DOES PERCEPTION EQUAL REALITY DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS?

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Abstract: *This qualitative exploratory case study targeted 36 hiring managers from Baby Boomer, X Generation, and Y Generation. The sample included 12 participants of each generation divided equally by gender to determine if an individual's appearance influenced the interview process. All participants were given an online pictorial questionnaire. Findings were that appearance continued to be a factor of judgment with expectations as professional with no common descriptor or specific characteristics of what equaled professional across the generations. Participants also felt they did not judge individuals with facial tattoos and piercings, and selection was based on the resume and interview questions. While tattoos and piercings are becoming common, the literature supported negative stigma associated with tattoos and piercings for some positions with appearance being a major factor during the interview process.*
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1. Introduction

The first moments of a job interview are the most important, creating an instant perception of an individual and sometimes creating a bias by an individual's dress, race, gender, weight, disability, tattoos, piercings, physical attractiveness, and even facial imperfections (Madera & Hebl, 2012). James (2011) asserted it takes about two seconds to form a first impression and determine if an individual is a fit for the organization. Perception is an instant and effortless judgment of an individual and can sometimes be the only factor during the interview process that sets individuals apart from another (Barrick, Swider, & Stewart, 2010). People can easily assume something about an individual based on appearance, professional credibility, and performance during a first meeting, making a first impression challenging to overcome regardless of the knowledge and expertise the individual can bring to an organization (Olympic.edu, 2015).

As leaders in an organization, hiring managers are responsible for employee selection and filling open positions by playing a significant role in the recruitment process in combination with the human resources team (Rajopadhye, 2017). A leader's role is to motivate people and help establish the rules for acceptable clothing attire, how to act, speak, and communicate when representing the organization (Bianca, 2018). The hiring manager has proven to be an integral part of the hiring process by educating staff, reviewing resumes and applications, and interviewing candidates with the help of human resources professionals. Regardless of the culture, an organization should continue to focus on the overall goals to benefit individual success leading to collective mission success.

2. Problem

The problem identified in this research was that hiring managers from the Baby Boomer, the X Generation, and the Y Generation used the initial impression of an individual's appearance to influence job candidates' credibility during the interview process. Gurchiek (2021)

reported that employers faced hiring challenges as baby boomers retired and the workforce required qualified, professional, and prepared managers to fill positions; however, Generation X was insufficient to support the needs and the characteristics of retirees and Generation Y did not align with the needs and wants required by the current leadership. Hiring managers, blinded by generational biases, deprived their organizations of the creativity and productivity gained by a diverse workforce (Jenkins, 2017). Individuals tended to assume specific behaviors of individual peer groups regarding appearance (Namdoo, & Jounghee, 2019). Generational diversity within the workplace has increased over the years, with most organizations now employing individuals who range in age from the early 20s to mid-70s, and as generations change, expectations on personal appearance change (King, Murillo, & Lee, 2017).

The research questions and subsidiaries were fundamental to the research study and contributed to knowledge of the specific topic of hiring managers' perception. The subsidiary questions were designed to determine if a hiring manager's perception differs based on the Baby Boomer, X Generation, and Y Generation.

3. Significance

The goal was to highlight the possible effects of personal appearance in the way hiring managers view an individual based on the first impression. A hiring manager who can eliminate biases from personal values during the interview process may allow the interviewee enough time to highlight credentials, experience, and skills that benefit the position and organization. The consequences faced by an individual not understanding the standards and values of personal appearance and workplace characteristics may create a negative impact, leading to labeling, and possibly a missed employment opportunity (King, Murillo, & Lee, 2017).

With so many generational characteristics, personalities, and differences of opinions on dress and appearance, organizations can create a flexible culture related to personal appearance and professionalism in response to changing opportunities and demands. The judgment of an individual's appearance begins early, and changes based on a shared age group in historical time with experiences that contribute to the uniqueness of the generation determining opinions (King et al., 2017; Kolnhofer-Derecskei, Reicher, & Szeghegyi, 2017). Individuals learn early in life the importance of physical attractiveness; however, it is difficult to acknowledge how an individual's biases go against values when hiring or promoting (Burgoon, Manusov & Guerrero, 2021).

4. Literature Review

Psychological research findings identified that people frequently judged individuals on appearance and behavior (Gupta & Shukla, 2017). Perception and judgment of a total stranger often include appearance, suggesting personal appearance demonstrates competence and trustworthiness, which creates an image of the individual as the best qualified (Cohen, 2018). Hiring managers rely on vague judgments when little is known of an individual using appearance as a prominent defining factor for selection (Linke, Saribay, & Kleisner, 2016).

Attractive individuals have a better chance of interviewing for jobs, getting hired, advancing in their careers, and earning higher wages than the unattractive counterpart because society favors attractiveness (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019). Physical attractiveness continues to be a requirement from the results of a 2017 study where customers were influenced by the attractiveness of frontline employees (Villi & Koc, 2018). The image of tattoos and piercings at one time represented gang members, convicts, bikers, and sailors; however, today while they are more acceptable and exemplify an expression of individuality and a form of art have no affiliation to a specific group (Sanders, 2022).

Appearance and communication crossing generations could bring different values and expectations among individuals creating a diverse work environment eliminating the days of one size fits all (Janssen & Carradini, 2021). Dress and appearance were extremely noticeable, which allowed individuals to formulate opinions about the individual (Berger, 2016). With the different generations in the workforce, establishing guidelines and policies, they created an environment of conformity among all employees.

Derous and Ryan (2019) articulated that resume screening might create differential treatment discrimination based on applicant names related to ethnic groups creating a bias toward the applicant. However, research by Hooley and Yates (2015) had previously asserted that appearance played an essential role in an individual's career. How an individual was perceived, how they are dressed, and how they look are the main components of an individual's career image (Hooley & Yates, 2015)—selling yourself as a professional presents a positive image to an employer (Morris, 2018). Hastings (2019) identified professionalism as an individual's appearance and as a representation of the position and organization. Zachary (2020) stated that organizations expect employees to dress professionally with expectations ranging from what they wear, how they behave, or how they groom.

O'Brien, Copus, Johnson, and Inglehart (2019) conducted a study to determine if a health care provider's appearance when it comes to attire, hairstyle, and accessories, affected patients' responses when the provider assessed the situation and provided medical recommendations. The results determined that patients had more confidence in the provider who wore the traditional white coat (O'Brien et al., 2019). Belik and Violette (2018) conducted a study to determine the necessary traits and behaviors of a professional by college students for accountant positions at a CPA firm. Honest and ethical were the essential traits to describe professionalism and looking at areas such as poor hygiene and inappropriate attire had negative impacts on professionalism (Belik & Violette, 2018). Those same students were asked to rate how attire and

general appearance impact professionalism. The student responses rated 74% of international students and 88% of domestic students as *very* and *extremely influential*, respectively (Belik & Violette, 2018).

Johnson and King (2017) stated that facial features and physical appearance were factors used to judge an individual. Even with tattoos being common among Americans with 21-29% having at least one tattoo, and 15-20% having two or more tattoos, facial tattoos are still a stigma creating a negative perception (Johnson & King, 2017). Sims (2017) stated that the population most connected to tattoos were under 40 years of age, and tattoos were well thought out and used for self-expression. Findings from the present study participants also revealed that an individual with facial tattoos reflected negatively.

Timming et al. (2017) determined that individuals with visible body art were selected less when in customer-facing positions. The stigma of visible body art has shown to have a dramatically negative effect on employment chances (Timming et al., 2017). Results from a study conducted on the perception of visual body art, which includes tattoos and piercings, among radiographers determined a lower acceptance rate from individuals without tattoos or piercings (Gildon, Baldwin, & White, 2020). Acceptance of covered tattoos was lower compared to uncovered tattoos, and there was no difference in covered piercings compared to uncovered piercings. Kluger, Misery, Seité, and Taieb (2019) submitted that body piercings are as popular as tattoos, and the most common body piercings are ears, belly button, tongue, and nose.

A common descriptor across each generation was the use of the word *professional* (or professionalism), although specific characteristics of what equaled *professional* varied among participants. Professional appearance, based on the research findings, had many looks, and the quest was to find professional descriptions across the board. With so many different ideas of what *professional* looks like from this qualitative exploratory case study and research, individuals will continue to impose personal expectations on others. The literature findings supported the idea that *professional* was an expectation, with varied meanings identifying the term.

Facial appearance and facial features were believed to be character traits individuals used to judge another's behavior and temperament as well (Johnson & King, 2017). King, Barclay, Ripat, Dubouloz, and Schwartz (2019) alleged that experiences influenced how individuals interpret other individuals and events that may generate change. Participants relayed that they did not judge based on appearance; however, the results from the pictorial questionnaire from participant responses revealed several individuals based the matches on stereotypes or expectations from past experiences. Participant responses and the peer-reviewed literature supported the contention that people make immediate character judgments based on appearance (Johnson & King, 2017). The findings identified first impressions did not influence behavior, but it did influence the selection decision.

5. Method and Design

The qualitative research methodology allowed the gathering of information of the hiring manager's perception, removed biases from the researcher, and allowed the collection of data through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions (Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera, & Martimianakis, 2016). The sample for recruitment included 36 hiring managers from three generations, which included Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. A thorough examination of research methods between quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods determined that the qualitative research method was the best approach, specifically an exploratory case study technique, for this study. An exploratory case study allowed me the opportunity to observe and gain insight from the hiring managers' experiences through reactions and impulses which form individual behavior (Webster, Seymour, & Daellenbach, 2010).

The interview process was the most used method when hiring an individual, so the first meeting can create a lasting first impression and sometimes makes it difficult to change a perception once formed

(Madera & Hebl, 2012). An individual's impression during the first meeting can begin or end with appearance alone (Baselli, 2022). Previous qualitative studies looked at first impressions, personal traits, planned behavior, and perception identified for the literature review. One study explored if first impressions influenced selection decisions where graduate students were tasked to recruit undergraduate students for enrollment into an MBA program (Florea, Valcea, Hamdani, & Dougherty, 2019. Although it can be premature, some hiring managers use the first appearance of an individual as a method of selection; therefore, the candidate may be less likely to obtain a position if they must overcome a poor first impression (Lumb, Homer & Miller 2010). The information was gathered through 30 participants in face-to-face in-depth interviews and six participants from the online focus group discussion.

6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that drove this study was based on the exploration of how initial impressions based on appearance influence a hiring manager's decision when evaluating the credibility of candidates. Providing an understanding of the expectations and acceptance regardless of the generational differences between Baby Boomer, X and Y Generations during the interview may be a benefit for a positive outcome (Espinoza & Ukleja, 2016). The theories associated with the perception of an individual's appearance from a hiring manager's standpoint from the different generations for the current exploratory case study were understood by examining correlations from impression formation theory, structural symbolic interactionism theory, and explanatory theory to expectancy violations theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and halo and horn effect theories. Theories listed identify reactions that are encoded by experiences, whether positive or negative (Gattario & Frisén, 2019).

The study focused on the perception of an individual seeking job opportunities when the hiring manager was from a different generation. Coping with an individual's misperceptions based on generational differences from a workforce with almost five generations can create adverse effects on opportunities during recruitment. Examining the hiring managers' perceptions during the recruitment process helped clarify the consequences that occur when individuals are prejudged. The perceived judgment among the different generations can affect an employment opportunity producing stereotypes and biases and making them a reality (Lu, Liu, Liao, & Wang, 2020). Organizations strive for a specific image and seek employees that fit the organizational brand (Fernandez-Lores, Gavilan, Avello, & Blasco, 2016). A conceptual framework was developed by the researcher based on theory and provided an understanding of and direction for the study (Kivunja1, 2018).

Coping with misperceptions of personal appearance in a world with five generations in the workforce can create a negative effect on opportunities of employment or promotions within an organization (Rastorfer & Rosenof, 2016). The success of an organization's effectiveness and performance will depend on hiring manager's understanding of the differences in work attitudes within the diverse workforce (Flory, Leibbrandt, Rott, & Stoddard, 2021). This research study was rooted in three major theories, (a) impression formation theory (Asch, 1946), (b) structural symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1962), and (c) explanatory theory (Rapoport, 1972; Thagard, 1978). Hiring managers are encouraged to set aside the perception obtained during the interview process and allow the prospective employee to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and ability required to perform the duties of the position successfully.

7. Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore and gain insight into how initial impressions based on appearance influence a hiring manager's decision when evaluating candidates' credibility. The participants of this case study were civilian hiring managers working for the United States Department of the Air Force with authority to hire civilian candidates in nonappropriated fund positions in support of the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs assigned to an Air Force Base in Texas.

The organization has an established dress and appearance policy that requires employees to "wear work attire that compliment[s] an environment that reflects an efficient, orderly, and professional organization" (Turner, 2017, p. 1). Employees are required to maintain a professional appearance and deemed it inappropriate if attire is "ill-fitting, excessively worn/torn or otherwise detracting from the desired image" (Turner, 2017, p. 1). Ideas of personal appearance regularly change over time, and understanding how appearance can affect an individual's employment opportunity within a diverse workforce with current trends and fads can be beneficial. More specifically, the information provided in this research may educate and help establish guidelines to meet the standards and values of appearance when conducting face-to-face hiring interviews.

8. Population

The population for this study was 128 United States Department of the Air Force hiring managers with the authority to hire candidates in nonappropriated fund positions in support of the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs assigned to an Air Force base in Texas. Participants ranged from ages 42 to 73 from the Baby Boomer generation (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1976), and Generation Y (born 1977-1995). The Silent Generation and Generation Z did not represent a large population, making it difficult to obtain data;

therefore, participants were not selected to represent these generational groups. Consideration was given to the first participants who replied to the letter of invitation. The total participants who submitted the signed informed consent forms included 12 in the Baby Boomer generation, 13 in Generation X, and 14 in Generation Y. To maintain an equal distribution among the generations and gender the first six males and six females from each of the three-generational groups based on year of birth from Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y were selected.

9. Data Collection/Analysis

I was a critical component in gathering the collection of data for this qualitative exploratory case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Conducting the face-to-face in-depth interviews and online focus group discussion were the instrumentations used to collect the primary data in this qualitative exploratory case study. All eligible hiring managers received the letter of invitation with two informed consent forms to participate in the face-to-face in-depth interviews or the online focus group discussion. Both informed consent forms indicated that participation was voluntary and how to withdraw from the study.

The data collection instruments for the study drew content from three sources. The first source included an online pictorial questionnaire, which is typically used in studies with children as participants (Allen, Nurmsoo, & Freeman, 2016). The online pictorial questionnaire for this study was used to determine if a hiring manager's perception was a direct link to reality since the face was the first visual information received. A human face conveys information about the social world of humans, holds the key to understanding the same and requires an individual to gain assumptions solely based on those cues (Zaraki et. al., 2017).

The online pictorial questionnaire was followed by a Skype face-to-face in-depth interview and ended with an online focus group discussion also via Skype, to determine what managers perceive about individuals by

appearance during the interview process. Individual interviews with in-depth questions required the researcher to listen actively and allow the participant to share their experience in their own words. Using in-depth interview questions were advantageous to this case study because there was an unlimited number of potential responses, it allowed participants to share detailed explanations, the responses were unforeseen, and participants spoke freely with no parameters.

A face-to-face interview was conducted utilizing structured in-depth open-ended questions with 30 participants using Skype, followed by an online focus group discussion utilizing six different participants via Skype. The goal was to obtain results to understand the hiring managers' expectations when interviewing candidates for positions in their organization. Obtaining confidential, open, and honest responses from hiring managers assisted in exploring their perceptions of personal appearance among the diverse generations in the workforce when interviewing. The information gathered from the data helped provide some guidelines on expectations during the interview process regardless of generational lines separating interviewers and interviewees.

The data analyzed included multiple sources, such as completion of an online pictorial questionnaire through SurveyMonkey, face-to-face in-depth interviews through Skype, and finally, participation in an online focus group discussion also using Skype. For this case study design, triangulation was used to shed light on a perspective to capture different dimensions of data analysis. Triangulation for this case study was met by collecting and comparing data independently from the online pictorial questionnaire, through face-to-face in-depth interviews, and focus group discussion. Credibility was accomplished by the responses obtained from multiple perspectives, audio-recorded, and member-checked for accuracy. Examining data collection analysis and results was essential and provided a clear indication of the overall study's trustworthiness.

The data collection for this case study included a SurveyMonkey online pictorial questionnaire, Skype face-to-face in-depth interviews, and a Skype online focus group discussion. Online questionnaires provided

anonymity and allowed the participants to respond honestly and did not provide Personal Identifiable Information (PII) when transcribed and analyzed. Participants were required to agree and sign the terms of the informed consent forms received with the letter of invitation before obtaining the SurveyMonkey link to complete the online pictorial questionnaire.

Each participant was assigned an alphanumeric control identifier after data were transcribed from the face-to-face in-depth interviews and online focus group discussion. Data were collected and transcribed using a coding identifier in alphanumeric characters for the Skype face-to-face in-depth interviews and Skype online focus group discussion. The participant's name or any personally identifiable information was not disclosed for any participants for this case study. The control identifier revealed the generational group, gender, and data collection method, helping reduce redundancy and overlapping information.

Data analysis from this exploratory case study design was conducted using the online SurveyMonkey responses, Skype face-to-face in-depth interviews, and Skype online focus group discussion. This method allowed the researcher to explore and gain insight into how initial impressions based on appearance influenced a hiring manager's decision when evaluating the credibility of candidates. Each participant whose informed consent forms were received were placed in the appropriate generational category and gender.

Data from the online pictorial questionnaire used for this case study analysis included the number of participants completing the questionnaire, birth year, gender, number of years in a supervisory position, quiz summary, and responses worth one point for each correct answer. All 36 participants completed the online pictorial questionnaire. Reports with question summaries, insights, and data trends and individual responses were some of the areas analyzed from the online pictorial questionnaire.

The next data analyzed included the face-to-face in-depth interviews, conducted individually with 30 of the 36 participants using Skype, and

were audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Interviews were transcribed and member-checked; however, during transcription, there were patterns and themes identified concerning the hiring manager's expectations. The final data analyzed included the online focus group discussion with the last six participants. The online focus group discussion was conducted using Skype and audio-recorded for transcription purposes. The discussion was transcribed from the audio recording and consisted of patterns and themes with hiring manager expectations. The collection of data was transcribed and analyzed by the researcher and did not include any PII after transcription to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, and researcher bias.

This exploratory case study used multiple sources to triangulate data from the online pictorial questionnaire, the face-to-face in-depth interviews, and online focus group discussion. The matches from the online pictorial questionnaire, participant responses from the face-to-face in-depth interviews, and online focus group discussion were a viable form of validation in this case study because the data collected were compared to identify common themes and patterns. The sample by generational group and gender may help determine if expectations of personal appearance vary among the generational group or gender.

10. Findings

As generations change, ideas and expectations shift to a new perspective baseline. As a hiring manager, finding an individual to fit the organization was as crucial as the individual having the experience required to perform the job, and hiring managers should become more creative in the recruitment and interviewing process. (Callahan, 2019). The findings revealed five themes and two corresponding subthemes: (a) Hiring managers' expectations were *professional* appearance, with subtheme one (Responses of *professional* appearance varied); (b) Hiring managers identified a prejudice and bias of facial tattoos and piercings on individuals with subtheme two(Facial tattoos were seen as distracting but

it also depended on the position); (c) Interview questions were standard to the position; (d) Responses and resume were the key areas for selection; and (e) Pictorial questionnaire was identified as interesting, different, eyeopener, and tricky.

In a case study, the objective is to define an understanding of the phenomenon by gaining a more in-depth insight into the participant's experience "to grasp the very nature of the thing" (Tavallaei & Abu Talib, 2010, p. 575). This exploratory case study used multiple sources to triangulate data from the online pictorial questionnaire, the face-to-face in-depth interviews, and online focus group discussion. The matches from the online pictorial questionnaire, participant responses from the face-to-face in-depth interviews, and online focus group discussion were a viable form of validation in this case study because the data collected were compared to identify common themes and patterns. The sample by generational group and gender may help determine if expectations of personal appearance vary among the generational group or gender.

This case study findings unveiled that hiring managers did impose expectations of personal appearance on other individuals. The findings permitted the researcher to compare results in the existing literature. Each theme identified in this study was compared with findings in current literature to add to the body of knowledge and gain insight into how initial impressions based on appearance influenced a hiring manager's decision when evaluating candidates' credibility. Derous and Ryan (2019) stated that resume screening was the most used assessment tool, and the first hurdle individuals face when applying for a job. Although participants allowed individuals to display experience for the position by responding to the interview questions, resume screening may interject and disrupt the process. Participants stated resume qualification, skillsets, and the interview responses were the primary documents used in making a hiring decision and not an individual's appearance.

11. Recommendations

To avoid potential legal liabilities and regulate appearance, the first recommendation from the findings of this qualitative exploratory case study is for organizations to involve human resources professionals to develop a dress and appearance policy. Developing a dress and appearance policy, posting to the organization website, providing to prospective employees before the interview, and incorporating into an orientation will eliminate any challenges about appearance for current and future employees. Establishing an organizational dress and appearance policy can enforce the appropriate dress and appearance and avoid hiring managers from imposing personal expectations on prospective job candidates.

With the varied ideas of professional appearance among generations, an organization's best defense was to communicate expectations through formal policies. The participants' responses determined that the expectations of an individual during the first meeting should be *professional*; appearance has many looks with expectations ranging from what they wear, how they behave, or how they groom (Zachary, 2020). Reddy-Best (2018) advised that implementing a dress and appearance policy creates a positive work environment encouraging confidence, optimism, and collaboration. Establishing a dress and appearance policy may help hiring managers understand the unique styles based on the generation and eliminate personal expectations during the hiring process.

The second recommendation is for hiring managers to work closely with human resources professionals to develop a recruitment plan, unique and effective methods to employ during interviews, and to prepare appropriate interview questions. Interview questions should be matched to the audience to obtain new talent (Sponaugle, 2019). Knowing the target audience was necessary and asking the right questions to obtain the right person for the position was a goal for a hiring manager. A key strategy in obtaining the right person is to learn about the generational differences and how to effectively communicate the organization's needs (Sponaugle, 2019).

The final recommendation is for organizations to consider establishing annual cultural sensitivity training to help hiring managers to push aside expectations and focus on meeting the organizational goals and mission to avoid legal liabilities and encourage diversity in the workplace. Participants experienced difficulties matching the job to an individual when working through the online pictorial questionnaire. Workplace diversity continues to grow, and with generational changes come some sensitive areas that can cause organization challenges. The lack of sensitivity with unique styles, a multitude of religious beliefs, gender identity differences, and sexual orientation were just a few areas that can cause havoc in an organization.

12. Conclusions

Individuals make decisions with the information at hand, and first impressions are the determining factor during the first meeting (Jimmieson, White, & Zajdlewicz, 2009). Leaders play a significant role in an organization and can help provide an understanding and clear expectations within an organization to create a cohesive work environment (Knouse & Strutton, 1999). Leaders must be able to "influence and inspire through visions, creativity, goals, and actions" (Salahuddin, 2010, p. 2). Hiring the right employee is vital, and organizations that focus on branding strive to maintain some conformity to meet the mission, vision, and goals established (Koerner, 2014). Leaders must prepare to handle the different cultures in the organization, and possessing insight, knowledge, and experience dealing with a diverse organizational culture can be beneficial (De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010).

Leaders gaining the knowledge of cultural differences can help separate organizational influence from generational preference, allowing an individual to exemplify expertise and experience beyond personal appearance and first impression judgments (De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010). With the diverse generational culture in organizations, opportunities for a younger generation to lead an older generation can be plausible;

therefore, understanding and managing a diverse workforce is essential for leaders (Salahuddin, 2010).

The overall findings revealed that hiring managers did impose expectations of personal appearance on other individuals. While some hiring managers felt they did not judge an individual based on appearance, the varied responses on *professional* appearance did not help determine what was and was not an appropriate standard.

Professionalism was identified in several different ways; however, based on participant responses, individuals knew what *professional* meant when they saw it on a person. In 1964, Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's stated, "perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so, I know it when I see it" (Johnson Ware, 2017, p. 1). While not in direct reference to professionalism, Justice Stewart's comment exhibits the difficulty with which subjectivity presents itself in humans' everyday lives. The body of research in this field is lacking. Defining *professionalism* is challenging; thus, aligning it with hiring managers' perceptions as applied to job candidates is equally arduous, perhaps even more so in multi-generational workplaces.

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