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Victimization on social networking sites

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VICTIMIZATION ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of victimization on social networking sites. Current media reports depict social networks as being targets for violence and sexual predators, but limited research on the subject has shown otherwise. A total of 354 students completed a survey regarding harassment, stalking, and sexual assault both online and offline. Koss' (1998) Sexual Experiences Survey was also used to measure sexual assault rates amongst the current sample. Analyses showed that violent victimization rates were low on social networking sites, while verbal harassment, incessant unwanted behaviors, and sexual harassment were all fairly prevalent on these sites. Furthermore, it was seen that there were significant differences between the location of victimization (online or offline), but further analysis is necessary to determine what factors influence these differenees. The low rates of serious online victimization suggest that although social networking sites may provide opportunities for certain types of victimization, those perpetrated offline are still more prevalent and harmful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The current study focused upon the victimization of those who use social networking sites, which are newly popular websites that allow users to contact each other through various means. The main forms of victimization analyzed were stalking, harassment, and sexual assault, in order to determine if the risk of victimization for these crimes varies when one uses social networks. The reason for this study was to test the claims that have been made by multiple media outlets that dangers exist upon such sites as MySpace, Facebook, and other similar social networks.

Currently laws, such as the Deleting Online Predators Act (Library of Congress, 2006), and other restrictions are being implemented as a result of the perception that there are dangers common to those using social networks, despite the fact that very few studies have analyzed the rates of victimization while using such websites. This study is significant because it may produce results that could corroborate the need for such laws. It may also show that the current reaction to social networks is unjustified and actions against these sites should be reduced. Furthermore, this study may confirm that a problem exists on social networks and show that the current method of protecting users is insufficient. The components of routine activities theory – motivated offenders, suitable

targets, and a lack of capable guardians – were considered in the context of victimization on social networking sites to verify if there is an increased risk while using such sites and if the use of social networking sites should be deemed a risky act that may lead to various types of victimization.

Research Questions

Multiple research questions were asked in this study, which included: what are the victimization rates of harassment, stalking, and sexual assault in both online and offline settings and what factors may impact these types of victimization (i.e. protections taken while on social networks, the type of information given to strangers)? Additionally, the study sought to determine how the victimization was conducted, whether it was in person or online.

Significance of Study

One popular website provides an eight page document describing the dangers that exist on MySpace.com and other social networking sites (Ramsland, 2007). This site portrays social networks as being extremely dangerous for minors by stating "they may think they've having a great time communicating on blogs and meeting new friends, but prowling among them are men who mean to use them for self-gratification, and perhaps even to harm or kill them" (p. 1), as well as depicting minors as vulnerable and unaware of the dangers. Despite this, the site only gives one example of a young girl who was harmed by a sexual predator while using a social network. A review of the resources used to compile this warning document reveals that three references were from popular newspapers, one from an unofficial website, one came from a book, and one resource was

an interview, yet no research studies were listed that yielded results contrary to the findings of the article.

Contrary to the current reports in the media today, practically no studies have found any indications that sex offenders on social networking sites victimize youth at higher rates as a result of use. One well cited study of 1,501 teens aged 10-17 found that of those who were solicited or propositioned for any type of sexual contact, the majority of the solicitations were from friends or others their own age (Finkelhor, Wolak & Mitchell, 2000). Less than 5% were actually aggressively solicited, which meant that the solicitor asked the teen to meet, talk on the phone, or sent something through the mail. Despite this, many media reports have cited Wolak and Mitchell's study and claim that one in five minors have been sexually solicited while on social networking sites (Library of Congress, 2006). This statistic has been misconstrued because it includes both those who have been solicited by friends and strangers that may have been wanted by the juvenile. Wolak and Mitchell were able to conclude that in 76% of solicitations, the solicitor was a minor, while 96% of solicitations by adults were from adults under 25 years old.

Although the information currently portrayed in the media may be reflective of the problem that exists on social networking sites, research studies conducted on the subject have yielded contradictory findings. These conflicting reports may be the result of a moral panic surrounding victimization of children due to the use of social networks. Stanley Cohen was the first person to coin the term "moral panic," which was derived for Cohen's impression of the fear in America that resulted from the media's portrayal of violent crimes (Ben-Yehuda & Goode, 1994). Cohen believed the media had an uncanny

ability to create hype around issues that seemed relatively insignificant and were not prevalent in society. By inundating the public with details and facts about an incident, over exaggerating details about the event, and by reporting false stories, the media had the ability to create fear and panic in the lives of Americans. As a result, not only was the public affected by the information, but also the police would themselves react differently to situations that appeared treacherous. As can be seen with the Deleting of Online Predators Act, the moral panic created in the media has "serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself" (Cohen, 1972, p. 9).

The perception of victimization causes parents, children, and others in society to be fearful for their own safety or others in their family. As a result of his child committing suicide because of an online relationship, Edmiston (2007) wrote a book titled "Why Parents Should Fear MySpace," which details the vulnerability that minors face online and the social issues that result from the use of such sites. Due to books and articles being published portraying social networks as dangerous places, the fear that parents have for their children's safety is high, yet it appears that those actually using these sites do not feel such high levels of fear. Rosen (2006a) studied the reactions of both parents and teens to MySpace, and found 83% of parents and 35% of teens feared for sexual predators while online. Also, Rosen found that 63% of parents found the coverage of predators in the media to be accurate, while 59% of minors disagreed with this statement. Teens may feel less fear than their parents because less than 10% of minors had been approached online for sex, and most of those who had been solicited blocked the individual from future contact.

A review of violent victimizations of juveniles over the last twenty years has shown that of those aged between 15 and 17, the number of victimizations per 1,000 has decreased from 45 in 1981 to 20 incidents per 1,000 in 2001 (Cassell & Cramer, 2007). Similarly, violent victimizations per 1,000 juvenile females decreased from 23 in 1981 to 11 in 2001. Although these numbers are not directly reflective of victimization on social networking sites, from the media hype it would be expected that violent victimizations would be increasing as a result of the rise in teens using social networking sites, yet this is not the case. The fear that is being created by the media, which presents information without much supporting research, may lead to victim distress, improper reactions by both parents and children, and less of a focus on those issues that are more prevalent in the lives of children (ie. victimization at home).

Definition of Terms

Social networks were defined very broadly in this study as those Internet sites where users are enabled with some form of communication. Harassment was defined as acts committed against an individual, either online or offline, which caused the individual to be pestered or irritated, while stalking went a step further and included these factors, as well as fear for one's safety as a result of actions of another. Stalking was also further defined as repeated acts that occurred over time, whether they were in person, over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet. Finally, sexual assault was defined as sexual acts committed against an individual that were against his or her will, which included unwanted vaginal, anal or oral contact.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

To demonstrate the need for a review of victimization on social networking sites, the current study broadly reviewed the issues of harassment, stalking, and sexual assault, which have been reported as commonly occurring problems on social networking sites, and their general prevalence in society. A review of social networking sites was also conducted in order to show the media's portrayal of these sites, as well as the new methods of investigation that police are utilizing to combat sexual predators online. This was followed by the few empirical research studies that have been conducted on the subject in order to show that the reaction of the media and police is not congruent with their findings. Finally, the routine activities theory was applied to the issues of harassment, stalking, and sexual assault, as well as victimization on social networks.

Harassment and Stalking

Studies have shown that harassment is typically perpetrated by males against females, with higher rates of harassment occurring when females engage in situations where there is a higher exposure to motivated offenders (De Coster, Estes, & Mueller, 1999). The issue of harassment is now largely associated with workplace harassment, although it may occur in many places and in various situations. Fisher, Cullen, and Turner (2002) claim that actual rates of victimization are unknown, yet it is likely that a

"substantial proportion" of females in college are at some time victims of harassment. This may be due to the exposure that females have while in college to elevated numbers of motivated offenders.

The issue of harassment can encompass many behaviors and actions. One study in particular identified five main types of harassment that are committed against college students, which include: "sexist remarks or behavior; inappropriate and offensive, but sanction-free sexual advances; solicitation of sexual activity by promise of rewards; coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment; and sexual crimes and misdemeanors" (Till, 1980, p. 1). With regard to online victimization, another study concluded that the main forms of harassment while online include: "posting defamatory or embarrassing personal information about others, impersonating others online, stalking people online, threatening violence, and physical and emotional abuse" (Mitchell, Becker-Blease, & Finkelhor, 2005, p. 503). One form of victimization that is closely associated with harassment is that of stalking, due to the common traits that are exhibited between the two crimes.

The issue of stalking was not a highly recognized problem in the United States until actress Rebecca Shaeffer was murdered in 1989 by a man who had previously stalked her (McGuire & Wraith, 2000). Currently, all states now have laws that make stalking a crime (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2002). Definitions and punishments for stalking crimes vary throughout the states, but they all have a general focus, which is to protect individuals from severe forms of harassment through the telephone, in person, and in writing (Holmes, 1993). Victims are typically defined as individuals, both men and women, who are "repeatedly followed, harassed, or physically threatened by other

persons," while stalkers are considered to be those who are infatuated with another and express it by unwanted acts (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1999, p. 99). Stalking in the state of Nevada is currently described as an act "that would cause a reasonable person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated or harassed, and that actually causes the victim to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated or harassed," which is done repeatedly (US Laws, 2007).

Studies have shown that the primary victims of stalking are females, while the offenders are typically males who, on occasion, may exert physical force, commit sexual assault, or even murder their victims. Mustaine and Tewksbury (1999) claim this relationship may be the result of an "offender who wishes to intimidate and gain power and/or control over his female victim" (p. 58). Due to findings that show women are victimized at higher rates, studies typically focus on females as victims, while overlooking the possibility that males are also victimized.

Despite the recent increase in the number of anti-stalking statutes, the problem has existed for many years, yet little is known about the extent of stalking due to a lack of research in the area. Of the few research studies conducted to date, the most extensive found that approximately 8% of women are victims of stalking in the United States, while a separate report to Congress estimated the number of stalkers to be between 20,000 and 200,000 (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2002). In addition to harassment and stalking, one of the most detrimental crimes in society is that of sexual assault.

Sexual Assault

The definition of sexual assault tends to be very broad because it encompasses a wide range of acts, from completed rape to touching, yet it always centers upon those acts

that were unwanted by the victim (Schwartz & Pitts, 1995). Koss' (1998) Sexual Experiences Survey defines acts of sexual assault as: unwanted sexual contact, coercion to engage in sexual acts through the use of pressure or power, and attempted or completed rape, which includes: vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse using either a penis or other foreign object.

Rates of sexual victimization vary widely depending on the survey and measures used, which makes it difficult to obtain an accurate portrayal of the true number of those who are the victims of sexual assault in the United States each year. Although somewhat dated, Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski's (1987) study of 6,159 college students, with 51% of the sample consisting of females and 49% males, revealed that nearly 54.7% of women surveyed had experienced some form of sexual victimization, while 15.4% of females reported that they had been the victims of rape. Although male sexual assault was reported much less than female rape, 4.4%, or 130 males, reported that they had been the victims of sexual assault.

Fisher, Cullen, and Turner (2002) assert that women in college have an increased risk of sexual assault victimization due to the fact that they have more opportunities to "converge regularly in time and space (with potential offenders), often with minimal adult supervision" (p. 260). They also claim that females in college may be assaulted at rates up to 30%. The National College Women Sexual Victimization Study (NCWSV) was a survey of 4,446 college aged females that showed that during one school year, 1.7% of the sample had been raped and 1.1% experienced an attempted rape (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). This data was then compared to the national average of sexual assaults as reported by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). A comparison

between the NCWSV and the NCVS data showed that sexual assaults were reported less in the NCVS, with 0.16% reporting a completed rape, while 0.18% had been a victim of attempted rape within a one-year period. The NCVS data further demonstrates that 1 in 34 women in the United States has either been the victim of an attempted or completed sexual assault. Schwartz and Pitts (1995) concluded that college females may also be at a higher risk of victimization when they participate in riskier activities, such as drinking alcohol, due to the fact that they may be in situations where they are viewed as suitable targets. Although only recently studied, harassment, stalking, and sexual assault may also be perpetrated on individuals through social networking sites.

Social Networking Sites

Victimization that occurs while online can be grouped into two categories, computer-assisted crimes and computer-focused crimes. Those that were analyzed in this study were deemed computer-assisted crimes, due to the fact that the commission of a crime was aided or furthered with the use of a computer (Yar, 2005). More specifically, those crimes that were committed through or with the use of a social networking site were analyzed to determine the prevalence of victimization as a result of online use.

While the majority of information reported through the media depicts social networking sites as being popular places for offenders of harassment, stalking, and sexual assault to find victims, research in the area has revealed drastically different results. Despite the findings of these studies that victimization while online is lower than it appears to be, few studies have analyzed this issue in depth due to the fact that fears of victimization on social networks are only just emerging. The current study will focus upon these three areas of victimization in order to determine whether the media reports or

the current research studies in the area depict a more accurate portrayal as to the true extent of the problem.

Media Portrayal

Although social networking websites are not new, the hype that they receive in the media has increased since the creation of MySpace in 2003 (Perkel, 2006). Multiple news stories have been written about social networks that include statements such as: "online meeting spots like MySpace.com [are] the 'street corner of our society'" (McCarroll, 2006), "death points out risks of Web dating" (Shields & Barnhardt, 2006), and "a perpetrator's dream come true" (Apuzzo, 2006). One television show, *To Catch a Predator,* featured the statistic that "50,000 predators are online at any given moment" (Cassell & Cramer, 2007), yet there was little data to support this claim (Levy, 2006). Additionally, stories have been reported in the media regarding young children leaving their homes, being attacked, or even murdered by offenders they had met on their computers. The inclusion of these statistics and statements without academic credibility may be done by the media in order to sensationalize crimes.

The increase in media coverage may be attributed to powerful and emotional stories that those reporting know will garner much attention. Muschert (2007) reports that the media tends to overstress crime myths. The four characteristics of crime myths that are pertinent for media reports are: "innocent and often helpless victims," "brave and virtuous heroes," "a threat to legitimate and established norms, values, or lifestyles," and "a deviant population responsible" (p. 352). These characteristics are those that tend to be played up in media stories in order to create interest for the reader. One point that Muschert makes is that children tend to be focused on in the media more because of their

"perceived innocence." This may add to the reasoning behind Internet victims being depicted much more frequently in the media recently.

In addition to crime myths, Muschert further analyzes reasons as to why the media tends to focus on particular stories, which are: the "issue-attention cycle," agendas of the media, and the focusing on certain aspects of stories in order to garner attention. First, the issue-attention cycle is the idiom for the phases that the mass media goes through when looking at particular issues that may be of interest to the audience. Second, research has shown that producers will focus more prevalently on what they deem is the most newsworthy, rather than what is really occurring. Lastly, the frame of the story is the aspect that is focused on, but this typically changes during the course of the event to increase attention. As a result of the portrayal by the media of social networks being avenues for sexual predators to attack young children, new approaches are now being taken by law enforcement to combat these individuals.

New Methods of Investigation

One approach to reducing the number of sexual predators online has been for police investigators across the United States to proactively investigate those who may be targeting children (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2005b). With the use of undercover investigators over the age of 18, sting operations are used to track individuals who are talking to those that they believe are minors. Typically when an offender makes an attempt to meet with the "minor" in person, the offender will be prosecuted for some type of sexual crime against a child. In most cases, the argument of entrapment is unsuccessful, particularly when it was the offender who contacted an individual that was believed to be a minor.

Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak (2005b) conducted a review of 124 cases of proactive online child sexual assault arrests in police agencies across the United States. When the number of cases was weighted, it was estimated that 644 individuals are arrested each year as a result of proactive Internet investigations. Of the cases reviewed, it was found that over 99% of those arrested were males, an overwhelming majority were white (91%), and many were married (35%). The types of crimes for which an arrest was made included: molestation, attempted kidnapping, and criminal solicitation of a minor. In regard to the courting period by sexual predators of children, nearly 60% only communicated with the supposed minor for less than a month, while another 37% spoke with the minor from 1 to 6 months before they were arrested. In 63% of the cases where the offender and minor were supposed to meet, the offender brought some type of sexual item with him.

The researchers also compared cases where an arrest was made as a result of a proactive investigation to those in which the offender solicited an actual minor. When these two groups were compared, they were relatively similar with respect to the age of the victim, the length of courtship, and the method of communication. These two data sets varied significantly with regard to the location where the groups first came into contact. In cases involving an investigator, meetings occurred most frequently in a chat room that was sexually oriented (48%). This was compared to those with an actual minor, where only 15% of the sample first made contact in a chat room with a sexual connotation. One example of the type of chat room that an investigator would visit to monitor the solicitation of minors was the "Daddy-daughter sex" room. This means that it is much more difficult for police organizations to proactively investigate child

victimization in non-sexual chat rooms due to the multitude of rooms that would need to be policed. Furthermore, when the offenders from the proactive and non-proactive arrests were compared, it was found that in approximately 40% of both groups, the offenders had possessed child pornography, yet less than 15% of both samples had been previously arrested for child sexual abuse. Despite investigations into the actions of these sexual predators, studies of online victimization reveal that the problem may not be as severe as is portrayed in the media.

Studies of Online Victimization

One of the first major studies to analyze the prevalence of teenage victimization on social networking sites, which was conducted by the United States Department of Justice, concluded that approximately 25% of those surveyed had received "unwanted sexual material while online," while 1 in 17 claimed that they had been "threatened or harassed" online (Chisholm, 2006). Also, the study found that nearly 20% of those using social networking sites had been "propositioned" for sex while online, which includes propositions from both strangers and acquaintances. This apparent increase in harassment and sexual assault ultimately led one high school to ban many social networking sites in order to curb victimization of students.

The Youth Internet Safety Survey was conducted in 1999 in order to determine "the risk factors surrounding online sexual solicitations of youth and distress due to solicitation" (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2001, p. 3011). In the study, 1,501 individuals between the ages of 10-17 who were deemed frequent Internet users were surveyed, with 63% of the sample being aged 14 or over, 56% frequenting chat rooms, and 56% talking to strangers while online. Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak found that

nearly one-fifth of the sample had been sexually solicited, which meant that an individual had made requests for sex, discussed sex when it was unwanted, or were contacted by an adult. It was also found that females and those who were older were solicited at higher rates, while those who were aged 10-13 were distressed as a result of the solicitations at a higher rate. The study concluded that although none of those surveyed were sexually assaulted, there may be an increased risk of exploitation for those who were considered to be troubled youth because they were solicited at higher rates.

A second Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS-2) was conducted in 2005 in order to compare the results from the first survey to determine if the risk of juvenile solicitation while online had changed over the six years since the first survey (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007). It was found that there was a decrease in the number of sexual solicitations of juveniles, while the number of aggressive solicitations increased. Of those that were non-aggressively sexually solicited, 82% were between the ages of 14 and 17, nearly three fourths had posted personal information online (72%), and over half used the Internet primarily for talking in chat rooms (54%). In regard to those that had been aggressively solicited online, 79% had been aggressively solicited online, 81% had posted personal information, and nearly 70% were using the Internet for chat rooms. Factors that may have contributed to the increase in aggressive solicitations were "being female, using chat rooms, talking with people met online, talking about sex with someone met online, and offline physical or sexual abuse" (p. 535).

Rosen's (2006a) study of 1,257 users of the social networking site MySpace found that the prevalence of stalking while using the website was extremely low. Rosen concluded that only 1.5% of the sample reported being stalked, while only 4.6% of those

sampled claimed they had been propositioned for sexual intercourse. In regard to the relatively small number of those who claimed to be the victims of stalking, the sample contained an even balance of males and females, while those that had reported being propositioned for sex were mainly females. Also, he determined that those who had been actively using the site for longer had a greater risk of victimization. Rosen found that despite the common portrayal in the media of MySpace as being a high risk area for teen victimization, the number of those actually harassed by a stranger was relatively low. Furthermore, a second study conducted by Rosen (2006b) determined that a high number of those users who had reported being either harassed or solicited for sex blocked the user from contacting him or her, or took some other action to end the contact.

The image of those who have sexually assaulted a minor with which they conversed with on the Internet has typically been of an individual who the minor has never met and may alter his or her personal traits to mimic that of the victim. Few studies have delved into the issue of those that do not fit this mold and had some prior relationship with the victim, whether it was familial or merely by acquaintance, because of the difficulties in accessing such information (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2005a). A review of police files in which a minor was sexually assaulted by an individual met online revealed that nearly half of victims had previously known the offender (39% total), 25% of arrests were the result of proactive police investigations, and 36% were for either possession or distribution of child pornography. With regard to all of the victims, 70% were female, while nearly half (45%) were between 6 and 12 years of age. Those who were victimized only by family members were primarily female (93%) and less than 12 years old (82%). The majority of those arrested for sexual assault against a minor with

the use of the Internet committed either intercourse or another type of penetration (45%), while 21% possessed or distributed child pornography, and 15% committed some additional type of illegal touching against a minor.

Harassment while using social networking sites may be increasing due to a rise in the number of methods in which individuals are able to make social contacts, especially for school aged children who are bullied by others at school while online (Mitchell, Becker-Blease, & Finkelhor, 2005). Mitchell, Becker-Blease, and Finkelhor's study of 1,504 mental health practitioners with patients who have had problematic experiences while using the Internet found that 10% of the sample was either a perpetrator or victim of harassment (30% and 70%, respectively). The study revealed that individuals were victimized while using online sites in "both sexual and nonsexual forms" (p. 503). Also with regard to harassment, one study found that on the most popular social networking site, MySpace, harassment was commonly in "the form of emails, web pages, instant messaging, text messages and postings on social networking sites" (Kosse, 2007, p. 22). Incidents that are occurring on social networking sites may be explained by applying the routine activities theory.

Theoretical Framework

One theory that may explain why variability may be exhibited in crime rates is the routine activities theory, which states that changes in crime are due to the opportunities of offenders. These changes may result when there is a convergence in time and space of motivated offenders, targets that are deemed suitable by the offender, and there is a lack of guardianship over desired persons or things (De Coster, Estes, & Mueller, 1999). Cohen and Felson (1979) claim that while many theories only account for changes in

crime during certain time periods and groups, routine activities theory is useful for explaining crime fluctuations overall.

This theory is frequently grouped with the rational choice theory, which states that individuals will typically commit crimes in which the offender gains pleasure from the act, while seeking to avoid pain (Cornish and Clarke, 1987; Lilly, Ball, & Cullen, 2007). Routine activities theory is generally considered to be a macro theory that "points at changes at a societal level that would reduce crime opportunities" (Burkhead, 2006, p. 213). Occasionally, this theory is applied on the micro level as a tool to predict possible individual victims (Lilly, et al., 2007).

Routine activities theory is broken down into three variables, which include: "motivated offenders, suitable targets of criminal victimization, and capable guardians of persons or property" (Akers & Sellers 2003, p. 33). This theory states that crime rates vary based upon the actions of both offenders and victims. The first variable is that of motivated offenders, which is the notion that when there is an increase in the number of offenders who desire to commit a certain crime, crime rates will likely fluctuate. This variable of the routine activities theory has been highly scrutinized due to its lack of an explanation as to who motivated offenders are and how they are determined as having a motivation to commit crimes (Burkhead, 2006; Schwartz & Pitts, 1995). Suitable targets are considered to be those that are readily available and easy to access, whether they are human beings or objects. They must also be seen as having worth because the offender needs to see that the benefit of committing the act is greater than the punishment if he or she is caught (Williams & McShane, 1999). Finally, when there is a lack of capable guardianship of persons or things, crime rates may also increase. A lack of capable

guardianship typically occurs when there is no one present to protect the desired object. Akers and Sellers (2003) state that when changes occur to each of the variables, there will be variations in the crime rate, but when combined, they "produce a multiplier effect on crime rates" (p. 35).

The main premise behind the routine activities theory is that those acts that are performed by individuals on a daily basis, although perfectly legal, may lead to their own victimization. This results when there is a convergence between those with criminal motivations or intentions and the opportunity to commit a crime (Burkhead, 2006). Routine activities are generally considered to be acts by individuals that are essential to their lives, such as working, shopping, and sleeping (Williams & McShane, 1999). Lilly and colleagues (2007) claim that due to the fact that opportunity is such a large factor in the commission of a crime, those areas in a community with the easiest targets will have higher crime rates than those with more hardened targets. As a result, opportunities for criminal acts must be removed in order to have a reduction in crime, as well as increased guardianship over such targets.

Cohen and Felson (1979) state that crime rates have increased over the past forty years due to societal changes since World War II. The change in both suitable targets and the lack of capable guardians increased the number of motivated offenders (Lilly et al., 2007). During this time, there was a shift from women staying at home to being in the workplace, which created a lack of capable guardians throughout the day, ultimately leading to more suitable targets (Burkhead, 2006). Additionally, items that were considered to be suitable targets shifted from those that were not easily accessible, like refrigerators, to more "portable" items like computers and televisions (Lilly et al., 2007).

These changes show how "legal behavior can increase illegal behavior" (Burkhead, 2006, p. 188).

After World War II, crime rates increased while the social factors that are typically viewed as having a significant impact on the crime rate were changing. For example, the unemployment rate was decreasing, the number of African Americans who completed high school was increasing, and the poverty level decreased. Cohen and Felson (1979) state that if those factors had also been worsening, the increase in crime would have been even more severe. Finally, the authors show that routine activities theory may be useful to explain why "the criminal justice system, the community and the family have appeared so ineffective in exerting social control since 1960" (p. 605). Although typically applied to property crimes, the routine activities theory may also be applied to more personal and violent crimes, such as harassment, stalking, and sexual assault, in order to explain changes in victimization.

Routine Activities Theory Applied to Victimization

The routine activities theory has been frequently applied to the issues of harassment and stalking, and the majority of studies have found that the actions of victims have a significant impact on their risk of victimization. Mustaine and Tewksbury (1999) examined the behaviors of college females and found that significant predictors of victimization included: going to the mall more frequently, living off campus, being employed, using drugs or alcohol, and the use of items for self protection. Mustaine and Tewksbury determined that although such acts or activities were predictors of stalking, they may also be the result of incidences of stalking. They concluded that those who are fearful of a stalker may visit locations away from home in order to avoid the possibility

of a confrontation with the stalker, they may have been in a relationship with the offender prior to any stalking incidences where drugs and alcohol were used, which suggests that the offender might be prone to acts that lead to violence, and finally they found that females who use items for protection, such as pepper spray, may employ such protectors due to fears of a stalker.

Due to the close proximity to adults and the inability for minors, especially those under 12 years of age, to easily leave the household, they are at a greater risk for sexual victimization perpetrated by an individual within the household. As the minor grows older, it is likely for this victimization to become less likely to occur, and more likely to occur in other social settings (Finkelhor, 1997). In addition to women in college, children may also be viewed as suitable targets because of their inability to defend themselves, as well as their incapability to leave the situation. The concept of suitable targets may also be furthered from physical objects and persons to those who utilize online social networks.

Routine Activities Theory Applied to Victimization on Social Networks

Based upon the variables utilized in the routine activities theory, the risk of victimization while using social networking websites may change. As stated above, the three variables that generally comprise the theory are the presence of motivated offenders, the appearance of a suitable target, and the lack of guardianship over something or someone that may be desired by an offender.

Sampson (2000) states "the routine activity approach assumes a steady supply of motivated offenders" (p. 141), which suggests that there will likely be individuals on social networks who may commit criminal acts. Those who are deemed motivated

offenders are broadly defined as "any persons who might commit illegal offenses for any reason" (De Coster, Estes, & Mueller, 1999, p. 23). Many research studies have applied the concept of motivated offenders solely to those who commit property and violent crimes. The concept of motivated offenders can also be applied more broadly, and in the case of social networking sites, can be useful in explaining victimization rates for online crimes of harassment, stalking, and sexual assault.

A suitable target is the variable that differentiates crimes committed against those who are victimized on social networks from those who are victimized while not using a computer. Computer users may be viewed as suitable targets for offenders because there is easy access to victims, there are many individuals online at one time, and the offender is relatively anonymous. In regards to child victims, offenders oftentimes have an easier time "grooming" a child online, as opposed to in person (Berson, 2003). Internet grooming is a technique often used by family members or acquaintances of a minor to introduce sexual content (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2005a). Methods of seduction include: "sexual conversations, sending sexual pictures to victims, fondling or holding victims while jointly viewing child or adult pornography, and using online pornography to show victims how to perform sexual acts" (p. 54).

Offenders are also given the ability to appear to be any person, which makes it possible for an adult offender to act as if he or she is much younger. The persona that may be portrayed by the offender may mimic that of the child in order to gain friendship and trust. Also, computers may be ideal places for offenders to find victims because of their familiarity with computers and the Internet. Lilly and colleagues (2007) state that offenders "tend to commit crimes in places that are familiar to them" (p. 271). Although

they may have been referring to physical locations that are well known to offenders, it is possible that this idea may also be applicable to offenders who are knowledgeable and skilled in computer technology.

Finally, the lack of capable guardianship occurs when users lack caution because they don't perceive that Internet communication is a threat to their personal safety. Pierce (2006) found that there was a "correlation between trusting strangers online and a [teen's] willingness to give out personal information" (p. 15). The safety that an Internet user feels in their home may be taken for granted, which may result in victimization. Furthermore, routine activities theory implies that those who are away from their homes more have a higher risk of victimization due to greater contact with offenders (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1999). Conversely, this concept may be applied to individuals who use social networking sites because those who utilize such sites at higher rates are more likely to come in contact with potential motivated offenders.

During the past 15 years, the number of individuals in the United States using the Internet has increased dramatically. One study comparing the growth over the 6 year period from 1997 to 2003 showed that in 1997 only 18.6% of U.S. households were using the Internet, while in 2003 over 54% of households had Internet access (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2004). Furthermore, 93% of teens now have access to the Internet, with 55% having profiles on social networking sites, 28% having their own online journals and 27% managing their own websites (Lenhart et al., 2007). Finally, the number of hours spent by individuals has increased substantially over the years. The U.S. Census Bureau (2008) reported that in 2000, the average American spent approximately 100

hours online per year. This number increased to 181 hours per year in 2008, and is projected to slightly increase to 183 hours per year by 2010.

The rise in the popularity of the Internet for U.S. citizens has essentially changed their daily routine activities. Rather than communicating with one another at meetings, social events, and work, practically all individuals have the option of using the Internet as a means for communication. This shift in the routine activities of these individuals will likely impact the types of crimes that are perpetrated against them. Routine activities theory states that crimes will likely increase when there is a convergence in time and space of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and a lack of capable guardians. The notion that the physical convergence between victims and criminals in space must also be expanded to include those who are brought together with the use of cyberspace. This growing phenomenon can be especially seen with teenagers. With over half of teenagers having profiles on social networking sites, their routine activities have transformed from being outdoors, visiting one another in person, or talking on the phone to communicating over cyberspace. This is likely to increase the likelihood that both teens and adults will be brought together with motivated offenders while they are attempting to engage in legal activities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Sample

A nonrandom convenience sample was recruited from Criminal Justice 104 classes. Students taking the Introduction to Criminal Justice (CRJ 104) course had the option of participating in a research study to fulfill a research requirement. A total of 354 students chose to complete this survey. Participants signed up for the study through the UNLV Criminal Justice Department's research website. Those who partook in the study selected a date and time to complete the questionnaire at the Legal and Social Issues research laboratory. On the day the questionnaire was given, participants were first provided with an informed consent form, which was signed in order to ensure the participant was aware of his or her rights and details about the particular study. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could chose not to complete any portion of the survey without losing participation credit.

If the participant signed the consent form, he or she was then provided with a questionnaire pertaining to victimization while using social networking sites which also included demographic questions. Once the questionnaire was completed, the participant placed it in a sealed box in order to ensure confidentiality. Also, no identifying information was collected in the research questionnaire to maintain confidentiality.

Finally, each participant was given a debriefing form explaining the study and provided information regarding counseling services in the event that a subject felt uncomfortable or distressed by the study.

Demographic information for the sample is presented in Table 1. The current sample was 60.5% female and 39.3% of male (only one participant did not specify his or her gender). The average age of participants was 22, with 25% of the sample being 18 and the majority of participants being less than 21. One participant was excluded from the analysis because he was an outlier at the age of 84. Table 1 also shows that the participants were predominantly Caucasian (60%), while 13% of the sample was Hispanic, 10.5% were African-American, 8.8% were Asian, and 7.9% fell into the other category.

In regards to the use of social networks, over 80% of the participants were currently using some form of social network, while nearly 92% had used a social network at some point in their lives. Of those using social networks, MySpace was the most commonly used site (75.1%), Facebook was the second most commonly used site (8.7%), and 15.9% fell into the other category, which included other social networking sites, as well as combinations of MySpace and Facebook (Table 2). Furthermore, of those participants who stated that they currently used these sites, an overwhelming majority stated that their reason for use was to keep in contact with current friends (80.7%), while other participants used these sites to make new friends (7.2%) and for other various reasons (11%). Only 3 participants stated that they were using social networks to make new relationships.

Table 1. Demographics

Variables	Values	Percentage	N
Gender	Male	39.3%	139
	Female	60.5%	214
Age	18	25.4%	90
	19	15.5%	55
	20	12.7%	45
	21	11.6%	41
	22-24	17.3%	61
	25 and above	16.6%	59
Ethnicity	Caucasian	59.3%	210
	Hispanic	13%	46
	African- American	10.5%	37
	Asian	8.8%	31
	Other	7.9%	28

Table 2. Social Networking Use

	Percentage	N
	Site Used Most	
MySpace	75.1%	217
Facebook	8.7%	25
LiveJournal	0.3%	1
Other	15.9%	46
	Reason for Use	
Make new friends	7.2%	21
Contact current friends	80.7%	234
Make new relationships	1.0%	3
Other	11%	32

Measures

The unit of analysis was the student sample who participated from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas campus. The statistical analysis used in this study was the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). This method was used to determine if there was variance in the victimization rates of those utilizing social networking sites. More specifically this study sought to determine if there were specific predictors that may increase one's likelihood for victimization. The variables in this study were measured through a 77-question survey polling personal use of social networking sites, activities conducted while online, and types of victimization that may have occurred as a result of social networking use.

The dependent variables in this study were the victimization rates of college students for stalking, harassment, and sexual assault. The independent variables included frequency of use of social networks, protections taken to block strangers from viewing personal information, type of information provided to strangers on the users' sites, social network that was most often used, number of pictures that were made public, and the number of friends the user had. It was hypothesized that the characteristics of use of social networking sites would have an effect on the risk of stalking, harassment, and sexual assault in college students.

Sexual Experiences Survey

Included in the 77 questions described above were 13 questions from the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss, 1998). The SES measures the prevalence of sexual assault, and has been deemed both reliable and valid by multiple studies over the past thirty years due to the manner in which participants are asked whether they have been

sexually assaulted in multiple ways. By using varied wording, it is possible to identify victims who had not previously associated their victimization with rape. Testa et al. (2004) found that the SES measures both rape and sexual assault involving coercion accurately, yet it does not always accurately measure attempted rape, which may be due to the highly specified wording of questions.

Overall, 78.7% of students participating in the study had participated in consensual sexual intercourse at some time in their lives. Only 4% of students stated that they had sexual intercourse due to the threat of force, while 6.3% had nonconsensual intercourse because of actual physical force. Finally, 16% of participants stated that they had been sexually assaulted either before, after, or both before and after attending college.

In addition to capturing the number of participants who have been sexually assaulted, Koss' scale is also designed to determine how many participants have been assaulted, but do not acknowledge that they have been sexually assaulted. This is achieved by asking three questions that do not specifically ask the participant if he or she has been assaulted, rather they ask if they have experienced various incidents that are categorized as assault. These three questions include: "have you ever had sexual intercourse with another person when you didn't want to because that person threatened to use physical force (e.g. twisting arm, holding down) if you didn't cooperate," "have you ever had sexual intercourse with another person when you didn't want to because that person used some degree of physical force," and "have you ever been in a situation where another person engaged in sexual acts with you such as anal or oral intercourse, when you didn't want to by using threats or physical force?" Finally participants are

straightforwardly asked if they had ever been sexually assaulted. Those that answered affirmatively to this question were acknowledged victims of sexual assault. Participants who reported never being sexually assaulted, but responding affirmatively to any of the above three questions were deemed unacknowledged victims. Table 3 shows a comparison between those who reported being victimized and those who were victimized, but did not view themselves as such. Over one-fifth of the sample reported being sexually assaulted, yet only 15.9 % of victims identified themselves as victims, while 5.1 % did not. Results on the SES indicated that 21% of the student population had been sexually assaulted.

Table 3. Acknowledged vs. Unacknowledged Sexual Assault

	Percentage	N
Not victimized	79.0%	278
Acknowledged victimization	15.9%	56
Unacknowledged victimization	5.1%	18

Data Entry

To maximize accuracy in data collection, the "Nearly Perfect Data Entry" system was used, which required that data from each survey was entered twice (Barchard & Pace, 2006). Entries that were inconsistent were highlighted in order to reduce the possibility of human error during data entry.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Social Networking Use

Table 4 depicts the prevalence of students using social networking sites. An overwhelming majority (91.8%) of participants reported some type of use of such sites within their lifetimes, while 81% of students were currently using some form of social network. Despite the high levels of use, only 15.1% reported ever fearing for their safety after using such a site. The relatively low levels of fear may be the result of users having the ability to block other users they no longer wished to communicate with, and this tactic was reported as being used by 29% of participants. Very few responded affirmatively to the question of whether or not they had changed their phone numbers, addresses, or email

Table 4. Social Networking Use Characteristics

	Yes	No
Ever used a social network	91.8% (325)	8.2% (29)
Currently use a social network	81.1% (287)	18.9% (67)
Feared for safety	15.1% (49)	84.9% (275)
Blocked user from contact	29.2% (94)	70.8% (228)
Met someone from site	31.3% (101)	68.7% (222)

addresses in response to the incidents. Only 2.9% changed personal information as a result of fears of stalking or harassment. Within this group 2.3% indicated that they met the person online and they changed online information and 0.6% met the person offline and changed online information. Another possible response to being victimized was whether individuals felt the need to delete their profiles. Twenty-six individuals reported deleting profiles after being harassed or stalked by an individual online, while only two people deleted social networking profiles after being physically stalked. Furthermore, only one participant reported filing a formal restraining order due to an online incident, while 22 participants (6.2%) had filed a restraining order due to an offline incident.

Online and Offline Victimization

Online and offline victimization was measured through 34 items. It appeared that 25 of the items could be grouped into 7 general areas. These groups were labeled as follows: threats that do not induce fear, verbal harassment, incessant and unstopping behaviors, physical harassment, sexual harassment, threatening behaviors leading to fear, and stalking. Additional items were not grouped into latent variables but are reported separately and included online behaviors, contacts with the police, and specific victimization questions.

The first group of items included threatening behavior experienced that was of a mild or non-fear-inducing type (e.g., "I have been threatened physically but did not fear for my life"). The rates of threats experienced online and offline are presented in Table 5. The first latent variable, being non-fearfully threatened, showed that there were more non-threatening behaviors occurring offline. Two-thirds of participants who stated that they had been threatened physically and did not fear for their lives claimed the

victimization was occurring offline, while only one-third reported online victimization. A similar pattern was exhibited with the other questions pertaining to non-fearful threats, with 17 students having unwanted pictures taken of themselves (compared to only 9 online) and 28 students being unwantedly watched by another (compared to 4 online).

Table 5. Frequency of Non-Fear-Inducing Threats (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.1 I have been threatened physically, but I did not fear for my life.	259 (73.2%)	95 (26.8%)	33	66
Q.14.26 I have had pictures taken of me which I did not consent to.	326 (92.1%)	27 (7.6%)	9	17
Q.14.29 I have been watched by another without my consent.	320 (90.4%)	32 (9.0%)	4	28
Composite			46	111

Note: Some people reported both online and offline victimization so those numbers added together may be greater than the victimized Yes count

Table 6 shows the second group of items that measured the prevalence of verbal harassment (e.g., "I have had verbal statements made to me that I considered derogatory"). The frequencies of verbal harassment are similar between online and offline victimization. While 104 participants were verbally attacked offline, nearly 101 participants experienced this online. Verbal harassment and derogatory statements appeared to occur more offline than online.

The third latent variable measured was that of participants' experiences with incessant behaviors and included questions pertaining to annoyances that happened

repeatedly (e.g., "I have requested that an individual or individuals no longer contact me, but these requests were ignored"). These responses are presented in Table 7.

Table 6. Frequency of Verbal Harassment (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.5 I have been verbally attacked.	164 (46.3%)	189 (53.4%)	101	104
Q.14.8 I have been verbally harassed.	187 (52.8%)	166 (46.9%)	85	91
Q.14.12 I have had verbal statements made to me which I considered derogatory.	191 (54.0%)	162 (45.8%)	82	91
Composite			268	286

Note: Some people reported both online and offline victimization so those numbers added together may be greater than the victimized Yes count

Table 7. Frequency of Incessant Behavior Experienced (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.4 I have been pestered or irritated by an individual to the point that I no longer wished to be friends.	167 (47.2%)	187 (52.8%)	102	92
Q.14.14 I have requested that an individual or individuals no longer contact me, but these requests were ignored.	268 (75.7%)	86 (24.3%)	60	31
Q.14.24 I have been repeated contacted online unwantedly by an individual.	277 (78.2%)	76 (21.5%)	73	7
Composite			235	130

Note: Some people reported both online and offline victimization so those numbers added together may be greater than the victimized Yes count

Contrary to the findings of non-fearful threats and verbal harassment, incessant behaviors appear to be more prevalent online than offline. While only 92 participants

reported being pestered or irritated to the point that they no longer wished to be friends offline, 102 stated that this was true in online situations. Also, 60 participants reported that they had asked to no longer be contacted, but those requests were ignored while online, while half as many students experienced this offline.

The frequencies of physical harassment were also measured in both online and offline settings (e.g., "I have been physically followed"). These responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Frequency of Physical Harassment (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.6 I have been physically attacked.	282 (79.7%)	72 (20.3%)	N/A	72
Q.14.9 I have been physically harassed.	286 (80.8%)	60 (16.9%)	5	55
Q.14.10 I have been physically followed.	278 (78.5%)	73 (20.6%)	8	66
Q.14.30 I have had an individual make unwanted physical contact with me.	283 (79.9%)	68 (19.2%)	3	65
Composite			16	258

Note: Some people reported both online and offline victimization so those numbers added together may be greater than the victimized Yes count

The latent variable of physical harassment showed that there was also more victimization offline than online. This is not a surprising finding as most participants probably do not associate victimization while in an online setting as being a type of physical victimization. While participants only answered affirmatively 16 times to the questions of being attacked, harassed, followed, or contacted physically, there were over 250 affirmative responses to these behaviors while offline.

Experiences of sexual harassment were measured through two items (e.g., "I have been sent unwanted material of a sexual nature"). The results for this variable are presented in Table 9. With regard to sexual harassment, it appears that more participants experienced certain types of sexual victimization online. Over 85 participants claimed to have had statements made towards them that were inappropriate due to their sexual nature, while only 67 students stated this had occurred offline. Furthermore, 84 students had been sent some type of unwanted material of a sexual nature, which was true for only 7 participants while offline.

Table 9. Frequency of Sexual Harassment (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.13 I have had verbal statements made to me which I considered inappropriate due to their sexual nature.	208 (58.8%)	145 (41%)	86	67
Q.14.16 I have been sent unwanted material of a sexual nature.	265 (74.9%)	89 (25.1%)	84	7
Composite			170	74

Note: Some people reported both online and offline victimization so those numbers added together may be greater than the victimized Yes count

The behaviors that could be deemed threatening were categorized as fear-inducing threats (e.g., "I have received unwanted phone calls, emails, letters, or messages that I found to be disturbing"). Those responses can be seen in Table 10.

Five of the six questions comprising this threat variable had higher rates of victimization offline than online. Only 14 participants responded that they had feared for their safety because of another while online, but 86 stated that this had occurred in offline settings. One participant was fearful enough to file a restraining order, while over 20

Table 10. Frequency of Threats Causing Fear (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.2 I have been threatened physically, and did fear for my life.	326 (92.1%)	28 (7.9%)	6	22
Q.14.3 I have feared for my safety because of a person.	254 (71.8%)	100 (28.2%)	14	86
Q.14.7 I filed a restraining order against someone out of fear for my safety.	331 (93.5%)	23 (6.5%)	1	22
Q.14.17 Physical threats have been made against me, family, or friends.	283 (79.9%)	70 (19.8%)	30	42
Q.14.23 I have asked someone to no longer contact me because I feared for my safety because of that individual.	317 (89.5%)	36 (10.2%)	36	13
Q.14.31 I have had threats made against me that made me fear for my life.	331 (93.5%)	21 (5.9)	4	17
Composite			91	202

Note: Some people reported both online and offline victimization so those numbers added together may be greater than the victimized Yes count

students filed restraining orders due to fearful situations offline. The only question that participants answered more frequently for online occurrences was asking someone to no longer contact them because they were fearful of their safety, which was reported by 36 participants online, and only 13 offline.

Finally, a latent variable for serious stalking behavior was created using four of the survey questions (e.g., "I have been under more stress due to fears resulting from being stalked"). These items are presented in Table 11.

The final latent variable measured stalking incidents, with many more subjects stating they had been victimized offline than online. While no students claimed they changed their daily routines due to a stalking incident online (13 offline), 10 had to

change some of their personal information, including phone number, address, or email address due to online stalking, which was also reported by 24 participants for offline situations. Finally, having been under stress or quitting a job because of stalking was reported twice for online situations, but in offline situations, these questions were responded affirmatively to 26 times.

Table 11. Frequency of Stalking (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.19 I have been forced to change my daily routine due to fears resulting from stalking.	340 (96%)	13 (3.7%)	0	13
Q.14.20 I have been under more stress due to fears resulting from being stalked.	339 (95.8%)	14 (4.0%)	1	13
Q.14.27 I have changed my phone number, address, or email address due to a stalking or harassment incident.	319 (90.1%)	34 (9.6%)	10	24
Q.14.28 I have quit my job or moved from my home due to a stalking or harassment incident.	339 (95.8%)	14 (4.0%)	1	13
Composite			12	63

Note: Some people reported both online and offline victimization so those numbers added together may be greater than the victimized Yes count

To consider whether these groupings of items were measuring a common underlying construct of victimization, correlations were considered. These correlations are presented in Table 12. All of the groups of items or latent constructs were significantly related to each other. Subsequent analyses used these groups or constructs rather than the individual items.

Table 12. Correlations Between the Latent Variables Created

	Threats (non-fearful)	Verbal harass-ment	Persistent behavior	Physical harassment	Sexual harass-ment	Threats (Fearful)	Stalking
Threats (non-fearful)	1	.45*	.36*	.58**	.32*	.56*	.38*
Verbal harassment		1	.55*	.51*	.46*	.49*	.24*
Persistent behavior			1	.40*	.44*	.40*	.34*
Physical harassment				1	.36*	.63*	.34*
Sexual harassment					1	.35*	.28*
Threats (fearful)						1	.41*
Stalking							1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There were some items that did not logically fall into groups already described so these items were considered individually. The rates of victimization for these individual items are presented in Table 13.

As occurred with most of the latent variables, many of the additional questions were occurring more in offline settings, such as having unwanted pictures taken (18 offline and 10 online) or needing to contact the police (34 offline and 5 online). One question that did not follow this pattern was receiving unwanted phone calls, emails, letters, or disturbing messages. Over 55 participants experienced this annoyance online, while only 29 experienced it offline.

Finally, participants were directly asked about their experiences with victimization at the end of the survey. These findings are presented in Table 14. An overwhelming majority stated that they had experienced more victimization offline,

Table 13. Frequency of Miscellaneous Events (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.18 I have deleted a profile I had on a social networking site due to a stalking or harassment incident.	326 (92.1%)	28 (7.9%)	26	2
Q.14.21 I have received unwanted phone calls, emails, letters, or messages that I found to be disturbing.	271 (76.6%)	82 (23.2%)	57	29
Q.14.26 I have had pictures taken of me that I did not consent to.	326 (92.1%)	27 (7.6%)	10	18
Q.14.15 I have contacted the police or another agency in order to report an incident	315 (89%)	39 (11%)	5	34
Composite			98	83

Note: Some people reported both online and offline victimization so those numbers added together may be greater than the victimized Yes count

while the only variable that strayed from this pattern was that of harassment. There were 86 participants reporting online harassment compared to only 49 participants offline. Only 11 stated they had been stalked online compared to 36 offline. When asked about sexual assault, 36 reported that they had been sexually assaulted while offline and 1 online.

Table 14. Frequency of Victimization as measured by Index Questions (online vs. offline)

	No	Yes	Victimized Online	Victimized Offline
Q.14.32 I have been harassed.	228 (64.4%)	125 (35.3%)	49	86
Q.14.33 I have been stalked.	306 (86.4%)	47 (13.3%)	11	36
Q.14.34 I have been sexually assaulted.	316 (89.3%)	37 (10.5%)	1	36
Composite			61	158

Differences in Victimization

In order to determine if there were group differences between those who were victimized online, offline, and both online and offline, analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted using the latent variables. The latent variables, as seen in Table 15, were comprised of multiple survey questions, with the number of questions per latent variable ranging from one to six. It was found that there were significant differences between the locations of victimization for all of the latent variables except for serious stalking. For the variable of being non-fearfully threatened, there were differences exhibited between the both online and offline victimization category and the two other groups. Verbal harassment, which consisted of three questions, showed significant differences only between offline victimization and those experiencing victimization both online and offline. Incidents of persistent behaviors and sexual harassment had significant differences between all three groups. The latent variable of physical harassment showed significant differences between the online group and the two other groups. Finally the fear-inducing threats category exhibited differences between the both category and the two additional groups.

To really look further into the differences in victimization, analyses were run considering differences in behaviors. The variable that was focused on was the level of privacy employed in participants' profiles, which was measured as being public, having some restrictions, and completely private. Of those using social networking sites, 34.9% had public profiles, 31.5% used some restrictions, and 33.6% had completely private profiles. ANOVAs were also used to determine whether there were group differences based on the three levels of privacy. To avoid increased errors due to multiple analyses,

Table 15. Victimization Variables Considered by Location of Victimization

Latent	Online	Offline	Both Online and Offline	*F*	*p*
Threats Non-Fearful (range 1-3)	1.07 (.27)	1.23 (.48)	1.88 (.62)	16.06	.000 [1,2]
Verbal Harassment (range 1-3)	2.22 (.86)	2.07 (.82)	2.45 (.64)	3.26	.040 [2]
Persistent Behavior (range 1-3)	1.73 (.78)	1.30 (.52)	2.23 (.63)	25.06	.000 [1,2,3]
Physical Harassment (range 1-4)	1.14 (.38)	1.97 (1.05)	2.80 (1.10)	3.88	.023 [1,3]
Sexual Harassment (range 1-2)	1.25 (.44)	1.04 (.20)	1.83 (.38)	28.45	.000 [1,2,3]
Threats (fearful) (range 1-6)	1.63 (1.14)	1.79 (1.24)	3.58 (1.31)	18.24	.000 [1,2]
Serious Stalking (range 1-4)	1.45 (.52)	1.58 (.73)	1.55 (.67)	.29	*n.s.*

[1] The online group varied significantly from the both group. 2 The offline group varied significantly from the both group 3 The online group varied significantly from the offline group.

a Bonferroni correction was applied and only results with a $p < .01$ were considered significant. These results can be seen in Tables 16 and 17.

Serious stalking was the only latent variable that exhibited differences based upon privacy, while multiple additional variables did show significance. Stalking showed

Table 16. Victimization Variables Considered by Levels of Privacy

	Privacy			ANOVA	
	104	94	100	*F*	*p*
N	Public	Some Restrictions	Private		
Threats (non-fearful)	.34 (.60)	.51 (.76)	.46 (.69)	F(2, 293) = 1.66	*n.s.*
Verbal Harassment	1.51 (1.28)	1.54 (1.22)	1.40 (1.20)	F(2,292) = .690	*n.s.*
Persistent Behavior	.94 (.95)	1.14 (1.01)	1.06 (1.07)	F(2,294) = .948	*n.s.*
Physical Harassment	.70 (1.09)	.77 (1.24)	.89 (1.20)	F(2,284) = .619	*n.s.*
Sexual Harassment	.66 (.78)	.71 (.68)	.69 (.67)	F(2,294) = .118	*n.s.*
Threats (fearful)	.64 (1.27)	.81 (1.39)	.84 (1.20)	F(2,294) = .707	*n.s.*
Serious Stalking	.17 (.51)	.44 (.80)	.19 (.49)	F(2,294) = 5.58	.004 [1]

[1] The Some Restrictions group varied significantly from the other two groups.
Note: Due to multiple analyses, a Bonferroni correction was applied and $p < .01$ was considered significant.

Table 17. Victimization Items Considered by Levels of Privacy

	Privacy			ANOVA	
	104	94	100	*F*	*p*
N	Public	Some Restrictions	Private		
Contacted Police to Report Incident (max 1)	.10 (.30)	.12(.32)	.11(.31)	F(2,295) = .116	*n.s.*
Deleted Profile Due to Stalking or Harassment (max 1)	.05 (.22)	.16 (.37)	.06 (.24)	F(2,295) = 4.65	.01 [1, 2]
Received Unwanted Phone Calls, Emails, Letters, or Messages (max 1)	.19 (.40)	.31(.46)	.26(.44)	F(2,294) = 1.73	*n.s.*
I was harassed (max 1).	.37 (.49)	.37(.49)	.39(.49)	F(2,294) = .054	*n.s.*
I was stalked. (max 1)	.06 (.24)	.18 (.39)	.17 (.38)	F(2,294) = 4.04	(.019) *
Sexually Assaulted (Q. 34) (max 1)	.08 (.27)	.06 (.25)	.17 (.38)	F(2,294) = 3.57	(.029) *
Sexually Assaulted (SES or Q.34) (max 1)	.26 (.59)	.22 (.55)	.44 (.77)	F(2,295) = 3.19	(.043) *

[1] Public significantly different from some restrictions. [2] Some restrictions significantly different from private.

* Due to multiple analyses, a Bonferroni correction was applied and $p < .01$ was considered significant. This analysis did not meet the corrected level of significance

differences between those who had public profiles and those with only some restrictions, while some restrictions differed from private.

For the individual items considered, in response to the question of whether or not a participant had deleted their online profile in the additional questions, it was found that the same groups differences as seen in stalking were exhibited. The harassment index question showed significant differences between public profiles and the other two groups.

There are two different measures of sexual assault presented in Table 17. Participants were asked about sexual victimization twice, in both the social networking survey and in Koss' Sexual Experiences Survey. Participants reported fewer instances of sexual assault the first time they were asked than the second time they were presented with the question. The two questions were then combined to capture all victims. The ANOVA showed that both measures varied significantly by privacy level.

Finally, it is interesting that there appears to be a curvilinear relationship across the privacy levels. To explore this phenomenon, privacy was considered in terms of other online behaviors like hours online, number of friends, and address on profile. The online use variables were analyzed using an ANOVA, and the variable of having a school listed on a profile was found to have significant differences between those with public profiles and those with some restrictions or completely private profiles. Those who stated that they had blocked a user from contact showed differences between public and private profiles. Those who were currently using a

social network also had significant differences between public profiles and those with only some restrictions. These results are presented in Table 18.

Table 18. Online Use Variables

	Privacy			ANOVA	
N	104	94	100	*F*	*p*
	Public	Some Restrictions	Private		
Hours Online	2.68(1.80)	2.97(1.79)	2.33(1.44)	F(2,130) = .13	*n.s.*
Number of Friends	3.58(2.31)	4.52(2.20)	4.92(2.03)	F(2,293) = .94	*n.s.*
Address on Profile	1.97(.17)	1.98(.15)	2.00(.00)	F(2,295) = 1.37	*n.s.*
School on Profile	1.33(.47)	1.19(.40)	1.16(.37)	F(2,295) = 4.65	.01 [1, 2]
Feared for Safety while using Social Network	1.88(.33)	1.87(.34)	1.81(.39)	F(2,290) = 1.14	*n.s.*
Blocked User from Contact	1.81(.40)	1.68(.47)	1.61(.49)	F(2,290) = 4.87	.008 [2]
Currently Use Social Network	1.10(.30)	1.01(.10)	1.04(.20)	F(2,294) = 3.99	(.02)*
Site Used Most	1.50(1.08)	1.69(1.18)	1.52(1.06)	F(2,278) = .813	*n.s.*

[1] Public significantly different from some restrictions. [2] Public significantly different from private.

* Due to multiple analyses, a Bonferroni correction was applied and $p < .01$ was considered significant. This analysis did not meet the corrected level of significance.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study has shown that there is a high rate of UNLV college students who have used social networking sites (91.8%). Those with profiles were relatively open with their personal information, with approximately one-third having completely public profiles. Furthermore, participants appear outgoing because they are including relatively high amounts of pictures, with 105 participants having between 21 and 100 pictures and 81 participants including over 101 pictures. Although respondents are exhibiting these levels of exhibition, they are also showing some signs of restraint, with one-third maintaining semi-private profiles and one-third having private profiles. Additionally, although over 90% reported the use of a social network, only 81.1% currently use such sites, which may be the result of protecting oneself from unwanted individuals viewing personal information.

It is evident that there is a high rate of victimization occurring amongst the sample of UNLV students, both online and offline. Koss' Sexual Experiences Survey showed that 21% of participants had experienced some type of sexual assault, which included 6 males and 67 females. These findings are consistent with previous studies utilizing the SES, which found that 20% of college aged females reported sexual assault (Testa et al., 2004). Various types of victimization were also highly reported by participants while online, with verbal harassment, incessant behaviors, and sexual harassment occurring at

the highest rates. This is likely due to the ease by which others are able to perpetrate such acts through social networking sites. Fearful threats occurred more frequently online than non-fearful threats, while physical harassment and stalking happened less frequently while online.

When comparing online and offline victimization, it was found that certain behaviors were seen either more commonly online or offline. The only exception to this was verbal harassment, which had comparable rates of victimization occurring online and offline. Types of victimization exhibited more frequently offline were non-fearful and fearful threats, physical harassment, and stalking. Only two types of victimization were seen more commonly online than offline, which were incessant behaviors and sexual harassment. Analyses indicated that groups being victimized online, offline, and through both venues differed significantly from each other. Across different types of behavior, the three groups of victims were significantly different on 2 of the 7 categories of behavior.

When analyses were conducted to see if exposure online affected victimization, it was expected that there would be a linear relationship, with those having the lowest levels of privacy being victimized the most, those with moderate protections being victimized less, and those with private profiles having the lowest amounts of victimization. This was not the case for the majority of the latent variables. Aside from verbal and physical harassment, which both had linear relationships, both fearful and non-fearful threats, incessant behaviors, sexual harassment, and serious stalking all exhibited curvilinear relationships. Those with public profiles had lower rates of

victimization than those with some restrictions, and those with private profiles had less instances of victimization than those with some restrictions.

As stated above, it was initially believed that as a result of having a greater level of privacy, there would be a reduction in victimization, but this did not occur. Since participants were not asked whether their profile became private or had some restrictions as a result of an incident of harassment, it is unclear whether previous victimization affected the profile status. If this were the case, it is possible that as a result of being victimized, participants changed their profile from being completely public to having some restrictions or private. One possible explanation for this pattern may be that a majority of participants originally had public profiles, but as a result of various victimization incidents, either actual or perceived, their level of privacy was changed to protect themselves from future incidents. This would account for greater levels of victimization in the some restrictions category than for the public category. As had been expected, there were less reported incidents of victimization for those with private profiles than those with some restrictions. Despite this, for all of the latent variables with curvilinear relationships, the mean victimization rate for those with private profiles was actually higher than those with public profiles. This finding may reflect that those who had initially had public profiles may have experienced some type of victimization and then changed their profile to completely private. Future research should look for reasons that people choose to make their profile private rather than public.

When the additional variables were analyzed, it was found that there was a similar curvilinear relationship exhibited for the variables of contacting the police, deleting profiles because of stalking and harassment, having unwanted contacts, and being

stalked. The two items measuring sexual assault also showed a curvilinear relationship, but the means of victimization were much higher for those with private profiles and those with some restrictions or public profiles. An overwhelming majority of those reporting victimization were victimized offline by someone they met offline. Although those individuals who experienced sexual assault were likely not assaulted as a result of social networks, the high amounts of privacy for those reporting sexual assault may be the result of them taking extra precautions to prevent future and further victimizations.

Finally, one interesting finding was that when participants were initially asked whether they had been sexually assaulted, 11.5% of participants stated that they had been sexually assaulted. After answering this question, they completed the Sexual Experiences Survey, which asked various questions pertaining to their experiences with sexual victimization. Once completing the survey, 16% reported sexual victimization. It is believed that once participants viewed certain indicators of assault in the SES, they then were cued to identify themselves as being victims of sexual assault. An additional 5% never reported that they were sexually assaulted despite reporting that they had experienced sexual interactions that meet the definitions of sexual assault.

The application of the routine activities theory to the present study shows that the sample fulfills all of the components that comprise the theory. Criminological theory can usually assume that there are individuals who are motivated to commit crime. The current study did not directly measure this variable, but this variable will also be assumed for the purpose of drawing conclusions. The element of suitable targets is likely fulfilled by the present sample due to the definition of suitable targets online as being those that are easily accessible and having multiple targets online at once. As reported by

participants, over two-thirds of the sample either had public or semi-public profiles, which allows easy access to personal information. Furthermore, over 90% of the sample reported use of these sites sometime in their lives, which makes contact with such individuals much easier. Finally, a lack of capable guardianship is likely occurring online due to the high rates of personal information reported to be online. This is evidenced by over 75% of the sample providing their city and state, over two-thirds stating their present school, and about one-third revealing their place of employment. There may also be a lack of capable guardianship when participants have easily accessible profiles, which is seen with over 65% of participants keeping public or semi-public profiles.

This research study is a good first step in determining the risk of victimization while using social networking sites and future research can focus further on the differences between victims who experience negative incidents online, offline, or in both venues. The preliminary analyses in this project indicate that these groups differ, so the next step is to predict what independent characteristics show where an individual is most at risk of being victimized. Although there may be some risks while using social networking sites (ie. sexual harassment and incessant unwanted contacts), there is still a much greater risk of being severely victimized offline during the everyday routine activities of individuals.

Limitations of Research

The current study does have a few limitations. The primary limitation is that those surveyed were from introduction to criminal justice courses. This implies that the majority of the students surveyed will represent those who have just begun school, which

limits the ability to capture the victimization rates of students throughout their entire college careers. Future research may be conducted which measures those entering college, as well as collecting data from those in their last semester, in order to have two groups for comparisons. Additionally, only students in criminal justice courses from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas were surveyed, which limits the ability to generalize all academic majors, as well as other college campuses. More extensive research may be conducted to examine the victimization rates on social networking sites of various majors throughout the United States in order to determine if the results from the current study are consistent throughout the country.

Recommendations for Future Research

It was found that there was an unexpected curvilinear relationship of victimization based upon the privacy of a user's profile. Due to the lack of questions regarding the reasons behind reported implementation privacy strategies, it was impossible to determine whether the participant was victimized and then changed a profile to private or the profile was initially private and the victimization occurred afterwards. Further analyses should be conducted in this area in order to determine if having a profile set to private provides a high degree of protection, or if individuals are still being victimized even with such settings in place.

The goal of the current study was to determine where the victimization was more prevalent and what factors may have led to victimization, so the quantity or frequency of victimizations, both online and offline, were not surveyed. Future research should delve into the number of times students are being victimized in order to determine if certain individual characteristics lead to repeat victimization, whether online or offline.

Finally, future studies should be conducted on samples other than college aged individuals. Previous research has explored victimization of children under the age of 17, while research on those 18 and over has been scant. The current study included those 18 and over, but only included individuals in college. Comprehensive research spanning all age groups and professions is necessary in order to determine the full extent of victimization while using social networking sites.

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APPENDIX MATERIALS

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review Approval Notice

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:

Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: July 30, 2007
TO: **Dr. Margaret Alexis Kennedy**, Criminal Justice

FROM: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

RE: Notification of IRB Action by Dr. Paul Jones, Co-Chair
Protocol Title: **Victimization on Social Networking Sites**
Protocol #: 0707-2409

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is, July 24, 2008. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

PLEASE NOTE:
Attached to this approval notice is the **official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form** for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond January 24, 2008 it would be necessary to submit a **Continuing Review Request Form** *60 days* before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at OPRSHumanSubjects@ccmail.nevada.edu or call 895-2794.

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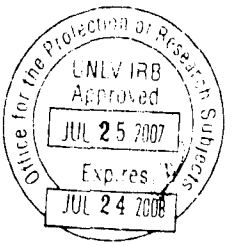
JUL 12 2007

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Criminal Justice



TITLE OF STUDY: Victimization on Social Networking Sites

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Alexis Kennedy, Melanie Taylor

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 895-5122, 895-0206

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about victimization while using social networking sites.

Participants
You are being invited to participate because you are enrolled at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and you are at least 18 years old.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: complete an anonymous self-report questionnaire package consisting of questions about victimization experiences while using social networking sites. You will be asked to provide some demographic information (e.g., age, sex, and ethnic background). Your name will not be associated with or linked to the data, and your consent form will be stored separately from the data.

Benefits of Participation
There may be a direct benefit to you as a participant in this study. You may benefit from gaining direct knowledge about the process by which criminological data is collected in a university setting. We hope to learn more about victimization while using social networking sites.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. You might be uncomfortable answering some of the questions asked. You may choose not to answer any questions that make me feel uncomfortable. Participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to refuse to participate and withdraw from the study without jeopardizing your course grade. If you exercise your right to withdraw from the study before it is completed, you will still receive your research credit points.

Cost /Compensation
There will not be a financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated financially for your time. You will receive one (1) research credit point for CRJ 104 for your participation. If you are a student who is not enrolled in CRJ104 we welcome your participation but you will not receive any course credit nor any financial compensation for your participation.

JUL 12 2007

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Criminal Justice

TITLE OF STUDY: Victimization on Social Networking Sites

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Alexis Kennedy, Melanie Taylor

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 895-5122, 895-0206

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Alexis Kennedy at **895-5122** or Melanie Taylor at **895-0206.** For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702-895-2794.**

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 3 years after the completion of the study and publication of the results. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form will be given to me.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____
Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Note: Please do not sign this document if the Approval Stamp is missing or is expired.

Victimization on Social Networking Sites

PLEASE READ THIS PAGE BEFORE COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. The general purpose of this survey is to investigate the prevalence of victimization on social networks. You will also be asked to provide some demographic information (i.e. age, gender). You may choose to refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. Participation is completely VOLUNTARY and you have the right to refuse to participate and withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing your course grade. If you exercise your right to withdraw from the study before it is completed, you will still receive your research credit points.

2. All of the information provided is **COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS**. To ensure anonymity please do not make any identifying marks on the answer sheets (please do **NOT** write any names or student numbers on the forms). No names or other identifying information will be written on the answer sheets once they are collected. The information collected will be completely confidential and will be reported in group form, keeping individual responses anonymous.

3. Completed answer booklets should be dropped into the sealed box marked research. Please also pick up a debriefing sheet before leaving the room.

THIS RESEARCH IS BEING CONDUCTED BY PROFESSOR ALEXIS KENNEDY AT THE UNLV DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE. DR. KENNEDY CAN BE REACHED AT 895-5122.

Please continue on the next page...

1. Social Networking Use

A social networking site is any type of online webpage where users are able to interact with one another through such features as profiles, blogs, and message boards.

1. Have you ever used a social networking site, such as Myspace, Facebook, or Livejournal?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

2. Do you currently use a social networking site, such as Myspace, Facebook, or Livejournal?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

3. Do you have a personal profile on any social networking site?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

2. If YES to Q.3, please provide information on profile that is used most.

4. Does your profile have any restrictions to limit who may view your profile?

- ◯ No, profile public
- ◯ Restricted so only friends can see information
- ◯ Restricted to only some friends can see information
- ◯ Restricted so no one can see information

5. Approximately how many pictures of yourself are currently on your profile and what type?

Serious	
Partylike	
Artistic	
Provocative	

6. Approximate how many other pictures are currently on your profile

7. Estimate the number of online "friends" you currently have on your profile

8. Estimate the number of online "friends" that you would consider to be close friends

Friends known before you had a site	
Friends known through site	
Family	

9. Do you list your real age on your profile

- ◯ Yes, and age is visible to all
- ◯ Yes, and age is not visible to all
- ◯ No, and age is visible to all
- ◯ No, and age is not visible to all

10. What personal information is included in your profile (check all that apply)

- ☐ City and State
- ☐ Address
- ☐ Phone number
- ☐ School
- ☐ Job

11. Have you ever feared for your personal safety due to the actions of other users while using a social networking site?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

12. Have you ever blocked a user from contacting you due to a disturbing incident?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

13. Have you ever met an individual in person that you first made contact with on a social networking site?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

3. Incident Survey

14. The following questions ask about incidents that may have happened to you either in person or online. Please check each box if the statement applies to you during the PREVIOUS 4 YEARS. The questions ask how you met the person who did the act to you (by someone you met online through a social networking site or somone you met offline). The questions also ask about where the incident occured (online in a social network site or offline).

	Does not apply	Met online/ Occurred online	Met online/ Occurred offline	Met offline/ Occurred online	Met offline/ Occurred offline
1.) I have been threatened physically, but I did not fear for my life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.) I have been threatened physically and did fear for my life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.) I have feared for my safety because of a person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.) I have been pestered or irritated by an individual to the point that I no longer wished to be friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.) I have been verbally attacked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.) I have been physically attacked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.) I filed a restraining order against someone out of fear for my safety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.) I have been verbally harassed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.) I have been physically harassed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.) I have been physically followed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.) I have received unwanted contacts from an individual or individuals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.) I have had verbal statements made to me which I considered derogatory	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.) I have had verbal statements made to me which I considered inappropriate due to their sexual nature	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.) I have requested that an individual or individuals no longer contact me, but these requests were ignored	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.) I have contacted the police or another agency in order to report an incident	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16.) I have been sent unwanted material of a	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

sexual nature					
17.) Physical threats have been made against me, family, or friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18.) I have deleted a profile I had on a social networking site due to a stalking or harassment incident	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.) I have been forced to change my daily routine due to fears resulting from stalking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20.) I have been under more stress due to fears resulting from being stalked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21.) I have received unwanted phone calls, emails, letters or messages which I found to be disturbing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22.) My property was vandalized by someone who had been harassing me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.) I have asked someone to no longer contact me because I feared for my safety because of that individual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.) I have been repeatedly contacted online unwantedly by an individual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25.) I have been repeatedly contacted offline unwantedly by an individual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26.) I have had pictures taken of me which I did not consent to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27.) I have changed my phone number, address, or email address due to a stalking or harassment incident	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28.) I have quit my job or moved from my home due to a stalking or harassment incident	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29.) I have been watched by another without my consent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30.) I have had an individual make unwanted physical contact with me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31.) I have had threats made against me which made me fear for my life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32.) I have been harassed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33.) I have been stalked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34.) I have been sexually assaulted	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. Please indicate to what degree these things happened to you. Please answer all questions.

	Never	Yes, before entering university but not since	Yes, since entering university but not before	Yes, both before and since entering university
1. Have you ever had sexual intercourse with another person when you both wanted to?	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Have you ever had another person misinterpret the level of sexual intimacy you desired?	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Have you ever been in a situation where another person became so sexually aroused that you felt it was useless to stop him/her even though you did not want to have sexual intercourse?	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Have you ever had sexual intercourse with another person even though you didn't want to because he/she threatened to end your relationship otherwise?	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Have you ever had sexual intercourse with another person when you didn't really want to because you felt pressured by continual arguments?	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Have you ever found out later that another person had obtained sexual intercourse with you by saying things he/she didn't really mean?	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Have you ever been in a situation where another person used some degree of physical force (e.g. twisting arm, holding down) to try to make you engage in kissing or petting when you don't really want to?	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Have you ever been in a situation where another person tried to have sexual intercourse with you when you didn't want to by threatening to use physical force if you didn't cooperate, but for various reasons sexual intercourse did not occur?	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Have you ever been in a situation where another person used some degree of physical force to try to get you to have sexual intercourse with him/her when you didn't want to, but for various reasons sexual intercourse did not occur?	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Have you ever had sexual intercourse with another person when you didn't want to because that person threatened to use physical force (e.g. twisting arm, holding down) if you didn't cooperate?	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Have you ever had sexual intercourse with another person when you didn't want to because that person used some degree of physical force?	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Have you ever been in a situation where another person engaged in sexual acts with you such as anal or oral intercourse, when you didn't want to by using threats of physical force?	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Have you ever been sexually assaulted?	☐	☐	☐	☐

1. Demographic Information

1. Age

2. Gender

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

3. Ethnicity (you may choose more than one option)

- [ ] African-American
- [ ] Asian
- [ ] Caucasian
- [ ] Other

4. What is your major?

5. Do you currently use a social networking site?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

6. If yes, which social networking site do you use most frequently?

- [ ] Myspace
- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] LiveJournal
- [ ] Other

7. If you currently use a social networking site, what is your primary reason for use?

- [ ] To make new friends
- [ ] To keep in contact with current friends
- [ ] To make new relationships
- [ ] Other

8. If you currently use a social networking site, please estimate the number of hours of use per week.

EXPERIMENT INFORMATIONAL FORM

PLEASE READ

Principal Investigator, Dr. Alexis Kennedy (895-5122)

Survey on victimization on social networking sites. The purpose of this study is to analyze the victimization rates using commonly used measures (i.e., Sexual Experiences Survey, Koss, 1992) on those who utilize social networking sites in order to determine if there is a correlation between the use of such sites and an increased risk of harassment, stalking, and sexual assault. Recent claims made by the media have portrayed victimization against young adults who use social networks as prevalent and extremely harmful. Few studies have been conducted in this area, and of those that have analyzed the issue, almost none have found evidence to support the claim that crime is rampant on the Internet. This study is being conducted in order to build upon previous research in this area. We hope to determine if the issue has been portrayed in the media as extremely harmful in order to create salience, or if the use of social networking sites does indeed increase vulnerability to the crimes of harassment, stalking, and sexual assault.

Some of the questions asked today are personal and may have been unsettling. If you would like to talk further about any issues raised here, the following is a resource available to you:

Student Counseling and Psychological Services at UNLV **895-3627**
Confidential counseling on any topic

References

Sexual Experiences Survey, Koss, 1992

VITA

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