This article starts out with a man receiving messages on social media from two different women he does not personally know himself. The second women’s message revealed to him that she thought he was a 43-year-old widow when in reality this wasn’t the case. William, the victim here realized that he was experiencing the effects of being a victim of catfishing. This is a social phenomenon that has been occurring recently within the past 10 years in increasing numbers in which fake online profiles are created in order to trick and manipulate people.

William just so happened to run his own blog which chronicled his life as a writer and a man who came out as gay, years after having married a woman and started a family. After his family left him he started dating again and met this one man that he quickly fell for named Paul. William felt rather insecure about himself and ironically created a fake profile of himself and messaged Paul asking him if he found the right man yet to which he replied with a frank “no”. Eventually William regretted doing this but he in fact did improve his relationship with Paul and they ended up happily married. William did touch on an interesting point towards the end of his article in which he noticed that the two women he contacted had a hard time separating the fake William with the real one due to their previous interactions and bonds with the fake one.

It’s an interesting story that really shows how unsuspectingly this can happen to anyone which gives everyone an equal chance of falling victim to this. Pictures and personal information put out there on social media is readily accessible for anyone willing to manipulate. The most interesting point of the article for me was how although the victim of catfishing, William made a fake profile for his own personal gains which was not something I expected. But then again this man who has a history of not being honest to himself by remaining a closeted man and marrying a woman so maybe this is just says something about his character.

I also think that after discovering how easy it was to create a fake profile it almost became a temptation for William to exploit that. The two women that messaged him were also easily fooled which led me to believe that not only is it easy for someone to create a fake profile but using a platform such as a dating website (in which you will not personally know the other users) makes it just as easy into fooling someone that you are a real person. From that point onward there are a few roads this can lead down. From the women it sounded like the fake profile was just getting a kick out of tricking them but there have certainly been cases of murders, rapes, abductions, and extortion following those that happen to meet the people behind these fake profiles.

For the case of answering the question “How would I react if this happened to me?”, I personally can’t answer that because this has in fact happened to me last year. I had three fake profiles created of me on Facebook by a fellow IU student in which he was friending random IU students I didn’t know and chatting with them. I then found out that this person was also using a fake number and sending harassing text messages in my name to a certain person. I was initially
shocked upon finding out about this but I swiftly handled it by having all the Facebook profiles reported and blocking/refraining from contacting the perpetrator behind all of this.

This was all especially slightly upsetting for me since the person that was receiving harassing text messages contacted me and was ready to file a police report but I repeatedly told them and gave them good evidence on how this could not possibly be me. The phone number he was receiving messages from was from Indiana but my number is listed under a New York area code. Perhaps similarly to William’s case with the two women, it is indeed difficult for people who first encounter the fake profile to dissociate that image and question it when encountered with the real one. I since have not had any problems related to this one case or similar to this. As for the final question I have pertaining to this topic is how difficult is it for those to whom fall victims to the manipulative actions of a fake profile, is it for them to trust the real profile who provides substantial evidence that they are telling the truth?