Academic Studies About Screening Applicants' Social Media: New Cottage Industry?

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I may need to start a separate blog to share and comment on the wealth of opinions that seem to be coming forward on the topic of employers screening applicants' social media. Hot on the heels of my post applauding what I thought was a sensible and realistic article suggesting that, well, yes if you are an applicant you should expect people to read information you make publicly available, I read about a new study out of North Carolina State University regarding applicants' attitudes about social media screening by employers. This comes not long after a study out of Carnegie Mellon that made its way to various headlines suggesting that "employers discriminate via social media" because the study found that employers tended to screen out dummy Muslim candidates, especially employers more conservative parts of the country.

The North Carolina State Study is based on two "exercises" that, the authors said, showed that applicants would have a lower opinion of employers who checked their applicants' social media. One of the authors is quoted as saying, " Elite job prospects have options, and are more likely to steer clear of potential employers they don't trust." Hmmm, if I were an elite applicant, I think I would be pleased to know that my employer was not ignoring publicly available red flags, but instead was engaging in a carefully crafted applicant screening process designed in consultation with legal counsel to ensure compliance with applicable laws. In any event, something tells me more studies from academia – and more BTCurrents posts about them – are on their way in 2014.