

CRIMINAL JUSTICE and the MEDIA:

FACEBOOK AND FUTURE CAREERS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Do you have a Facebook page? Are you cautious with what you post on Facebook? To some observers, Facebook postings may seem to be nothing more than a way for college students to share evidence of the “good time” they had over the weekend. However, the postings can have a long-lasting impact on students’ abilities to secure future employment. It is quite common now for employers, particularly criminal justice agencies, to search the Internet for content related to future employees. Searching Facebook pages is, in fact, now a routine part of background checks in some criminal justice professions.

Some of you may feel comforted by the fact that your Facebook pages are private. After all, you can select “privacy” settings so that only your “friends” can see what you post on your page. A few things are worth considering in response to this belief about privacy. For example, if your friends can view content on your Facebook page, *their* friends might also be able to view parts of your page if they tag your page or save any content from your page. Although most Facebook users are probably already aware of this, many were surprised to learn from an Associated Press article that Facebook users are sometimes required by potential employers to turn over their Facebook passwords, or at least to log in to their Facebook pages during job interviews, so

that the employers can review the Facebook postings, regardless of the user’s privacy settings (McFarland, 2012). According to McFarland, some employers ask potential employees to “friend” background investigators as part of their background check.

Of course, you can refuse to log in to your Facebook page during a job interview or deny the friend request made by the investigator, but as one chief deputy told McFarland, allowing employers to access their Facebook pages “speaks well of the people we have apply.” By implication, refusing to open up your Facebook page to interviewers does not speak so well.

As a result of the Associated Press article, legislators across the United States proposed laws prohibiting employers from requesting password information from potential employees, and Maryland was the first state to pass such legislation in June 2012 (Bennett-Smith, 2012). Other states may follow suit, but employers are still able to review Facebook postings available through public settings.

Bennett-Smith, M. (2012, June 11). Job interviewer asks for Facebook password. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from [http://www.csmonitor.com/Business/2012/0611/Job-interviewer-asks-for-Facebook-password-Should-you-give-it; McFarland, S. \(2012, March 21\). "Job seekers getting asked for Facebook passwords." USA Today. Retrieved from http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/news/story/2012-03-20/job-applicants-facebook/53665606/1](http://www.csmonitor.com/Business/2012/0611/Job-interviewer-asks-for-Facebook-password-Should-you-give-it; McFarland, S. (2012, March 21).)