

Social Media Investigations Part One: The Role of the Private Investigator

A social media investigation can be far more revealing than the average Facebook user might think...

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, December 1, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- According to a [2016 Pew Research Center report](#), 69% of all American adults are active on at least one social media site. That number has increased steadily since social media came into existence: ten years ago, only 11% of Americans used social media.

The Pew numbers reveal some interesting patterns: men are somewhat less active on social media than women, and the incidence of social media presence increases both with education and income. That it decreases with age is to be expected; less obvious, perhaps, is that the rural population is significantly less active on social media than their urban and suburban counterparts.

The biggest social media magnet is Facebook: according to Pew, virtually all people active on social media are active on Facebook. The other platforms (Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest were included in the Pew report) trail Facebook by a significant margin, involving comparatively small (21% to 28%) segments of the population.

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John A. DeMarr, PI

In other words, nearly 70% of all Americans are posting information about themselves somewhere on the Internet. While that fosters communication and social interaction, it also provides considerable possibilities for the private investigator. A great deal of information can be gleaned from

what people post about themselves. There are many cases in which people have posted too much, the reductio ad absurdum being the case of an [Ohio woman](#) who, in 2010, discovered public photos on Facebook of her husband's bigamous Walt Disney World wedding to another woman.

Private investigators aren't the only people searching social media in this way. We know that employers check applicants' Facebook profiles as a means of obtaining more information on the people they are considering hiring. While photographs of people in some state of inebriation or minor debauchery abound on social media sites, they will hardly reflect well on job applicants, no matter



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how professional they may appear at their interviews. (In situations where hiring is done online, the social media search is especially valuable to an employer.)

A niche science has even sprung up to help employers infer personality traits from Facebook profiles. Using the Big Five personality traits have determined that one can identify extrovert, neurotic, conscientious, agreeable and/or narcissistic personality traits from the way social media users manage photographs on Facebook. One study showed that neurotics post a profusion of photographs of themselves, agreeable people are more likely to be tagged in photos on other people's pages, and conscientious people tend to have their photos carefully organized.

A social media investigation can be far more revealing than the average Facebook user might think, and not only because psychological inferences can be made from the way they arrange photos on their pages. People are often all too eager to post personal information on Facebook, and an investigator can benefit greatly from this lack of discretion. Sometimes, as in the case of the woman who discovered her husband's bigamous wedding, we can sew up an entire case just by looking at social media. The answer might not be staring the client in the face when he or she looks at a Facebook page, but a professional who knows where and how to look can learn a great deal.

(I absolutely do not want to suggest that we hack into private profiles. We don't, but we do know how to make the most of what information is available to us. This might be a good place to warn people not to try to break into the accounts of people they suspect of something like cheating. It's dangerous for a number of reasons, and can spoil evidence that might otherwise have been usable in court.)

At John A. DeMarr PI our [social media investigations](#) are designed to produce a very clear picture of a subject and his or her online activity. We have developed our own protocol that results in an exceptionally thorough report on a subject. If you would like to order a social media investigation, please contact us at 877-433-6277 for further details.

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