20 minutes and were audio-recorded with permission of the participants. Interview content was later transcribed by the researcher for content analysis and only anonymous quotes were reported.

Content Analysis

Qualitative analysis was conducted using notes taken during in-person and phone interviews. Participants' responses were recorded in Excel for analysis purposes. The analysis was conducted by identifying different possible responses for each individual

question. Once the possible responses were identified, each interview was reexamined and coded for whether that response was present. Each response was then reviewed for similarities to be combined to create a broader category. Once categories were identified by the researcher, a second researcher separately coded the entire data set to ensure inter-rater reliability. Overall, the two researchers had a 95% agreement rate; in the cases where there was a disagreement, the two researchers discussed their disagreements until consensus was reached.

In addition to identifying responses to each individual research question, the group of participants who reported that they manipulated their Facebook pages for employment purposes were reexamined to identify common themes across each question in order to create distinctive profiles. Profiles were created based on responses to research questions that pertained to participants who had manipulated their Facebook pages for employment purposes.

Results

  The following analysis details the participants' behaviors on their Facebook pages for employment purposes, views on employers using Facebook to make employment decisions, beliefs regarding job applicants manipulating their pages to attract potential employers, and their privacy settings on their personal pages. Next, participants who reported they had manipulated their Facebook pages were reexamined in order to create profiles across the sample. Participants with similar responses across all questions were categorized into the same profile.

Behaviors on Facebook for Employment Purposes

  The purpose of Research Questions 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, and 1f was to understand participants' behaviors on their Facebook pages for employment purposes, such as what they had done to their Facebook pages, reasons for Facebook alterations, the effectiveness of Facebook alterations, reasons why participants decided not to alter their Facebook pages, and if they considered doing anything to their Facebook pages. Some research questions were asked contingent upon participants' responses to specific questions.

  Research Question 1a: Facebook Alterations. In order to differentiate between participants who altered their Facebook pages for employment purposes from those who did not, Research Question 1a asked, "Do job applicants manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes?" Sixty-eight percent ($n = 34$) of the participants reported that they had done something to their Facebook pages for employment purposes, and 32.0% ($n = 16$) said they had never done anything to their Facebook pages.

Research Question 1b: Examples of Facebook Alterations. Participants who reported that they had altered their Facebook pages were asked Research Question 1b: "What do job applicants do to manipulate their pages?" Of the participants who were interviewed, 61.8% ($n = 21$) admitted to privatizing the content on their pages. The most common types of privatization consisted of making their pages completely private, followed by hiding pictures, and limiting others' access to their Facebook content. To illustrate, one participant said, "I made my page completely private so no one can see anything." Another responded, "I made sure I hid pictures I don't want others to see and limited public and friend views on my page."

The next category of modification consisted of removing content, modifying content, and changing the display name. Of those participants, 55.9% ($n = 19$) said they had modified content on their pages to some extent for employment purposes. Participants mainly removed unflattering content such as pictures and posts that involved alcohol and drugs from their pages. Some even went as far as to changing their names on their pages to avoid being found by potential employers. For example, one participant said, "I changed my display name to a nickname and took down pictures that involved alcohol." Similarly, another responded, "I deleted pictures that involved alcohol and added more pictures with family to present a good image."

The last category of alteration consisted of participants who became more conscious of their activities on Facebook. A total of 14.7% ($n = 5$) became more conscious of their activities on Facebook such that they no longer updated their statuses, added colleagues to their network, and avoided posting information that could be

considered inappropriate in the workplace. For instance, one participant stated, "I am conscious about not putting information that could be considered a red flag," and another said, "I stopped updating my statuses and adding co-workers as my friends." In summary, results of Research Question 1b indicated that the most common type of Facebook alteration was privatization, and the extent to which information was altered on Facebook pages varied amongst participants even though they shared a common practice of doing something to their Facebook pages for employment purposes. Table 2 presents a list of things that participants had done to their Facebook pages.

Research Question 1c: Reasons for Facebook Alterations. Research Question 1c asked, "Why do job applicants manipulate their Facebook pages?" The purpose of this question was to explore the reasons why some participants altered their Facebook pages. Results showed that there were five reasons that led these participants to do something to their pages. The first reason for alteration was because participants wanted to avoid misperceptions. Of the participants who were interviewed, 64.7% ($n = 22$) of the participants said they were concerned about how others would perceive them based on information that appeared on their Facebook pages. For example, one participant said, "I am concerned about employers formulating negative opinions about me before getting to know me in person." Similarly, another said, "I don't want employers to make judgments about me based on content found on my Facebook page."

The second reason that led participants to alter their Facebook pages was that they were concerned about the content that appeared on their Facebook pages.

Table 2

What do job applicants do to manipulate their pages?

Categories	Description	*n*	%
Privatized content		21	61.8%
Making pages private	Page is no longer public; Page no longer searchable	9	26.5%
Hiding pictures	Hide inappropriate and tagged pictures from others	8	23.5%
Limiting others' access to content	Only friends have access to content; limit public and friend views	5	14.7%
No access to certain FB content	Don't allow anyone to post on the owner's wall; no access to what others post; blocked photo albums from others	4	11.8%
Modified content		19	55.9%
Removed unflattering content	Deleted pictures that involved alcohol or partying; removed content with swearing and offensive comments	11	32.4%
Modified content to appeal to employers	Added more pictures with family; changed default picture to make sure it is work appropriate; made page public to show work demo to be noticed	5	14.7%
Removed tagged content	Removed tagged pictures, comments, and wall posts	4	11.8%
Changed display name	Changed display name to a nickname to avoid being found	2	5.9%
Conscious of activities		5	14.7%
Became more Conscious of activities	Don't post inappropriate pictures; conscious about not putting information that could be considered a red flag; be wary of statuses that are posted	4	11.8%
Careful of who appears in social network	Deleted manager from current friends' list; stopped adding coworkers to social network	2	5.9%

*Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% because responses can be listed in more than one category

Of those participants, 20.6% ($n = 7$) were concerned about the appropriateness of content that appeared on their Facebook pages, including content that others have posted. Specifically, one participant said, "I am concerned about what others put on my wall such as incriminating information that employers might not want to see."

The third reason that led participants to alter their Facebook pages was to avoid a decreased chance in employment. A total of 11.8% ($n = 4$) of the participants indicated that they altered information on their pages in order to avoid a decreased chance in employment. For example, one participant responded, "I heard a lot of employers search online about their potential candidates, so I didn't want them to have a reason not to hire me." Another said, "I am concerned about employers finding information that could decrease my chances of employment."

The fourth reason that led participants to alter their Facebook pages was that participants wanted to separate professional and private lives. For example, 5.9% ($n = 2$) said they wanted to ensure that they separated their professional and private lives. Both participants said, "I just want to keep my private life separate from my professional life because I didn't want my employers to know about my social activities."

The last reason participants altered their Facebook pages was to present a professional image. Another 5.9% ($n = 2$) said, "I wanted to present a more professional image with the information that appears on my Facebook." Thus, the answer to Research Question 1c is that participants had different intentions when they altered their Facebook pages, with the most common reason being to avoid misperception by potential

employers. Table 3 presents a list of reasons why participants manipulated their

Facebook pages.

Table 3
Why do job applicants manipulate their Facebook pages?

Categories	Description	n	%
Avoid misperceptions	Don't want employers to formulate negative opinions or make judgments based on Facebook content; don't want employers to have negative perceptions based on Facebook; afraid employers would judge them based on the pictures on Facebook	20	64.7%
Concerned about content	Concerned about what others post on their wall such as incriminating information; inappropriate posts and pictures by friends	7	20.6%
Avoid a decreased chance in employment	Concerned that information found on Facebook would decrease chances of employment; didn't want employers to have a reason not to hire them	4	11.8%
Separate professional and private lives	Didn't want employers to know their social activities; want to keep private life separate from professional life	2	5.9%
Present a professional image	Presenting a positive image to potential employers	2	5.9%

*Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% because responses can be listed in more
than one category

Research Question 1d: Beliefs on the Effectiveness of Facebook Alterations.

Research Question 1d asked, "Do job applicants who manipulate their Facebook pages

believe it is effective?" Results showed that 94.1% ($n = 32$) believed it has not been

effective, whereas, only 5.9% ($n = 2$) believed that it has been effective in getting more

opportunities. The most common reason why participants thought it was ineffective was

because they did not believe that companies checked Facebook before hiring someone.

Of those participants who believed it has not been effective, 64.7% (*n* = 22) of the

participants were not sure whether companies checked Facebook before making

employment-related decisions. One participant said, "No, I don't think it helped

me because I don't think employers actually checked when I was applying for jobs."

The next reason participants thought it was ineffective was because they did not

track their number of opportunities. A total of 17.7% (*n* = 6) said they did not track

whether they received more opportunities after altering their Facebook pages.

Specifically, one participant said, "No, because I haven't tracked whether I got more call

backs after my Facebook was made private." The last reason participants believed it was

ineffective was because their pages were not searchable to begin with. The last reason

consisted of 11.8% (*n* = 4) of participants who made sure their pages were not searchable

by people outside of their network before looking for jobs. For instance, one participant

responded, "No, I don't believe it was effective because employers can't find me anyway,

therefore, they are unable to see any information about me."

There were two reasons that participants thought manipulating their pages

resulted in more job opportunities. The first reason participants thought manipulating

their pages resulted in more job opportunities was because there was an increase in

response rate from employers. Of those participants, 2.9% (*n* = 1) responded, "I think it

helped because I noticed an increase in response rate from employers." The next reason

participants thought manipulating their pages was effective was because their Facebook

page was not searchable. A total of 2.9% (*n* = 1) said, "I think it was effective because

employers are unable to find me, therefore, they are not able to find any negative

information about me." Thus, the results of Research Question 1d showed that even

though many participants manipulated their Facebook pages to appeal to potential

employers, the majority of them actually do not believe that it has been effective in

providing them with more job opportunities, interviews, or call backs. The reasons why

participants believed it was effective or ineffective are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Do job applicants who manipulate their Facebook pages believe it is effective?

Categories	Description	*n*	%
No		32	94.2%
Don't think companies check Facebook	Don't think employers actually checked when applying for jobs; hard to know whether employers looked at Facebook for employment purposes	22	64.7%
Did not track number of opportunities	Did not track whether they received more opportunities; did not track whether there were more call backs after page was made private	6	17.7%
Pages are not searchable	Employers can't find them	4	11.8%
Yes		2	5.8%
Increase in response rate	Got more call backs than before	1	2.9%
Facebook page is not searchable	Employers are unable to find any information	1	2.9%

Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% because responses can be listed in more
than one category

Research Question 1e: Reasons for not Altering Facebook Pages. Thirty-two

percent (*n* = 16) of the participants who responded they had never done anything to their

Facebook pages for employment purposes were asked the following Research Question

1e: "If job applicants do not manipulate their Facebook pages, why haven't they done

anything?" Results showed there were six reasons why participants had never done

anything to their Facebook pages. The first reason participants chose not to alter their

Facebook pages was because they were careful about the content that appeared on their pages. Of the participants who did not manipulate their Facebook pages, 56.3% ($n = 9$) reported that they did not manipulate their Facebook pages because they were cautious about the information that appeared on their pages to begin with. For instance, one participant said, "I haven't done anything because I make sure content on my Facebook page is clean and that there is nothing on my page that employers will find incriminating." Similarly, another said, "It is because I don't disclose any private information that would compromise my chances of being hired or integrity." The second reason was because participants believed the content that appeared on their Facebook pages was appropriate. A total of 18.8% ($n = 3$) said they were not worried about the information that employers would see on their pages because there was nothing employers would find incriminating. One participant said, "I don't think the things I post would jeopardize my chances in getting a job." Another said, "I don't believe I have any inappropriate content that I have to worry about." The third reason was because participants wanted to present a true representation of themselves. The third reason consisted of 6.3% ($n = 1$) of participants who explained that he/she wanted to ensure that the information on Facebook was a true reflection of who he/she is. The participant said, "I chose not to do anything because employers want to see how well someone fits into their company's culture, both from a work and social perspective.' The fourth reason was because Facebook is used for social purposes only. A total of 6.3% ($n = 1$) of the participants responded, "It is because I don't post anything on my Facebook to begin with. I only use it to look at friends' pages." The fifth reason was because of the privacy

settings of his/her Facebook page. Another 6.3% (*n* = 1) of the participants explained, "I

didn't do anything because my privacy settings were set to the strictest settings before I

started looking for work." The last reason was because the participant made sure to

separate professional life from private life. For example, 6.3% (*n* = 1) of the participants

said, "I made sure I keep my professional life separate from my personal life. I make

sure I don't have any coworkers as my Facebook friends." Thus, results of Research

Question 1e indicated that the most common reason why participants chose not to do

anything was because they were cautious about the content that appeared on their

Facebook pages, such as ensuring that there was nothing on their Facebook pages that

employers would consider incriminating or questionable. Table 5 provides a list of

reasons why participants have not done anything to their Facebook pages.

Table 5
If job applicants do not manipulate their Facebook pages, why haven't they done anything?

Categories	Description	*n*	%
Careful about content	Make sure content is clean and that employers will not find incriminating; careful about content on Facebook; don't post anything that is questionable	9	56.3%
Content is appropriate	Don't believe there is anything inappropriate; don't think content would jeopardize chances in getting a job; only have wedding pictures	3	18.8%
Present a true representation	Employers want to see how well someone fits into their company culture, both from a work and social aspect	1	6.3%
Social purposes only	Use Facebook to look at friends' pages	1	6.3%
Privacy settings	Privacy settings were set before looking for work	1	6.3%
Separate professional and private life	Ensure private and professional lives are separated, no coworkers as FB friends	1	6.3%

*Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% because responses can be listed in more than one category

Research Question 1f: Reasons for Possible Facebook Alterations. Similar to

Research Question 1e, participants who responded they had never done anything to their

Facebook pages were asked Research Question 1f: "For job applicants who do not

manipulate their Facebook pages, have they thought of doing anything?" There were

various reasons why participants ($n = 16$) said they never thought of doing anything. The

first reason participants said they never considered doing anything was because they were

careful of the content that appeared on their pages. As illustrated in Table 6, 75.0% ($n =$

12) of the participants said they were cautious of the content that was posted on their

pages. For example, one participant said, "I never thought of doing anything because I

am cautious of the content I post on my page." Similarly, another said, "No, because

there is no content that I am concerned about employers seeing on my Facebook page."

Another reason participants never thought of doing anything was because of their preset

privacy settings. Of the participants who never thought of doing anything, 12.5% ($n = 2$)

responded, "No, because my account is already set to private so that there is no

information that can be seen as incriminating." The next reason was because he/she

wanted to present a true representation. A total of 6.3% ($n = 1$) participants responded,

"No, because I want employers to be able to see if I am a good fit culturally." The last

reason was because there was no work-related connection in social network. Another

6.3% ($n = 1$) said he/she ensured that there were no coworkers that would appear in

current social network. Thus, the answer to Research Question 1f is that the reasons why

participants never considered doing anything to their Facebook pages was identical to

why they had not done anything to their Facebook pages thus far.

Table 6

For job applicants who do not manipulate their Facebook pages, have they thought of doing anything?

Categories	Description	*n*	%
No		16	100.0%
Careful of what appears on my page	Cautious of content and information that is posted on Facebook	12	75.0%
Page is private	Don't think employers would look into someone's page that's private; account is already set to private so that there's no information that can be seen as incriminating	2	12.5%
Present a true representation	Want employers to be able to see if he/she is a good fit culturally	1	6.3%
No work-related connections	Does not have any coworkers in social network	1	6.3%

*Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% because responses can be listed in more than one category

Summary of Research Questions 1a to 1f. Overall, the results of Research Question 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, and 1f illustrate whether participants had manipulated their Facebook pages for employment purposes, what they actually did, their beliefs on the effectiveness of what they had done, and the reasons why they had chosen to do or not to do something to their Facebook pages. Results indicated many people altered their content on Facebook by privatizing content on their pages as a way to avoid misperceptions by potential employers, and believed it was ineffective in helping them get more job opportunities. Results also showed that the reason why most participants had chosen not to alter their Facebook pages was because they were careful with the content that appeared on their pages to begin with. Similar to why participants had chosen not to alter their Facebook pages, most participants said they never thought of doing anything to their pages because they were careful with the content on their pages.

Beliefs on Employers' Use of Facebook

The purpose of Research Question 2 was to discover and understand participants' beliefs regarding employers' use of Facebook for employment purposes. All participants were asked the same question to allow for comparisons between the two groups of participants (participants who had done something to their Facebook pages and participants who had not) regarding their beliefs on employers' use of Facebook to make employment decisions.

Research Question 2: Wrongfulness of Employers' use of Facebook. Research Question 2 asked: "Do job applicants think it is wrong for employers to make decisions using information found on Facebook pages?" Specifically, 55.9% ($n = 19$) of the participants who had done something to their Facebook page and 62.5% ($n = 10$) of the participants who did not do anything thought it was wrong for employers to use information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions. For both groups of participants (47.1% ($n = 16$) from the "yes" group and 56.3% ($n = 9$) from the "no" group), the most common reason why they thought it was wrong for employers was because they believed that Facebook is based on personal life and does not reflect how someone will perform in a work setting. For example, a participant who admitted to doing something to his/her Facebook page said, "Yes, it is wrong because regardless of who it is, Facebook is someone's own personal space as opposed to something that employer should use to consider candidates. Facebook does not provide job-related information, therefore, it does not show how someone will perform as an employee." In addition, another participant said, "Yes, it's wrong because what one does in their private

life doesn't necessarily determine whether you would be a good employee or not."

Similarly, a participant who had not altered his/her Facebook page shared the same belief and said, "Yes, it's wrong because employers should not base work ethics or work experiences from information found on applicants' Facebook pages. Facebook also does not demonstrate an applicant's skill set." It is clear that participants believed that because Facebook is for personal use, it should not be utilized to screen out job applicants because it does not contain information that demonstrates someone's ability to perform job duties and functions.

The next reason both groups of participants thought it was wrong for employers was because information can be misinterpreted. A total of 11.8% ($n = 4$) of participants from the "yes" group and 12.5% ($n = 2$) from the "no" group believed that information found on Facebook pages could easily be misinterpreted by people who are looking at it. For example, one participant said, "It is not right to make decisions on the view of a webpage because Facebook information can be taken out of context." Another said, "Because everyone has their own stereotypes, images on Facebook can be portrayed how social media want them to and in the wrong perspective." This created a concern for participants because they felt that content on a job applicant's page could be misunderstood. They believed how one perceives and interprets information might not always be the same as others who are interpreting the same information.

Conversely, 44.1% ($n = 15$) participants from the "yes" group and 37.5% ($n = 6$) from the "no" group believed that it was not wrong for employers to use information found on Facebook pages for employment decisions. The main reason why participants

did not believe it was wrong was because Facebook provides more insight regarding job applicants. A total of 17.6% ($n = 6$) of participants from the "yes" group and 25.0% ($n = 4$) from the "no" group believed that Facebook provides information that allows employers to gain more insight on job applicants. For example, one participant said, "No, it's not wrong because you hire someone not solely on their ability to provide work for a company. Since now they represent you and your company and you want to hire someone with a whole package, Facebook is the source that will give insight of a person as a whole." Another participant said, "No, because employers should look at the complete package of a job applicant. And since Facebook provides a true representation of a candidate, it is okay for employers to use that information to make an informed decision." Participants agreed that even though Facebook is based on personal life, they believed that it provides useful information about candidates that employers could use.

The next reason participants believed employers should be allowed to use Facebook to make employment decisions was because Facebook is public. Participants from the "yes" and "no" group, 14.7% ($n = 5$) and 18.8% ($n = 3$) respectively, believed Facebook is a public avenue that is accessible to the general public. For instance, one participant said, "It's not wrong because any information that is on Facebook is public, and employers can use whatever they find to make decisions." Similarly, another participant said, "No, I don't think it's wrong because Facebook is a public forum and anything people post on it becomes public property." Because information is disclosed in a public webpage, participants felt that employers could use all of the information they came across to guide them to make decisions.

The last reason participants believed employers should be allowed to use Facebook to make employment decisions was because it allows employers to see if applicants are a good fit. A total of 11.8% ($n = 4$) of the participants from the "yes" group thought Facebook allows employers to see if job applicants are a good fit for the organization even if the job applicant is qualified to do the job. In particular, one participant said, "No, it's not wrong because companies have the right to decide the type of employee they want to hire. Even if a person is qualified, they might not be a cultural fit and Facebook may offer information to help them make that decision." Similarly, another participant said, "No, because you want employees who will reflect upon the company's goals and values. And if they find something to their distaste, they have every right to use that as a tool to decide whether or not to go forward with that candidate." Participants believed that organizations should look beyond qualifications when hiring potential employees because they believed that other traits such as personality and cultural fit are as important in determining whether a job applicant is a qualified hire for the organization. Table 7 presents a list of reasons why participants believed it was wrong or not for employers to use Facebook pages to make employment decisions.

Summary of Research Question 2. The responses to Research Question 2 suggest that even though the two groups had different behaviors in terms of their Facebook pages, they shared the same belief in regards to whether it was wrong for employers to use Facebook for employment purposes.

Table 7

Do you think it's wrong for employers to make decisions using information found on job applicants' Facebook pages? Why?

Categories	Description	Participants who manipulated their pages (*n*)	%	Participants who did not manipulate their pages (*n*)	%
Yes		19	55.9%	10	62.5%
Facebook is based on personal life	Facebook content is not job-related; it reflects the social aspect of an individual; Facebook is based on personal life; people may perform differently at work than in private; work shouldn't be involved in private life; does not reflect work ethics; does not indicate how well someone will perform a job; private life doesn't determine whether someone would be a good employee	16	47.1%	9	56.3%
Information can be misinterpreted	Facebook information can be inaccurate representations of an individual; content can be portrayed differently depending on who is looking at the information; information can be taken out of context	4	11.8%	2	12.5%
No		15	44.1%	6	37.5%
Facebook provides more insight regarding job applicants	Although Facebook may not accurately represent someone, it still shows how you want others to perceive you; gives insight of a person as a whole; hiring someone is also about personality; personal information may be crucial to a job; it's reflecting who they really are; another evaluation of how the employee will be	6	17.6%	4	25.0%
Facebook is public	Any information that is on Facebook is public and employers can use what they find to make decisions	5	14.7%	3	18.8%
Allows employers to see if applicants are a good fit for the company	Even if a person is qualified, they might not be a cultural fit and Facebook might offer information to help make that decision; companies want employees who will reflect upon the company's goals and values	4	11.8%	0	0.0%

*Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% because responses can be listed in more than one category

Although there were more participants who believed it was wrong for employers to use information on Facebook to make employment decisions, there were still a number of participants who believed it was acceptable for employers to do so. In conclusion, participants mainly thought it was wrong because Facebook is based on personal life and has nothing to do with how someone will perform in a job. For participants who thought it was appropriate for employers to use Facebook information, they believed that Facebook is able to provide the organization with more valuable information about job candidates.

Beliefs on Applicants' Use of Facebook

Similar to Research Question 2, the purpose of Research Question 3 was to discover and understand participants' beliefs regarding applicants' use of Facebook for employment purposes. All participants from both groups were asked the same question in order to compare and contrast the varying beliefs on applicants' use of Facebook.

Research Question 3: Wrongfulness of Applicants' Manipulations. Research Question 3 asked, "Do job applicants think it is wrong to manipulate Facebook pages for employment purposes?" A total of 94.1% ($n = 32$) from the "yes" group and 68.8% ($n = 11$) from the "no" group believed it was not wrong for applicants to alter their Facebook pages for employment purposes.

The most common reason why both groups of participants thought it was acceptable was because applicants were presenting the best image to potential employers, with 52.9% ($n = 18$) from the "yes" group and 56.3% ($n = 9$) from the "no" group. For example, one participant said, "No, it's not wrong because they are creating the best

representation of themselves to increase their chances of being hired." Similarly, another participant said, "No, because people are supposed to present the best versions of themselves when applying for jobs." Because job applicants were trying to secure a job, participants believed that job applicants were allowed to manipulate their pages in order to present the best image of themselves.

The second reason participants believed it was not wrong for applicants was because applicants could do whatever they wanted on their pages. A total of 29.4% ($n = 10$) form the "yes" group and 12.5% ($n = 2$) from the "no" group believed because the applicants were the owners of their Facebook pages, they could do whatever they wanted on their pages. One participant said, "It's not wrong because Facebook is a public site and applicants can and should be able to choose what content they want to be shown to the public." Another participant who shared the same belief said, "No, because it is up to them what information they want public and searchable. They have the option to choose what others can see." Because the nature of Facebook is for people to share personal information to the public, applicants have the freedom to choose the types of information they want to disclose to others.

The next reason participants believed it was not wrong for applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages was because it helps to prevent wrong judgments made by others. Of those participants, 8.8% ($n = 3$) of participants from the "yes" group thought applicants were allowed to manipulate their pages as a way to prevent wrong judgments made by others. Specifically, one participant said, "It's not wrong because people should be allowed to alter information as a way to prevent others from making the

wrong judgments and having the wrong perceptions." With Facebook being a public site, information that appears on the site is easily accessible by the general public. Participants thought that applicants should be able to alter their Facebook pages to avoid being judged based on social activities.

The last reason participants believed it was not wrong for applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages was because employers are using Facebook to find information on job applicants. A total of 5.9% ($n = 2$) form the "yes" group and 6.3% ($n = 1$) from the "no" group thought that because employers are allowed to use information found on Facebook to make employment decisions, applicants should be allowed to alter their Facebook pages. One participant explained, "No, it's not wrong because if employers are looking at Facebook, potential employees should be able to present a positive image of themselves." Also, another participant said, "No, because it's okay for applicants to be prepared for someone to check their page." Now that organizations are using Facebook to screen out job applicants, participants believed that it was acceptable for participants to alter their Facebook pages to prepare for potential employers to check.

Although many participants believed it was not wrong for applicants to alter their Facebook pages for employment purposes, 5.9% ($n = 2$) from the "yes" group and 31.3% ($n = 5$) from the "no" group disagreed with their beliefs. Participants thought that it was wrong because applicants were lying and falsifying information on their pages to attract potential employers. For example, one participant said, "Yes, it is wrong because it is lying and making yourself look better than you actually are." Similarly, another participant said, "It is wrong because it doesn't show who they really are. People are

doing it to show a different side of themselves that might be unrealistic." Participants understood that applicants were trying to increase their job opportunities by making themselves look appealing; however, they believed that it was unacceptable when job applicants were misrepresenting themselves on their pages in an attempt to attract potential employers. Table 8 presents a list of reasons why participants believed it was wrong or not wrong for job applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes.

Summary of Research Question 3. The responses to Research Question 3 suggest that more participants thought it was permissible for job applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes than those who did not. Specifically, the main reason participants believed it was not wrong for applicants to manipulate their pages was because they were trying to present the best image to potential employers. In addition, results also indicated that only participants from the "no" group believed it was wrong for applicants to alter information on their Facebook pages for employment purposes. Participants believed it was wrong because applicants were deliberately misrepresenting themselves as a way to appeal to employers.

Privacy Settings

The purpose of Research Question 4 was to understand participants' privacy settings in relation to the amount of content that was manipulated on their Facebook pages. Similar to Research Question 2 and Research Question 3, all participants were asked the same question to identify similarities and differences between the two groups of participants.

Table 8
Do job applicants think it is wrong to manipulate Facebook pages for employment purposes?

Categories	Description	Participants who manipulated their pages (*n*)	%	Participants who did not manipulate their pages (*n*)	%
No		32	94.1%	11	68.8%
Presenting the best image	Potential employees should be able to present a positive image of themselves; make themselves presentable and appealing to potential employers	18	52.9%	9	56.3%
Applicants can do whatever they want on their page	Only sharing information that is intended to be shared; they can present themselves however they want on their page; they can alter their page to put themselves in the best possible light	10	29.4%	2	12.5%
Prevent wrong judgments	Prevent others from making the wrong judgments and perceptions based on social activity	3	8.8%	0	0.0%
Employers are using Facebook to find information on job applicants	Applicants can be prepared for someone to check their page	2	5.9%	1	6.3%
Yes		2	5.9%	5	31.3%
Because it is lying	It's making yourself look better than you actually are; applicants are untruthful and creating a false representation	2	5.9%	5	31.3%

*Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% because responses can be listed in more than one category

Research Question 4: Privacy Control. Research Question 4 asked, "What do job applicants do to their privacy settings?" Based on the interview responses, there were six predetermined privacy settings for both groups of participants. The majority of the participants from the "yes" and "no" groups, 70.6% ($n = 24$) and 87.5% ($n = 14$) respectively, limited access to their content. The most common theme within this category was ensuring that only friends had access to content, followed by public could only see basic information, blocked content from certain individuals, and had different settings for different groups of audiences. For example, one participant said, "I made my page where only friends can view my page and content. I am searchable by the public; however, they can only see my name and basic information." The second privacy setting was participants had privatized the content on their Facebook pages. A total of 26.5% ($n = 9$) from the "yes" group blocked tagged content from being seen by anyone and making all pictures private from everyone. One participant said, "I made my settings to where I am the only one who has access to my tagged content and pictures." The third privacy setting of making themselves not searchable appeared in both groups of participants. To avoid having people who were not in their social network to have access to their information, 20.6% ($n = 7$) of participants from the "yes" group and 12.5% ($n = 2$) of participants from the "no" group made themselves not searchable by the general public. The fourth privacy setting of making sure content was appropriate consisted of only participants from the "yes" group. Of the participants who had manipulated their Facebook pages, 14.7% ($n = 5$) said rather than changing their privacy settings, they made sure that content was appropriate before it appeared on their pages. For example,

one participant said, "I review everything that is tagged before it gets posted on my wall and is shared to people who are in my network." Similarly, another participant said, "I set my page where it requests for permission to review everything that is tagged before it gets posted on my wall." The fifth privacy setting was limiting what others could do on their Facebook pages. A total of 11.8% ($n = 4$) of participants from the "yes" group created control in what others were allowed to do on their Facebook pages. For example, one participant said, "I created control so that people can't post anything on my wall and tag me in posts without my approval." Lastly, instead of changing their privacy settings to limit what others could see or do, participants from both "yes" and "no" groups made their pages completely public, 2.9% ($n = 1$) and 12.5% ($n = 2$) respectively. When asked why they decided to make their page completely public, one participant responded, "I made my Facebook public to show work demo and to create a portfolio to be noticed by employers." Table 9 provides a list of job applicants' different privacy settings.

Summary of Research Question 4. The results of Research Question 4 suggested that participants from the "yes" group had more privacy settings to control what other people could see compared to participants from the "no" group. Even though participants from the "yes" group had more privacy control, the majority of both groups changed their privacy settings to limit others' access to their Facebook content. In addition to limiting others' access to their content, participants from the "yes" group also privatized their content, made themselves not searchable, ensured content was appropriate, limited what others could do, and made their pages public.

Table 9
What do job applicants do to their privacy settings?

Categories	Description	Participants who manipulated their pages (*n*)	%	Participants who did not manipulate their pages (*n*)	%
Limited access to content	Only friends have access to content, followed by public can only see basic information, blocking content from certain individuals, and having different settings for different groups of audiences	24	70.6%	14	87.5%
Privatized content	Tagged content are blocked from everyone; all pictures are private	9	26.5%	0	0.0%
Not searchable	Not searchable by the public	7	20.6%	2	12.5%
Made sure content is appropriate	Review everything that is tagged before it gets posted; request permission to review and approve any tagged content before it is posted	5	14.7%	0	0.0%
Limit what others can do on their Facebook pages	People can't post pictures or tag the user without the owner's approval; no one can post on wall	4	11.8%	0	0.0%
Made page public	Everything is public	1	2.9%	2	12.5%

*Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% because responses can be listed in more than one category

Profiles of Participants who Manipulated their Facebook Pages

After each Research Question was examined and categories were identified, responses of participants who reported that they had altered their Facebook pages were reexamined across all questions to create distinct profiles. The purpose of creating profiles was to identify similarities and differences between these participants, and to discover any patterns that occurred across participants who have manipulated their Facebook Pages. There were seven distinct profiles that were identified based on participants' responses to what they had done to their Facebook pages, why they manipulated their pages, the effectiveness of the manipulations, wrongfulness of employers' use of Facebook pages for employment decisions, wrongfulness of job applicants' Facebook manipulations for employment purposes, and their current Facebook privacy settings. Profiles were presented in the order of frequency that occurred in participants, with the most frequent occurrences to the least frequent. Table 10 highlights the seven distinct profiles that were identified.

Maintain privacy and oppose employers' use of Facebook. The first profile consisted of participants who privatized their content in order to avoid misperceptions by potential employers, believed it was ineffective in getting more job opportunities, opposed employers' use of Facebook for employment decisions, believed it was not wrong for job applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages, and limited others' access to their Facebook content. These participants believed manipulating their Facebook pages was ineffective in helping them get more job opportunities because they did not

think companies actually checked Facebook before making employment-related decisions. In regards to their beliefs on the wrongfulness of employers' use of information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions, they believed that it was wrong for employers because Facebook is based on personal life and does not reflect someone's ability to perform a job. In addition, participants did not believe that it was wrong for job applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes because they were trying to present a good image to attract potential employers. Lastly, participants limited others' access to their Facebook content such that only friends within their social network had access, and that people outside of their network could only see their basic information.

Modify Facebook and support employers' use of Facebook. Although the second profile share many similarities with the first profile, there were two key differences between the two profiles. Participants in the second profile modified their content such as removing unflattering and tagged content as a way to avoid misperceptions by potential employers instead of privatizing their content. The second difference is their beliefs on employers' use of information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions. Contrary to the first profile, participants believed that it was not wrong for employers to use Facebook to make employment decisions because it allowed companies to gain more insight on job applicants.

Maintain privacy and ensure appropriateness of content. Participants in the third profile privatized their content because they were concerned about the appropriateness of content that appeared on their Facebook pages, believed it was

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ineffective in receiving more job opportunities, supported employers' use of Facebook to make employment-related decisions, believed it was not wrong for job applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages, and privatized their Facebook content. Similar to the first two profiles, participants also believed that manipulating their Facebook pages was ineffective in getting them more job opportunities. However, they believed it was ineffective because they did not track their number of opportunities pre and post manipulations. Participants were supportive of employers using information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions because they believed that it allowed employers to see if applicants were a good fit for the organization. Participants were also supportive of applicants manipulating their Facebook pages for employment purposes because they believed that applicants were allowed to do whatever they wanted because they were the owners of their pages. Lastly, unlike the last two profiles, participants privatized their content by blocking tagged content and pictures from everyone.

Maintain privacy and support employers' use of Facebook. Similar to the last profile, participants also privatized their content because they were concerned about the appropriateness of content that appeared on their pages. However, they differed in their beliefs on the effectiveness of manipulations, employers' use of Facebook pages to make employment decisions, and applicants' manipulations on Facebook for employment purposes. Participants thought that manipulating their Facebook pages was ineffective in resulting in more job opportunities because they did not think companies checked Facebook before making employment decisions. Since Facebook is public and any information that appears on there is public as well, they believed it was not wrong for

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employers to use this information to help them make employment decisions. In addition, participants also thought it was not wrong for job applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes because they were trying to present a good image to appeal to potential employers. Lastly, participants had the same privacy settings as the last profile where they privatized content on their pages.

Avoid a decreased chance in job opportunities. Unlike previous profiles, participants had chosen to privatize their content because they wanted to avoid a decreased chance of employment. Participants believed that manipulating their profiles was ineffective in receiving more job opportunities because they did not notice a change in response rate from employers after their profiles were altered. Participants were not supportive of employers using information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions because Facebook is based on personal life and does not reflect how someone will perform in a job. They also believed that it was not wrong for job applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes because they could do whatever they want on their own personal pages. Lastly, participants set their privacy settings to limit others' access to their Facebook content.

Conscious of activities and oppose applicants' manipulations on Facebook. Similar to the participants in the first two profiles, these participants also intended to avoid misperceptions by potential employers. However, rather than privatizing or modifying content on Facebook pages, participants became more conscious of their activities such as not posting any inappropriate content that could be considered incriminating to viewers. Participants also believed that manipulating their Facebook did

not result in more job opportunities because they did not think that companies actually checked Facebook before making employment decisions. In regards to employers' use of information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions, participants believed that it was wrong because information that appeared on Facebook could be misinterpreted and taken out of context. One of the key distinctions was that this was the only profile that believed it was wrong for applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes. Specifically, participants believed it was wrong because applicants were being untruthful and created a false representation of themselves. Lastly, similar to the first two profiles, participants also limited others' access to their Facebook content.

Present a professional image and publicize Facebook content. The last profile consisted of the participants who modified their content in order to present a professional image of themselves. This was the only profile that believed manipulating Facebook content was effective in getting job opportunities because participants noticed a change in response rate. Participants also believed that it was wrong for employers to use information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions because Facebook is based on personal life and does not demonstrate someone's ability to perform a job. Similar to the majority of the profiles, participants did not believe it was wrong for job applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages because they were allowed to do whatever they wanted on their personal pages. Lastly, unlike any other profiles, participant made his/her Facebook page completely public as a way to appeal to employers.

Table 10
Profiles

	What exactly did you do to your page?	Why did you do it?	Do you think it was effective?	Do you think it's wrong for employers to make decisions using information found on job applicants' Facebook pages? Why?	Do you think it is wrong for applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes? Why?	What have done to your privacy settings to control what other people can see?
Maintain privacy and oppose employers' use of Facebook	Privatized content	Avoid misperceptions	Ineffective because don't think companies check	Wrong for employers because Facebook is based on personal life and doesn't reflect job performance	Not wrong for applicants because they are trying to present a good image	Limited access to content
Modify Facebook and support employers' use of Facebook	Modified content	Avoid misperceptions	Ineffective because don't think companies check	Not wrong for employers because it allows companies to gain more insight on applicants	Not wrong for applicants because they are trying to present a good image	Limited access to content
Maintain privacy and ensure appropriateness of content	Privatized content	Concerned about appropriateness of content	Ineffective because didn't track opportunities	Not wrong for employers because it allows employers to see if they are a good fit for organization	Not wrong for applicants because they can do what they want since it's their page	Privatized content on page
Maintain privacy and support employers' use of Facebook	Privatized content	Concerned about appropriateness of content	Ineffective because don't think companies check	Not wrong for employers because Facebook is public	Not wrong for applicants because they are trying to present a good image	Privatized content on page

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Avoid a decreased chance in job opportunities	Privatized content	Avoid a decrease in chances of employment	Ineffective because there was no change in response rate	Wrong for employers because Facebook is based on personal life and doesn't reflect job performance	Not wrong for applicants because they can do what they want since it's their page	Limited access to content
Conscious of activities and oppose applicants' manipulations of Facebook	Become more conscious	Avoid misperceptions	Ineffective because don't think companies check	Wrong for employers because information can be misinterpreted	Wrong for applicants because it is lying	Limited access to content
Present a professional image and publicize Facebook content	Modified content	Present a professional image	Effective because there was a change in response rate	Wrong for employers because Facebook is based on personal life and doesn't reflect job performance	Not wrong for applicants because they can do what they want since it's their page	Made profile public

Discussion

Given the rising popularity of SNSs such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, previous studies have examined how organizations utilize SNSs to gather information about potential employees and how job applicants are using SNSs for career development. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether job applicants have manipulated their SNSs for employment purposes, to identify the specific characteristics of their pages that were altered as a way of attracting potential employers, and to understand job applicants' beliefs regarding employers' and applicants' use of Facebook for employment purposes.

The results of the first research question that asked participants if they had done anything to their Facebook pages for employment purposes showed that more participants had done something to their Facebook pages than those who had not. This indicated that job applicants were cognizant of employers looking at job applicants' Facebook pages and were becoming more aware of the information they wanted to appear on their Facebook pages.

The results in regards to what was actually altered on Facebook revealed that job applicants were more likely to privatize their content such as making their Facebook pages private, hiding pictures, and limiting others' access to their content than modifying content and being conscious of their activities on Facebook. This demonstrated that job applicants believed that privatizing their content was the most effective way in appealing to potential employers.

Results pertaining to why job applicants manipulated their Facebook pages revealed that job applicants wanted to avoid misperceptions by potential employers, followed by being concerned about the appropriateness of their content, avoiding a decreased chance in employment, separating professional life from private life, and presenting a professional image. This showed that job applicants were more likely to alter their Facebook pages to prevent being misunderstood by potential employers based on the content that appeared on their pages.

Although the first research question showed that participants manipulated their Facebook pages for employment purposes, results pertaining to the effectiveness of manipulations indicated that job applicants did not believe it was effective in attaining more job opportunities. Interestingly, results showed that the reason why job applicants believed it was ineffective was because they did not think companies actually checked Facebook before making employment decisions. Even though job applicants manipulated their Facebook pages with the intent to appeal to potential employers and to receive more job opportunities, they did not actually believe that their manipulations helped them in achieving that goal.

For job applicants who did not manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes, they were asked why they had not done anything to their pages. Results demonstrated that job applicants did not alter any content on their pages because they ensured that the content on Facebook was not incriminating to potential employers. This demonstrated that as long as job applicants were careful with the information that appeared on their pages, they were less likely to manipulate their pages in order to appeal

to potential employers. As a follow-up question, they were also asked if they had thought of doing anything to their Facebook pages. Results showed that job applicants were not likely to ever do anything to their pages as long as they were cautious of the content and information that was posted on Facebook.

In terms of beliefs regarding employers' use of information found on Facebook pages to make employment decisions, the respondents were divided in their beliefs regarding whether it was wrong for employers to use information found on Facebook to make employment decisions. For the job applicants who believed it was wrong, results revealed that they disapproved of employers that would use information on Facebook because Facebook was based on one's personal life and did not reflect how someone would perform in a job setting. On the contrary, the job applicants who supported employers' use of Facebook information believed that Facebook was able to provide employers insight on job applicants such as their personality and who they truly are.

The results in relation to the beliefs on job applicants' manipulations of their Facebook pages suggested that job applicants believed that because the intent was to attract potential employers and to receive more job opportunities, it was acceptable to alter information on Facebook in order to present the best image to employers. However, results also showed that job applicants believed it was wrong to alter information on Facebook because it misrepresented who someone truly was and made yourself look better than you actually were.

Results regarding the privacy settings of Facebook showed that most job applicants limited others' access to their content in such a way that only friends had

access to their content, public could only see basic information, and their content was blocked from certain individuals. This indicated that job applicants' privacy settings on their Facebook pages might influence whether or not they manipulated their pages and the amount of information that was actually altered.

Based on the research questions that were answered by the job applicants who had manipulated their Facebook pages for employment purposes, seven distinct profiles were identified. The profile that occurred most frequently amongst the participants was "maintain privacy and oppose employers' use of Facebook." Participants in this profile privatized their content to avoid misperceptions by potential employers, believed Facebook manipulations were ineffective in receiving more job opportunities, opposed to employers' use of Facebook to make employment decisions, believed it was not wrong for job applicants to manipulate their pages for employment purposes, and limited others' access to their content. The second profile differed from the first profile in what participants had done to their Facebook pages and their beliefs on employers' use of Facebook for employment decisions. Participants in this profile modified instead of privatized their Facebook content to avoid misperceptions by potential employers, and they believed it was not wrong for employers to use information found on Facebook to make employment decisions because it allowed employers to gain more insight on job applicants. The third profile was distinct from the first two profiles in terms of why participants had manipulated their Facebook pages. Instead of wanting to avoid misperceptions by potential employers, participants manipulated their Facebook pages because they were concerned about the appropriateness of the content that appeared on

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their pages. Similar to the third profile, participants in the fourth profile also privatized their content because they were concerned about the appropriateness of content that appeared on their Facebook. However, participants in this profile were the only participants who supported employers' use of Facebook for employment decisions because Facebook is public. They believed that because Facebook is public, information that appeared on Facebook is public as well. Therefore, they believed that employers could use information that was found on Facebook to help them make employment-related decisions. The fifth profile also differed from first four profiles in the reason why participants had manipulated their Facebook pages. Rather than to avoid misperceptions by potential employers and concerned about the content that appeared on Facebook, these participants had chosen to do something to their Facebook because they wanted to avoid a decreased chance in job opportunities. The sixth profile was the only profile that consisted of participants who became more conscious of their activities on Facebook. For example, participants became more careful with the information that was posted on Facebook and ensured that there were no work-related connections in their social network. This was also the only profile that opposed job applicants' manipulations on Facebook for employment purposes. Participants believed that it was wrong because job applicants were lying on their pages and were misrepresenting themselves in order to attract potential employers. Lastly, participants in the seventh profile modified content on their Facebook in order to present a professional image to potential employers. In addition, this was the only profile that consisted of participants who made their Facebook completely public as a way to appeal to employers.

Implications of the Study

The findings in the current study add to the current research on the use of SNSs for employment purposes, given that this is the first study to look at what job applicants have specifically done to their Facebook pages for employment purposes. Previous research has examined how employers utilized SNSs as a way to promote their own brands, monitor current employees, and screen out job applicants as a way to prevent future harm to their organizations, and how job applicants began to use SNSs for career development; however, there was no direct research that looked at what job applicants have done to their SNSs to attract potential employers. The current study provides a better understanding of whether job applicants do manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes and the reasons that led them to manipulate content on their Facebook pages. Results of the study not only expand on the research of job applicants' use of SNSs for employment purposes, the current study also introduces job applicants' beliefs on the wrongfulness of employers' use of Facebook to make employment-related decisions, and the wrongfulness of job applicants' manipulations on Facebook to attract potential employers.

Assuming that organizations continue their practice of using information found on Facebook to help them make employment-related decisions, it is important for organizations to understand the potential consequences on using this information. Results of this study provided that job applicants were aware that employers might be looking at Facebook to help them make employment-related decisions; as a result, job applicants were finding ways to ensure they were presenting a professional image and

appeal to potential employers. Organizations need to be aware that although Facebook may provide information on job applicants in addition to resumes and in-person interviews, information on Facebook pages may not accurately represent who they truly are because they might have hidden or modified content on their pages. Furthermore, organizations also need to be aware that some job applicants do not believe that it is wrong for them to manipulate information on Facebook to attract potential employers. Therefore, organizations that use Facebook to help them make employment decisions need to be mindful of the content that appears on Facebook and the validity of the information that is found on a job applicant's page. Organizations may want to continue to use Facebook as a resource to help them determine whether job applicants are a good fit for the organization; however, organizations should not put too much weight on the information that appears on Facebook considering that job applicants might have falsified their Facebook pages.

In addition to the implications that were previously mentioned for organizations, there are also implications pertaining to job applicants that need to be discussed. Applicants need to be aware that even though they may make their Facebook pages not searchable by the public, organizations are still able to navigate to their pages and access their information by clicking on pictures they are tagged in or finding their names in a friends' friend list (Constine, 2013). With that being said, applicants need to understand that the best way to control what other people can see is by manually choosing who can see the individual things that are shared on Facebook (Richter, 2013). According to a social recruiting survey that is conducted by Jobvite (2013), employers reported that they

were more concerned about spelling and grammar errors than references to alcohol use or partying; therefore, applicants who manually modified content such as removing unflattering content in their Facebook pages need to be aware that recruiters reacted more negatively about spelling and grammar errors in posts than seeing pictures that are related to alcohol or drug use. Rather than spending time on removing information that might be seen as incriminating, job applicants should focus on using the correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation in their posts. Furthermore, applicants can include more information that helps demonstrate their cultural fit to appear more attractive to organizations.

Strengths of the Study

Although previous research has examined how organizations are using information found on SNSs for employment-related decisions and how job applicants are using SNSs for career advancement, it did not specifically look at what job applicants were doing to their Facebook pages in order to attract potential employers. By conducting in-depth structured interviews, the study was able to explore what job applicants had done to their Facebook pages for employment purposes and as a result gain a deeper understanding of why they had chosen to do something to their Facebook. Furthermore, this study was able to provide insight regarding job applicants' beliefs on employers' and applicants' use of Facebook for employment-related purposes. The present study provided evidence that demonstrated some job applicants had intentionally altered their Facebook pages for the purpose of attracting potential employers.

Limitations and Future Direction

Although the present study has its strengths, there are also limitations that should be addressed. The first limitation was that although participants believed that manipulating their Facebook pages was ineffective, it is not clear if they were actually able to measure whether it had resulted in more job opportunities after manipulating content on their Facebook pages. The consequence is that other factors might have influenced participants' belief on its effectiveness. For example, many participants believed that it was ineffective not because they did not notice an increase in responses from employers; rather, it was because they were unable to determine whether employers checked their Facebook pages before making employment decisions. Future research should attempt to do an experimental study to compare manipulated and non-manipulated Facebook pages to identify if there are differences in the number of opportunities offered by employers. Future research also needs to investigate the different characteristics on Facebook that influence employers' decisions, and whether manipulating these characteristics actually helps job applicants receive more job opportunities.

A second limitation was that only one type of SNS was investigated in the current study. Results from a survey conducted by Jobvite (2013) has shown that the number of companies using social networks to support their recruitment efforts is increasing, and that the top social networks used for recruiting are LinkedIn (94%), Facebook (65%), and Twitter (55%). Facebook was selected for this study because it is one of the most utilized social networking sites; however, it is unknown if Facebook alone has an impact on the job opportunities offered to job applicants. Organizations may check job applicants'

Facebook pages in addition to LinkedIn, Twitter, and other resources before making employment decisions. Future research should investigate possible manipulations of more than one type of SNS to understand the influence of other SNSs on the results.

A third limitation of this current study was the method used to recruit participants. Because this study collected data from participants in the researcher's professional and social network, participants who were not part of those networks were excluded from the study. Given that this methodology resulted in a primarily younger sample, the results of this study may not be representative of all the people on Facebook who are seeking employment. It also resulted in having participants who were less likely to be looking for full-time jobs or career growth opportunities, because many participants were still in school or had recently graduated from college. Therefore, further research that investigates manipulations on Facebook purposes for employment purposes should include a sample that is consisted of a more diverse age group.

Conclusion

Organizations and job applicants continue to use SNSs such as Facebook for employment-related purposes. The current study provides support to whether job applicants had manipulated their Facebook pages to appeal to potential employers in the hopes of receiving more job opportunities. This study found that job applicants manipulated their Facebook pages for various reasons, with the most reoccurring reason being to avoid misperceptions by potential employers. This study also indicated that there were more job applicants who privatized their content such has making their pages private and hiding pictures than purposely modifying content that appeared on their

pages. Given the findings of this study, organizations need to be aware that information that are found on job applicants' pages might not accurately represent who they are and how they will perform as a future employee.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Recent news have found that employers are screening out job applicants by looking at information found on Facebook Pages. Have you ever done anything to your Facebook Page because you were concerned about an employer looking at it?
2. If yes, what exactly did you do to your Facebook page?
3. Why did you do something to your Facebook page?
4. Do you think it has been effective in terms of more job opportunities, interviews, or call backs? Why or why not?
5. If no, why haven't you done anything to your Facebook page?
6. Have you thought of doing anything? Why or why not?
7. Do you think it is wrong for employers to make decisions using information found on job applicants' Facebook pages? Why?
8. Do you think it is wrong for applicants to manipulate their Facebook pages for employment purposes? Why?
9. What have you done to your Facebook page's privacy settings to control what other people can see?