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A Unique Approach Against Child Sex Offenders: Jefferson County "Cheezo" Unit the Model for Success?

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A UNIQUE APPROACH AGAINST CHILD SEX OFFENDERS;
JEFFERSON COUNTY "CHEEZO" UNIT THE MODEL FOR SUCCESS?

by

Sonia R. Chavez

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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JEFFERSON COUNTY "CHEEZO" UNIT THE MODEL FOR SUCCESS?

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ABSTRACT

A Unique Approach Against Child Sex Offenders; Jefferson County "Cheezo" Unit The Model For Success?

Online crimes against children are a daunting problem facing law enforcement today. The Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force reported 76,961 complaints in 2010-2011. The purpose of this study was to describe a unique approach the Jefferson County Child Sex Offender Internet Investigations (CSOII) Unit, nicknamed "Cheezo", utilize, analyze the arrest data of Cheezo, and determine if Cheezo could be used as a best methods approach against this problem. A demographic study was conducted on the Cheezo arrest data, as well as comparison analysis of arrest totals, prosecution rates, and educational presentations provided to the community. Comparisons were conducted with Cheezo and the following programs; ICAC task force, Colorado ICAC task force, and a non-profit volunteer organization called Perverted Justice. All data comparisons showed Cheezo, with three full-time investigators, was able to come within 38% of arrest totals, and 37% of prosecution totals of the Colorado ICAC and Perverted Justice, respectively. Cheezo also coordinates a very successful educational program, providing approximately 130 presentations a year at schools and events. Cheezo was identified as an excellent prototype to be used to combat online child sex crimes.

Keywords: criminology, Internet stings, online child sex crimes, cybercrime

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Introduction

Envision a 13-year-old girl who is new to using the Internet and has recently begun chatting with a new “friend” who happens to be a 40-year-old male. The young girl views this friend as a confidant and best friend of whom she can ask anything, to include her sexually curious questions. This friend seems to know everything and is always willing to answer and engage these questions. Eventually this girl is convinced to meet with her new friend and leaves her home without telling her parents and heads to the meet location nearby. Unbeknownst to her, the male friend is a sexual predator who has had sadomasochist desires and having teenage slaves to control. The young 13-year-old girl is picked up and taken to the home of the 40-year-old male where she is immediately raped while being videotaped, and then chained up in the dungeon. Over four days this young girl is raped, beaten, and tortured over and over again. Luckily, the male had videotaped the initial rape and sent it out on social media to his group of friends and followers and one of them had the decency to report the crime to law enforcement. The FBI was able to find and rescue this young girl the very day the abductor has planned on killing her. This is one example provided by the Child Sex Offender Investigations (CSOI) Unit, nicknamed “Cheezo”, website (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/you/).

This is the reality that kids and parents are now facing. With the spread and development of technology and the Internet, child predators have found a hunting ground that provides them with easy and quick access to naïve and curious children. The Internet, email, and creation of chat rooms was already a complex challenge for law enforcement to try to catch and combat child predators (ICAC, 2013,

www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3). Today, we are facing social media sites, advanced applications available on smart phones that give anyone access to free messaging, picture sharing, and even coordinates of where someone is or was last. An even bigger problem today, as noted in "Internet Usage and Crimes Against Children", is the mobility of the Internet through the use of cell phones, iPads, iPods, and Net books (Anderson, p. 2). Kids can have their phones, laptops, iPads, etc. anytime and anywhere. This mobility makes it increasingly dangerous and increasingly difficult to protect children. To compound the problem, many parents may find it difficult and frustrating to keep up with technology, especially those parents who never "caught on" or felt comfortable using technology. In many cases, parents have no clue what applications, social sites, or picture programs are available to their children, or the dangers they may pose, referred to as the "Perfect Storm" by the Enough is Enough non-profit organization (EIE, 2013, www.internetsafety101.org/dangers.htm).

A child predator on the other hand can be very educated in what technology has to offer, and especially what is available to children and where children will be. A child predator will find it very beneficial to utilize chat rooms, social sites, gaming sites, and applications that children are most likely to gravitate to since this will be where they can talk to and solicit a child the easiest.

This very same methodology can be used against the predator, essentially turning the predator into prey. That is the approach of the Jefferson County (Jeffco) District Attorney's (DA) CSOII, "Cheezo" Unit, Colorado.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to describe the CSOII, nicknamed "Cheezo," Unit and its unique approach to preventing and catching online child sexual predators. By utilizing data from larger programs like ICAC and Perverted Justice, a baseline will be created to help provide a more accurate perspective of what one county from one state can do, whereas the other current programs involve multiple federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies or large volumes of volunteers. It is hypothesized that Cheezo's methods and procedures could be utilized as a best methods approach to combat online child sex crimes, as determined by number of arrests, followed by percentage of offenders successfully prosecuted, and educational presentations or training conducted within the community on a yearly basis.

Rationale

Law Enforcement efforts against online sex crimes against children have been in place since the late 90's yet the problem persists and will continue to persist as technology offers easier access to children (ICAC, 2013, www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3). Although there are many great initiatives to combat child sex predators online, there are not many that conduct the type of intensive, live, and thorough types of investigation stings as the Jeffco Cheezo Unit.

Research Questions

Research questions for this project include:

R1) What are the methods and procedures used by Cheezo?

R2) What are the methods and procedures used by other programs developed to combat online child sex crimes?

R3) How do the methods and procedures used by Cheezo differ from other programs developed to combat online child sex crimes?

R4) Is Cheezo the prototype for a best methods approach to combat online child sex predators?

The distinctive approach the Jeffco DA Cheezo Unit uses has shown great success thus far, yet is the only law enforcement program like it in Colorado currently. Other programs with the same mission are utilizing completely different methods, and although noteworthy, are not necessarily engaging the offender directly as the Cheezo program does. In other words, Cheezo has the ability to interdict the offender prior to an offense against a child, whereas other law enforcement approaches tend to engage the offender after a child has already been approached (DOJ, Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011).

Limitation and Delimitations

Jurisdiction is defined as the legal authority of a court to try and rule cases within a specific geographic area and specific types of cases (Law.com, 2013, www.dictionary.law.com/default.aspx?selected=1070). Although initially jurisdiction was assumed to be a limitation and cause for concern, according to Cheezo investigator, Mike Harris, law enforcement agencies have been able to establish jurisdiction based on where online communications occur (2013). Additionally, law enforcement agencies work with each other when necessary to continue and prosecute an ongoing investigation that may occur in another state or county. Jurisdiction can come into play however when an investigator is deciding whether to begin a sting or not, based on how likely it is to be able to arrest the offender. For example, if the offender is located

outside of the U.S., it is possible the investigator would choose not to begin an investigation because of the complexity of arresting an offender from another country (Harris, 2013).

This study is limited by data and size of the organization being studied. The Cheezo Unit consists of three investigators from One County in Colorado. Although they have proven to be very successful with over 600 arrests (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/arrests/), this program would be considered small in comparison to the National Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, which consists of over 60 coordinated task forces (ICAC, 2013, www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3). Another data limitation is the length of time the court cases take after an arrest which is estimated to be anywhere from 6 months to 14 months, as well as failure to appear, and cases involving juveniles (Harris, 2013). All three of these situations affect the arrest data available for analysis. For example, in 2011 Cheezo conducted 79 arrests however only 40 of these arrests were available on the website (Harris, 2013).

Definitions

Sting for this Study: the online investigation set-up where one investigator portrays himself or herself as a child

Cheezo: the nickname of the Jeffco District Attorney Child Sex Offender Internet Investigations (CSOII) Unit

Sex Offender for this Study: Adult over the age of 18 that intentionally seeks out a child online for sexual purposes

Victim for this study: child under the age of 17 who was sexually exploited or assaulted online by an adult

Age of consent: ability of an individual to understand, agree to, and cooperate in sexual activity with another individual, recognized at 17 for most Colorado laws regarding sex crimes (Jeffco, 2012, www.co.jefferson.co.us/sheriff/sheriff_T62_R236.htm)

Child: minor under of the age of 15 as defined by Colorado Revised Statutes (Denver's Premier Sex Assault Law Firm (DPSALF), n.d., denvercriminalattorneys.info/consent-and-colorado-sex-crimes/)

Sexual Exploitation of a Child: attempting to persuade or entice a minor who is under 15 years old to engage in explicit sexual conduct to make pornography, called "sexually exploitative material," or possessing, distributing, or producing such material including digital images or video (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/sexual-exploitation-of-a-child)

Internet Sexual Exploitation of a Child: using the computer to invite a minor under 15 years old to create sexually explicit material, including pictures or video (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/sexual-exploitation-of-a-child)

Indecent Exposure: knowingly exposing one's genitals in another persons view under circumstances most likely to alarm or offend the person (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/indecent-exposure/)

Internet Luring of a Child: communication of sexual messages or description of sexual conduct to a minor under 15 years old using the Internet or by text message, and tries to persuade the minor to meet (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/internet-luring-and-exploitation/)

Enticement of a Child: Invites, persuades, or attempts to invite or persuade, a child under the age of 15 years old to enter a building, vehicle, secluded room or area with intent of a sexual nature (Steinberg, 2013, www.colorado-sex-crimes-lawyer.com)

Sexual Assault on a Child or Minor: knowingly having sexual conduct with a minor under 15 years old and at least four years older than the victim (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/sexual-assault-on-a-child-or-minor/)

Class 3 Felony Sexual Assault on a Child: same as above with the inclusion of the use of force, threats, or the assault occurred as a pattern of sexual abuse, called “sexual assault on a child by one in a position of trust” (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/sexual-assault-on-a-child-or-minor/)

Sexual Assault: knowingly inflicting sexual intrusion on a an alleged victim through the use of force or coercion, or without the ability to give consent, or the victim was under the age of 15 years and the accused was at least four years older, or authority was used to compel the victim, or the assault happened as part of medical service (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/)

Solicitation of Prostitution: sexual conduct in exchange for money or other items of value (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/solicitation-of-prostitution-or-furthering-prostitution/)

Solicitation for Prostitution: asking someone to engage in prostitution, arranging or offering to arrange a meeting for the purpose of prostitution, or directing another person to a place of prostitution (DPSALF, n.d., www.denvercriminalattorneys.info/solicitation-of-prostitution-or-furthering-prostitution/)

Best Methods for this Study: process that most thoroughly combats the online sexual predator issue to include education, training, arrests, and prosecution

Review of Literature

Summary

This literature review consisted of scholarly, peer reviewed articles, the Jefferson County District Attorney Child Sex Offender Internet Investigations Unit website (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org), the National Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force website (ICAC, 2013, www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3), the Colorado Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force website (CO ICAC, 2008, www.coloradoicac.com), the Perverted Justice (PJ) non-profit website (PJ, 2013, www.perverted-justice.com), and the Enough is Enough (EIE) non-profit website (EIE, 2013, www.enough.org). This research is being conducted to analyze and describe the methods and procedures used by the Jefferson County District Attorney's Child Sex Offender Internet Investigations (CSOII) Unit in an effort to determine the benefits of duplicating this type of program for use and expansion in other Colorado law enforcement agencies. The literature on this topic is grouped by: law enforcement specific programs with subtopics of Cheezo, the National ICAC, and the Colorado ICAC; and non-profit organizations with subtopics of Perverted Justice and Enough is Enough. That is then followed up with six areas identified through the coding process of all sources. Websites were utilized for information on the Cheezo unit as well as current information on law enforcement agencies and other organizations with the mission to combat online child sex crimes. Further, six areas of similarity were discovered during content analysis of 13 scholarly, peer-reviewed articles.

Law Enforcement Programs

Cheezo

District Attorney (DA) Pete Weir is the current supporter of the CSOII "Cheezo" Unit. It originated when DA Scott Storey took office in 2005 and realized there was a large problem of online, unsupervised time on the Internet by kids (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/home). He then created the Child Sex Offender Internet Investigations (CSOII) Unit, under Mike Harris. Nicknamed Cheezo, which goes along with mascot of big yellow cool cat, the unit uses a two-pronged approach of education to children and parents, and going undercover and online pretending to be children (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/home/). The educational presentations of Cheezo, as described on the Cheezo website (2013) are comprised of three different presentations based on the grade of children and one for adults. The Kindergarten-3rd grade presentation presents stranger danger-Internet strangers with the Cheezo mascot to make it fun and engaging, and encourages parents to attend (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/presentation/). The 4th-5th-grade presentation focuses on online safety, social networking, and cell phone safety with the message of, "if you don't know someone face to face, do not interact with them online" (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/presentation/). The middle-high school presentation combines the 4th-5th-grade presentation and the introduction of "sexting" (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/presentation/). Finally, the adult presentation covers everything from all three grade presentations, plus helpful tips to keep their children safe online and on cell phones (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/presentation/).

The Cheezo website, provides 12 tips for parents that are summarized as: educate yourself, then your child; teach children the obvious rules to include sharing of information and pictures online; install an Internet filter or family safety software such as mymobilewatchdog; know the dangers associated with sites that children frequent; talk with your kids about encountering pornography and what to do or avoid; manage the time spent on the Internet and cell phones; set Internet boundaries and enforce them if they are not followed; keep computers in open areas of the home and out of bedrooms; create an open dialogue with your child that encourages trust and communication; engage your child to teach you about the gaming and social media sites they visit; involve compromise and communication when allowing website usage and social media sites; monitor video games and gaming sites that allow communication (Cheezo, 2013, www.cheezo.org/parents/). Finally, become familiar with sites like Netlingo to learn shorthand terms used in social media and texting (Netlingo, 2013, www.netlingo.com). According to the Cheezo website, investigators have provided over 2,000 educational presentations in Colorado and according to Mike Harris, the unit conducts approximately 130 presentations a year (2013).

National Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force

The national ICAC Task Force is a Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) program that helps state and local law enforcement develop a response to cyber enticement and child pornography cases (ICAC, 2013, www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3). These efforts include forensics, investigations, training, tech assistance, victim services, and community education (ICAC, 2013, www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3).

The ICAC Task Force was developed in response to growing Internet use by children and heightened online accounts of predators seeking contact with children, as well as increased proliferation of child pornography online (ICAC, 2013, www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3). “The 1998 Justice Appropriations Act directed the OJJDP to create national network of state and local law enforcement cyber units to investigate child exploitation”, and the Providing Resources, Officers, and Technology to Eradicate Cyber Threats to Our Children Act (the PROTECT Act), 2008, enabled the ICAC program through Fiscal Year (FY) 2013. The ICAC is a National network of 61 task forces made up of over federal, state, and local law enforcement (ICAC, 2013, www.ojjdp.gov/programs/progsummary.asp?pi=3).

In 2009, according the Department of Justice (DOJ) in “Review of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program” summary for 2010-2011, a continuation of funding increased the ICAC’s responsibilities to include: an increased ability of state and local law enforcement officers to detect, investigate, and arrest violators of ICAC offenses; to conduct proactive and reactive investigations; to provide training and assistance to law enforcement of all levels; to increase the number of offenses that are investigated and prosecuted in both federal and state cases; to create a multiagency response; to participate in the DOJ Project Safe Childhood; to enhance nationwide response; to develop and deliver public awareness and prevention programs; and to participate in both proactive and reactive events that will enhance investigations and prosecutions (DOJ, Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011, p. 5). The types of complaints handled by ICAC include traveler complaints, defined by ICAC as “the transport of at least one individual for the purpose of sexual contact with a minor” (DOJ,

Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011, p. 4), enticement, obscenity directed at minors, commercial sexual exploitation of a child, and the manufacturing, distribution, or possession of child pornography (DOJ, Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011, p. 10).

ICAC Colorado

The Colorado Springs Police Department is the responsible ICAC Task Force agency for the state of Colorado and was provided a budget of \$317,604 in 2010, and \$328,856 in 2011 (DOJ, Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011). It was one of the original 10 task forces created in 1998 and is comprised of 40 agencies with intergovernmental agreements, and 20 agencies that participate and contribute (CO ICAC, 2008, www.coloradoicac.com/abouticac.html). The CO ICAC, like the Cheezo Unit, has a two-pronged approach that includes education, however the presentations are primarily conducted by school resource officers (SROs) due to lack of manpower.

According the Colorado ICAC website, they are responsible for: investigations of persons using the internet to attempt to engage in sexual contact with underage children; persons who send children web camera feeds of, or files displaying sexual acts; and persons who download or distribute child pornography files using email or file-sharing networks (CO ICAC, 2008, www.coloradoicac.com/investigations.html). Their goals are to improve CO investigations and prosecutions of Internet related crimes against children; to promote public awareness of sexual exploitation of children and provide education to the community (CO ICAC, 2008, www.coloradoicac.com/abouticac.html). Their educational programs include presentations for parents and community groups, middle to high school, 3rd-6th-grade,

and 2nd-grade-Kindergarten (CO ICAC, 2008, www.coloradoicac.com/abouticac.html).

Some of the investigations conducted by the CO ICAC are: child exploitation, or the possession, manufacturing, or distribution of child pornography; enticement of a child; trafficking of children; child prostitution; promotion of obscenity to a minor; child sex tourism; internet luring of a child; internet sexual exploitation of a child; contributing to the delinquency of a minor; and harassment and bullying for sexual purpose (CO ICAC, 2008, www.coloradoicac.com/investigations.html).

Non-profit Efforts

Perverted Justice

Perverted Justice (PJ) is a non-profit organization that was created in 2003 by Xavier Von Erck and one other person after they noticed a large amount of strange “chatters” soliciting children over public chat rooms in a Portland Regional Room (PJ, 2008, <http://www.perverted-justice.com/index.php?pg=faq#cat1>). The goal of PJ is to deter predators from soliciting children in regional chat rooms and to create a “chilling affect” (PJ, 2008, <http://www.perverted-justice.com/index.php?pg=faq#cat1>). PJ selected regional rooms due to how easy it is to target offenders and it is assumed the offender would live close by and be more willing to meet. PJ works hard to cooperate with law enforcement and has created first agreements with as many police organizations as possible (PJ, 2008, <http://www.perverted-justice.com/index.php?pg=faq#cat1>). Additional efforts include: conducting training with law enforcement on their tactics; creation of survivor discussion forums; the chronicling and cataloging of internet-related abductions; creation of an internship program for Criminal Justice students; and efforts to raise awareness about internet predators (PJ,

2008, <http://www.perverted-justice.com/index.php?pg=faq#cat1>). PJ provides speaking engagements and presentations to kids, teens, parents, college students, and law enforcement.

PJ, similar to Cheezo, conducts Internet stings through the use of regional chat rooms, by posing as underage children. They have achieved a high arrest and prosecution rate through the use of double-recorded chats, which involve software programs set up to record Yahoo! Chat logs on the local computer, in addition to a secure server located in another state that cannot be accessed (PJ, 2008, <http://www.perverted-justice.com/index.php?pg=faq#cat1>). So if an offender tries to say the recorded chats were a set up, there is a second set of recorded chats on a server in another state that can verify the conversations. They also use underage sounding phone verifiers, which are adults who sound underage and are used to prove intent (PJ, 2008, <http://www.perverted-justice.com/index.php?pg=faq#cat1>). PJ is able to provide chat logs, IM names, and all evidence collected during their sting and as seen on the popular show "To Catch a Predator," PJ has been able to create successful relationships with local law enforcement resulting in numerous arrests per day (PJ, 2008, <http://www.perverted-justice.com/index.php?pg=faq#cat1>). According to the PJ website (2013), they have been able to convict 550 offenders since June 2004. Some of the benefits of utilizing PJ is that they work at no cost to law enforcement, they provide great accessibility and flexibility, they are trained and focused strictly on catching online child predators, and they have a large amount of volunteers to work with (PJ, 2008, <http://www.perverted-justice.com/index.php?pg=faq#cat1>).

Enough is Enough

Enough is Enough (EIE) is a non-profit organization created in 1994 to confront online pornography, child pornography, child stalking, sexual predation, and other forms of online victimization (EIE, 2013, enough.org). EIE, somewhat similar to Cheezo, PJ, and ICAC, utilizes a three-pronged approach of education, working with the industry to ensure current laws against child pornography and online sexual predation of children are enforced (EIE, 2013, www.enough.org). They focus their efforts on public awareness, encouraging the technological industry to create family-friendly corporate policies and solutions, and promoting legal enforcement of existing laws and enactment of new laws (EIE, 2013, www.enough.org). One of the methods used for public awareness is the Internet Safety 101 program. This program is directed toward parents, guardians, and adults to teach them Internet safety and available software so they can better control and moderate their Childs use of the Internet. EIE has also been involved in creating a multitude of videos to be used for awareness and has been a part of many shows such as Oprah, Dr. Phil, and Dateline NBC to name a few (EIE, 2013, www.enough.org). One large difference of EIE is that they do not in anyway conduct Internet stings or have any contact with offenders. They are much more prevention, education, and enforcement of law focused.

Content Analysis Themes

Community Awareness

Online crimes against children is a serious problem being faced across the country, therefore it is imperative that awareness of what dangers exist to children online is a primary focus of any program with a mission to combat these crimes. It

appears clear that Cheezo, ICAC, Perverted Justice, and Enough is Enough have all taken approaches, some of them similar, to educating kids and their communities. All of these programs have organized presentations for parents and kids alike, and many of the programs provide a series of tips for parents to utilize when trying to moderate their child's access to the Internet. In addition, training parents, children, and the community as a whole, in Internet safety and the dangers that children face online was a prevalent theme many of the 13 sources used. Research conducted by Worlak, Finklehor, and Mitchell (2004) suggests training and awareness programs aimed at teens to teach them the severity and repercussions of having an online relationship with grown adults. They also recommend training that teaches teens not to talk to online strangers and not to provide personal information online (Worlak et al., 2004). It is great to have initiatives like Cheezo and ICAC out there, but without children and parents taking action to be safer online, this crime will continue to be an uphill battle.

Parental Involvement

Similar to community awareness, parent involvement is also a big focus for all of the programs discussed. All of the programs offer and provide presentations specific to parents and adult guardians. EIE also provides a safety program that parents and adults can purchase (EIE, 2013, www.enough.org). Parents are the moderators and controllers of their children's online access, therefore if they are undereducated and under informed about what their kids are doing, then it would seem safe to assume that children will continue to be vulnerable to online child predators. A study by Worlak et al. (2004) identified troubled or weak communication with parents as a potential contributor to vulnerability online. Perception, however, can be key, as identified in a survey study

conducted by the Rochester Institute of Technology (2008), which showed that 66% of high school students felt their parents provided no supervision online, yet only 7% of parents reported non-supervision (McQuade and Sampat). That is a huge gap in perception between parent and child, and a cause for concern.

Accessibility to the Internet by Children/Social Media

Two of the coding variables will be discussed as a combined topic due to the similarity of them both. With the access to the Internet, access to Social Media followed, therefore it makes sense to discuss both variables together. It seems obvious that with the growth of the Internet and Internet use by children, there would be a growth in predators targeting children through this expanded access. In research conducted by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project (Pew) (2010), 93% of teens between 12 and 17 access the Internet, as of 2009, which was the same percentage noted in their 2006 study. Another important aspect of accessibility for children is Internet access at School. According to a study by Cheong (2005), 99% of schools provide access to the Internet as of 2002. On top of school access, the mobility of the Internet has reached a new level with the introduction of cell phones that have Internet access. According to a study by Pew (2013), 78% of teens own a cell phone and nearly half of those are smart phones, and 74% of teens between 12 and 17 year old access the Internet on some sort of mobile device (Pew, 2013, p. 2).

Although Internet access seems steady since at least 2006, social media access by teens has grown considerably according to Pew (2010). Originally, many law enforcement programs and programs like Perverted Justice were created to combat chat rooms (Harris, 2013, and PJ, 2008, www.perverted-justice.com), but now they

have to face a vast array of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest, all of which provide a social medium of some sort (Pew, 2013). Cheezo has managed to utilize social media as a resource to connect with the children they educate during school presentations by creating a Cheezo Cool Cat Facebook page. Children are able to get updates on current offenders who are wanted, tips by Cheezo for Internet safety, and also to provide any leads or concerns with Cheezo.

Trust and Grooming of Children/Lack of Deception

Similar to Internet access and social media, a lack of deception use by offenders and their method of gaining trust through the grooming of a child were two topics that seemed related enough to group in review. Although it would seem necessary for online child predators to deceive children about their age and intentions, this does not seem to be the case, and rather seems to be a way for offenders to gain trust. An older person could be viewed as a confidant with knowledge and experience. In study by Wolak et al. (2004), it was found that only 5% of offenders lied or used deception about their age (p. 424.e15). In addition, most offenders, to include those who originally hid their sexual intentions, were eventually open about their sexual motives (Wolak et al., 2004). In Wolak et al.'s study, it was noted that offenders spend long periods of time talking to victims, creating a trusting, and usually a romantic relationship prior to meeting. This takes the away the image of meeting up with a stranger, since the offender is viewed as a romantic partner by this point (Wolak et al., 2004)

Similar to what is described above, the grooming process of victims is one in which offenders spend some time talking to and getting to know the child in order to attain trust. Cheezo Investigator Harris (2013) described multiple text and phone

conversations with offenders, with most average investigations lasting between one to two weeks prior to an arrest. In the Wolak et al. study (2004), with the exception of a few cases, force and coercion was typically not used or needed and many children met with the offenders willingly.

Methods

Methodology

The design of this project is descriptive. According to Babbie (2010), descriptive research answer the four questions of what, where, when, and how. This study aims to describe what the Cheezo Unit is and does, to include the structure, methods, and procedures. It also aims to answer where and how their investigations are conducted, as well as cover these elements of their educational presentations. Finally, through the use of the data and description of above, this study will identify when this program began, how long it's been active, and identify any available demographic and descriptive statistics available.

Included in this study is one phone interview and multiple email communications with lead Cheezo investigator, Mike Harris, over the period of March 15th-April 14th. A summary of these communications follows, however the full dialogue from the interview and emails is provided in Appendices A and B.

The purpose of direct communications with Investigator Mike Harris was to get as much information on the Jeffco DA CSOII Cheezo Unit as possible. Even though the website provided excellent information and even arrest data, having first hand information from the lead investigator was a unique opportunity. In our discussions Harris described his experience working as an investigator for Lakewood Police Department and noticing a large volume of child sex crimes with no direct effort going toward them, and he also noticed an increase in chat room usage. In 1966 Harris began working with the Jeffco DA office and was able to get funding toward Internet sex crimes, however this was only one of many types of investigations Harris was doing at

the time. This changed in 2005 when the CSOII Cheezo Unit was created with the sole focus on Internet sex crimes against children. When asked what the primary methods and procedures used are, Harris explained that wherever kids go, they go, and this include gaming websites, social website, chat rooms, etc. The unit uses pictures of 18-22 year olds with signed consent and creates profiles or personas with these pictures. They also spend a lot of time interacting with kids and emulate their sayings, actions, and behaviors. The investigators communicate with offenders over text messages and through phone conversations, which are later used as evidence. Harris described the easy access and availability of children today due to the use of cell phones, therefore requiring investigators to be available 24/7 for credibility. Investigators carry multiple phones with them and are ready to communicate anytime, just like a child would be. There is no over time pay or benefits, just a willingness to sacrifice time to catch the offenders.

When asked what sets Cheezo apart from other similar programs, Harris identified the different focus of the ICAC. Other law enforcement programs like ICAC focus on peer-to-peer (P2P) communications and sting operations that involve the sharing, distribution, or transfer of child pornography. Cheezo on the other hand is intercepting an offender that is actively seeking a child to meet up with. In addition to stings, Cheezo investigators provide over 130 educational presentations a year to children and adults and utilize their mascot, Cheezo the Cool Cat, to reach out to the younger children. They also created a Facebook page that is advertised to the children and has proven very successful for receiving tipsters, and information from kids on new

sites and leads for where kids are going online. Through their interaction and engagement with children, kids themselves have become one of the greatest resources.

Originally it was assumed that jurisdiction would be an issue seeing as this a cyber type crime and the offenders could be located anywhere, however Harris clarified that jurisdiction was not an issue and could be based on where the communication took place, such as in Jefferson County, or where the offenders communication took place. Investigators also worked with other law enforcement agencies in the offenders' state, when necessary. Harris stated that they conduct around 80 stings a year and that number could grow if their team were to grow. When asked what was required to arrest an offender, Harris responded that pictures of a sexual nature have to be asked for or provided, and that approximately 90% of offenders ask for a naked picture. The average length of a sting is 1-2 weeks but they have had time periods on both the high and low end of the spectrum.

When asked if methods used for offenders going after boys or girls was different, Harris responded that methods were not different and the predators were interested in the child aspect, not the gender. The focus of the investigators is spent more on portraying themselves as vulnerable children since that is what attracts the offender. The same was asked of high profile cases and the same response was given. No different methods were used, and this was an important element because preferential treatment could cause legality issues. Also, Harris mentioned that many times they wouldn't even know they have a high profile case until the arrest happens.

When asked about what has changed, Harris discussed the evolution of technology from chat rooms to cell phones and the availability of access everywhere.

He also discussed the sexualized environment children grow up in now. Children are much more likely to talk about sexual things and provide sexual pictures than ever before. Finally, permission was requested to use all information and names for this study and Harris agreed and stated that everything is public record.

Research Design

This study is quantitative. The arrest data from the Cheezo website is analyzed from 2005-2011. Also, data provided from the Colorado ICAC and the Perverted Justice website is used to establish a baseline of a large law enforcement task force and a large non-profit organization. It is presumed this baseline will provide a better perspective of what a small investigative team like Cheezo has achieved. A content analysis was also performed through advanced Google searches of pdf filetype using the phrase "Internet crimes against children." Over a 1,000 documents were available however many of these documents were repetitive and linked back to ICAC as a whole. Initially 12 reports and studies were chosen based on diversity of authoring agency, relation to Internet use of children, or any relation to online child exploitation. About half of these sources were dropped due to their focus of online child pornography or lack of quality study, such as four samples that were one to two page statistic reports of Internet use by children but with inadequate sourcing of the study. Finally, a bibliography report by the Department of Justice was used with a snowballing method to locate eight additional reports. A coding sheet was then used against six variables identified throughout the literature review.

Sample

Sampling was not used for the five programs of Cheezo, ICAC, CO ICAC, Perverted Justice, and Enough is Enough. All of the information found on the five Law Enforcement and non-profit organizations was used. ICAC as a whole encompasses the vast majority of efforts state-wide as it is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, and is represented by 61 task forces which is more than one task force per state (DOJ, Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011).

Procedure

This research paper is not meant as a comparison of Cheezo with other law enforcement programs like ICAC because it is believed that Cheezo is a unique approach to combating online child sex predators. The Cheezo data is analyzed to determine what has changed and what results can be determined over the span of 2005 to 2011. To answer R1, a phone interview and multiple email communications was used to identify the methods and procedures used by Cheezo. Next, R2 was answered through literature reviews of the National ICAC, Colorado ICAC, Perverted Justice, and the Enough is Enough websites. Further, R3 was answered through the multiple communications with Mike Harris, review of the Cheezo website, and review of the ICAC, Perverted Justice, and Enough is Enough programs. To answer R4, it will be necessary to analyze the Cheezo arrest data, compare that against the baseline of the ICAC and Perverted Justice data, and combine those results with known data statistics of the educational presentations and results.

Results

Summary

Even though Cheezo has successfully arrested 630 offenders between 1996 and 2013 (Harris, 2013), only the 347 arrests that resulted in prosecution, from 2005 to 2011, available on the Cheezo website (www.cheezo.org/arrests/), were used for data analysis. The remaining 283 arrests stand as follows: 88 arrests occurred between 1996 to 2005 but were not provided on the website since Cheezo was not officially created yet; 19 arrests for 2012 were available on the website however they were not used since it was not an accurate picture of the 58 total arrests conducted (Harris, 2013); the remaining 176 arrest cases were not available on the website due to a combination of juvenile offenders, no shows, deferred sentences, and a 6 to 14 month process for each case (Harris, 2013).

A predictive analysis tool called SPSS Statistics, developed by IBM, was used for all Cheezo data tables and graphs. Arrest specifics were collected off of the Cheezo website and manually entered in an excel spreadsheet with the following data fields: offender, gender, age, date of arrest, charge 1-5, number of charges, sentence 1-3, and deportation status. Each similar charge and each similar sentence was coded and given a numerical representation, the age field was broken into specific age groups and provided an alphabetic representation, and the number of charges were grouped and provided an alphabetic representation. Once the data was imported into SPSS, each variable was defined for proper representation within the tables and graphs. Since no current statistics exist on Cheezo arrest data, descriptive statistics of frequencies (count) and cross tabulation were used. Finally, for general arrest and educational

presentations data, published statistics for 2010-2011 on ICAC/CO ICAC, and total arrest statistics from the Perverted Justice website were used.

Analysis of Cheezo Data, 2005-2011

The following types of analysis were conducted on the Cheezo arrest data to determine frequency or count for gender, age range, charges, sentences, and deportation.

Gender

In the case of gender, males account for 99.7% of offenders arrested by Cheezo from 2005-2011. This percentage is consistent with a study by Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkehor (2005), about proactive Internet investigations, in which 100% of offenders were male (p. 249)

Table 1

Cheezo Gender Frequency Analysis

	Frequency	Percent
F	1	.3
M	346	99.7
Total	347	100.0

Age Groups

Offenders ranged in age from 18 to 72, at time of arrest (ATOA); therefore age groups were defined with a 10-year span of each group. Offenders in the 21-30 year old range accounted for 50.4% of those arrested, while offenders between 31-40 years old accounted for 24.8% of those arrested. An interesting aspect of the results was the clear decline in offenders over the age of 50 year old, which represented only 6.4% of offenders.

Table 2**Cheezo – Age At Time Of Arrest Frequency Analysis**

	Frequency	Percent
18-20	16	4.6
21-30	175	50.4
31-40	86	24.8
41-50	48	13.8
51-80	22	6.4
Total	347	100.0

Number of Charges

Since it was apparent that most offenders were charged with more than one crime, it was useful to do a frequency analysis of the number of charges per offender. This analysis showed that 93.4% of offenders were charged with two to four charges when arrested. This is likely due to the methods of offenders in which pictures are provided or asked for, sexual conversations are exchanged through text or phone, and offenders attempt to meet (Harris, 2013), all of which result in multiple crimes.

Table 3**Cheezo – Frequency Analysis of Number of Charges**

	Frequency	Percent
One Charge	16	4.6
2-4 Charges	324	93.4
5+ Charges	7	2.0
Total	347	100.0

Summary of Charges

There were 15 different charges identified in the Cheezo arrest data. Charges that were similar, such as Internet Sexual Exploitation of a child and Criminal Attempt Sexual Exploitation of a Child, were grouped into one charge code, however they were

counted as two separate charges in the totals. For example, both of the above mentioned charges were coded as number four, and two number fours were documented for an offender charged with both crimes.

The analysis determined that Criminal Attempt Sexual Exploitation of a Child was the most prevalent charge with a 25.8% of all charges. Internet Luring of a Child was a close second, accounting for 21.4% of charges, and Criminal Attempt Sexual Assault on a Child was the third most prevalent charge, accounting for 20.2% of charges.

Table 4
Cheezo – Frequency Analysis of All Charges

	Frequency	Percent
Enticement of a Child	126	14.2
Criminal Attempt Sexual Assault on a Child	179	20.2
Promotion of Obscenity to a Minor	43	4.8
Criminal Attempt Sexual Exploitation of a Child	229	25.8
Indecent Exposure	73	8.2
Soliciting Child Prostitution	4	.5
Contribute Delinquency of a Minor	6	.7
Internet Luring of a Child	190	21.4
Unlawful Sexual Contact	19	2.1
Possession of Material	9	1.0
Child Abuse	2	.2
Kidnapping	2	.2
Child Inducement	4	.5
Aggravated Incest	1	.1
Fail to Register as a Sex Offender	1	.1
Total	888	100

Sentencing

The different types of sentences administered were grouped into six different categories based on similarities. Intensive Supervised Probation (ISP) and Probation were combined, as was Department of Corrections (DOC) and Jail, and Useful Public Service and Community Service. Work Release could have been combined with DOC and Jail, however since this sentence is one in which the prisoners are allowed to go to work, it seemed reasonable to keep separate. ISP or Probation was the primary sentence for most offenders and accounted for 67.7% of sentences. Department of Corrections or Jail was the second highest sentence with 13.8% of offenders receiving this sentence. Of note, there were a total of 443 sentences for 347 arrests because many of the offenders received more than one sentence.

Table 5

Cheezo – Frequency Analysis of Sentences

	Frequency	Percent
Intensive Supervised Probation or Probation	300	67.7
Work Release	46	10.4
Community Corrections	6	1.4
Department of Corrections or Jail	61	13.8
Useful Public Service or Community Service	29	6.5
Parole	1	.2
Total	443	100

Deportation

Since it was recognized that a number of sentences were put on hold due to deportation, a frequency analysis was done on sentences involving deportation. This

data field was coded with an N representing cases with no deportation status during sentencing while Y was used to represent cases that resulted in deportation. Analysis showed that only 3.7% of cases resulted in deportation.

Table 6

Cheezo – Frequency Analysis of Deportation

	Frequency	Percent
N	334	96.3
Y	13	3.7
Total	347	100.0

Cheezo Arrests by Year

A frequency analysis of all Cheezo arrests by year was conducted using arrest totals provided by Mike Harris (2013). Since the website arrest data was not all encompassing due to the previously mentioned issues of juvenile offenders, no shows, sentence deferral, and case length, Harris provided accurate arrest totals from 1996-2013, however only numbers from 2005-2011 were used since that is the timeframe of this study and 2012 helped to give a current picture of arrest totals for Cheezo. The data showed a spike in arrests during 2008-2009 and then a slight decrease, to include 58 arrests in 2012. Prior to 2012, there appeared to be a strong increase in arrests consistently totaling over 65 per year and over 70 arrests for 33% of the years.

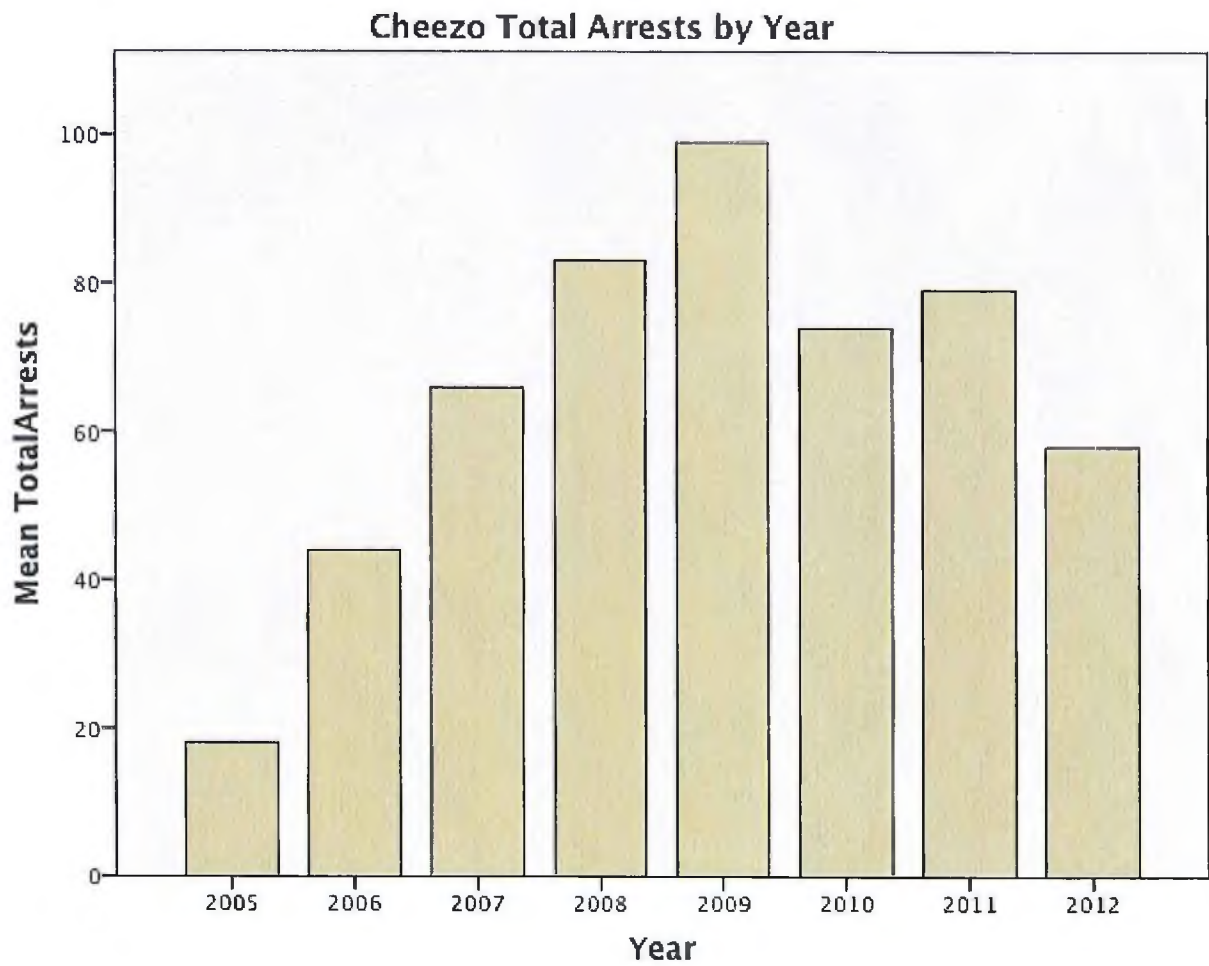
Table 7

Cheezo Arrest Totals, 2005-2012

Year	Total Arrests
2005	18
2006	44
2007	66
2008	83
2009	99
2010	74
2011	79
2012	58

Figure 1

Cheezo Total Arrests by Year



Arrest Comparison by Program

ICAC & CO ICAC

An analysis of all arrests by Cheezo, the Colorado ICAC Task Force, and the National ICAC Task Force was conducted, however only 2010-2011 statistics were available for ICAC and CO ICAC, therefore that is time period of comparison. This comparison was done simply to put into perspective the size of an effort like Cheezo, with three full-time investigators, in comparison to what a large task force like the CO ICAC comprised of 40 agencies, and an even larger task force like the national ICAC, can do. In 2010-2011 Cheezo conducted a total of 153 arrests while the CO ICAC task force conducted a total of 248 arrests, which is a difference of 38%.

Table 8

Arrest Total Comparison, 2010-2011

	2010	2011	Total
Cheezo	74	79	153
CO ICAC	111	137	248
ICAC	5387	5819	11206

Perverved Justice

A comparison of arrests with Perverved Justice was not possible since PJ only provides statistics for convictions on their website.

Prosecution Comparison

ICAC

A prosecution rate comparison was attempted to establish what outcomes are more successful for prosecutions. The Cheezo Unit reports a 99% success rate with

only five cases actually going to trial since 1996, and the remaining cases all resulted in pleas (Harris, 2013). The ICAC website reported a 40% prosecution success rate for 2011, and it is unknown if this percentage is the average seen yearly throughout its creation (DOJ, Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011).

Perverted Justice

A comparison was made between Cheezo's prosecutions from 2005 to 2011, and the total number of convictions reported since 2004 on the Perverted Justice website. Since Perverted Justice is a larger non-profit organization with a large number of volunteers, this comparison was also used to provide a baseline of how Cheezo compares in prosecution rate to a larger non-profit organization doing similar Internet stings. Cheezo came within 37% of Perverted Justice's totals, however this percentage would be smaller if the juvenile cases, deferred sentences, and results from cases currently in process, were included. These cases could not be included on the website due to privacy and legal issues, therefore they weren't used for this comparison.

Table 9

Cheezo & Perverted Justice Conviction Totals

	Total
Cheezo (2005-2012)	347
Perverted Justice (2004-2013)	550

Educational Efforts

A comparison of educational presentations conducted by Cheezo, CO ICAC, and Perverted Justice was intended, however due to a lack of data, could not be completed. What is currently known is that Cheezo conducts approximately 130 educational presentations to kids and parents per year (Harris, 2013). The CO ICAC reported

conducted 275 presentations in 2010 and 433 presentations in 2011 (DOJ, Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011, p. A-8), however their current website states that no presentations are scheduled and that due to lack of personnel, the majority of presentations are done by School Resource Officers. Perverted Justice states on their website that they provide presentations to the community upon request, however there is no data provided.

Content Analysis

A content analysis was performed on 13 scholarly, peer-reviewed articles to determine any common themes. Upon review, six common variables were used for the analysis. Community awareness was determined by discussion about the importance of providing training, presentations, or community outreach efforts in order to improve community awareness of online child sex crimes. Second, parental involvement was determined by discussion about what role a parent plays, negative or positive, in helping to prevent children from becoming victims of online child sex crimes. Third, accessibility to the Internet was analyzed as any discussion about how accessibility to the Internet has increased or changed in the home, school, or through mobile devices. The variable trust and grooming was determined by any discussion about offenders spending time getting to know victims, or any descriptions of behaviors by the victims that would generally identify trust, such as willingly meeting with offenders for sexual encounters. Social Media was a variable analyzed by any discussion about the use of social media by children, to include any increase or change noticed in the amount of social media access by children. Finally, lack of deception was determined by any discussion about

offenders providing accurate information about their age and intentions online, prior to meeting with victims. For this study, P=Program and A=Article.

Table 10
Content Analysis Coding Sheet

Variable	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8
Community Awareness	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Parental Involvement	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Accessibility to Internet	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
Trust & Grooming	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Social Media	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Lack of Deception	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0

Analysis of the six variables showed that almost 77% of sources discussed the accessibility of the Internet to children, while only about 54% of sources talked about the use of social media by children. Both parental involvement (69%) and community awareness (62%) earned similar percentages for the role they play in helping to combat online child sex crimes. Additionally, both trust and grooming, and lack of deception were on the lower spectrum with only 39% and 31%, respectively, of sources discussing these topics.

Table 11
Content Analysis Results

Variable	Total	Percentage
Community Awareness	8	61.5
Parental Involvement	9	69.2
Accessibility to Internet	10	76.9
Trust & Grooming	5	38.5
Social Media	7	53.8
Lack of Deception	4	30.8

Discussion/Conclusion

Combating Internet crimes against children is no small task. In 2010 and 2011 alone, the Colorado ICAC task force dealt with 1,687 complaints while the national ICAC task force as a whole dealt with 76,961 complaints. There is no doubt that each program and organization discussed in this study is doing great things and showing positive results. This study however was aimed at determining if small units like the Cheezo Unit, utilizing a different approach from the majority of law enforcement programs combating Internet crimes against children, could be established as a best methods approach for combating online child sex predators as determined by arrests, followed by percentage of offenders successfully prosecuted, and educational presentations or training conducted within the community on a yearly basis.

R1: What are the methods and procedures used by the Cheezo Unit?

Through multiple communications with the Cheezo lead investigator Mike Harris (2013), it was determined that Cheezo conducts Internet stings by creating child personas on popular social and gaming websites. These personas are very realistic in nature and use pictures provided by 18-22 years old, with signed consent. In addition, once an Internet sting begins, investigators commit large amounts of personal time to continue text and phone conversations with offenders in order to create authenticity of the vulnerability and access they would normally have with a child. As a second approach to their stings, Cheezo investigators also provide approximately 130 educational briefings at schools and events. A Cheezo Cool Cat mascot is used to better engage younger children. Investigators also promote their Cheezo Cool Cat Facebook page and encourage kids to become a friend and receive alerts about

predators, tips, and to have a place to notify Cheezo of any “creepers” or information that would be helpful (Harris, 2013).

R2: What are the methods and procedures used by other programs developed to combat child sex crimes?

The Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force focuses primarily on peer-to-peer (p2p) investigations and referrals. Peer-to-peer is defined as computer-to-computer sharing of data, in this case child pornography. The p2p investigations primarily deal with online child pornography while the referrals can come from federal, state, or local law enforcement. One difference with Cheezo is that ICAC primarily conducts p2p investigations and not active investigations like Internet stings. Thus, Cheezo is intercepting the offender prior to an assault on a child, whereas p2p and referral investigations are intercepting the offender that is potentially not meeting with children, or has already met and assaulted a child. Another difference is that the Colorado ICAC task force currently has School Resource Officers conducting the majority of educational presentations, whereas Cheezo provides a more hands on approach.

The Perverted Justice program is very similar to Cheezo as far as the types of Internet stings they conduct, however they are a much larger volunteer organization. Another difference from the Cheezo program is that PJ focuses mostly on regional chat rooms and runs software that records chat logs specific to Yahoo! (PJ, 2008, www.perverted-justice.com). Further, PJ does reference presentations that they are available to provide, but there is no clear indication of how often or how many of these

presentations are given on a yearly basis, and it does not seem to be a primary focus of their program.

R3: How do the methods and procedures used by Cheezo differ from the other programs?

Cheezo differs primarily through the hands-on, personal approach they take. Investigators are willing to commit and devote personal time to catching the offenders, on a 24/7 basis during an investigation. Harris (2013) described carrying multiple phones at all times just so they can be accessible the way a child would be. There is no overtime pay or bonuses, just the payoff of getting the bad guy. This same approach can be seen with the educational presentations conducted for children. Harris (2013) described how many of the kids they meet at the schools end up “friending” Cheezo’s Facebook page and using it as a resource. Harris (2013) also provided multiple instances of these kids providing investigators with new popular social or gaming websites, or even providing tips on “creepers”. This type of rapport signifies trust from the kids.

R4: Is Cheezo the prototype for a best methods approach to combat online child sex crimes?

The data analysis from this research has shown that a small unit of three full-time investigators (Cheezo) can come within a 38% difference of arrests with a task force of 40 agencies (CO ICAC), likely hundreds of law enforcement officers. In addition, Cheezo has been able to achieve a 99% prosecution rate on all arrests, while ICAC reports a 40% prosecution rate in 2011 (DOJ, Review of ICAC Task Force Program, 2010-2011). A comparison with Perverted Justice on prosecution totals showed Cheezo

came within a 37% difference of convictions, which is also impressive since PJ is a non-profit organization with hundreds of volunteers. Finally, even though a direct comparison could not be conducted on educational training provided to the community, it is clear that Cheezo places a large focus on awareness and education through schools and other community events, and conducts about 130 presentations per year, according to Harris (2013). The Colorado ICAC has transferred responsibility of their educational presentations to School Resource Officers due to a shortage in personnel, and Perverted Justice does not provide any statistics on educational programs they provide to the community.

The research in this study has shown that Cheezo would be a quality prototype for a best methods approach against online child sex crimes. If one small unit of three investigators can achieve the amount of success seen through this data analysis, it would be worth investing in additional units throughout the Colorado, and the country. Although Cheezo's approach requires a significant amount of commitment, time, and resources, the payoff is worth it to continue to protect children online.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Phone Interview with Mike Harris, District Attorney Investigator for the Cheezo Unit, on March 15, 2013 at 12:00 pm

Questions asked by: Sonia Chavez, Answers provided by: Mike Harris

Question #1: How did Cheezo get started?

Answer #1: In 1991 I began working as an Investigator for the Lakewood Police Department and noticed a large number of child sex offenses with no way to handle them. In 1993 I also noticed a large number of chat room usage. In 1996 I took a District Attorney Investigator position and convinced the current DA to use funding toward Internet child sex crimes.

Question #2: What are the primary methods and procedures used by the Cheezo Unit?

Answer #2: Anywhere kids go online we go, portraying ourselves as kids. We utilize pictures of 18-22 year olds provided to us with signed consent to use these pictures online. One participant offered over 200 pictures, which resulted in over 100 arrests. Everything is done through text and phone conversations. We are in constant conversations due to the access available today, to provide believability. Phone conversations and any webcam usage are used as confirmation for evidence upon arrest.

Question #3: How do investigators learn or train to portray as a child?

Answer #3: We interact with kids all the time. We have a Facebook page for the Cheezo unit. We read postings and copy current sayings, actions, walks, and talking like the kids we see and talk to.

Question #4: What makes Cheezo different from other similar programs?

Answer #4: Other programs like the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force use peer-to-peer sting operations which involve the sharing, distribution, or transfer of child pornography. The Cheezo investigators are running sting operations on active child predators who are seeking a child to have sexual encounters with. Cheezo also takes a dual approach through education by providing over 130 presentations to schools and adults, yearly. Cheezo goes to schools to educate kids about online sex crimes and uses a mascot called Cheezo, who is a large yellow "cool cat." This method has been successful in getting the kids excited and has been a great source of intelligence gathering as the kids discuss new applications and websites that kids are visiting. The Cheezo Facebook webpage has also been successful with kids providing leads and tips, some of which have led to investigations and arrests.

Question #5: How do stings start? Are there jurisdiction concerns?

Answer #5: We build personas on multiple sites that kids frequent to include Facebook, MySpace, gaming sites, etc. We check these sites on a daily basis, which can be time consuming. Jurisdiction has not been an issue and charges can be filed through Jeffco as the location where the communication occurred, or wherever the offender is. We do work with other DA's depending on the case and the circumstances.

Question #6: What is the average yearly number of stings conducted? Has there been an increase or decrease in this number?

Answer #6: We conduct about 80 stings a year on average, to include 14 current stings with four in process. The number of stings has grown over the years as the team has grown to three. If the team were to grow, arrests could grow to over 200 a year.

Question #7: What is required to conduct an arrest?

Answer #7: The offender has to ask for pictures from us as the child or provide pictures of himself sexual in nature. About 90% of offenders ask for a naked picture. The fastest sting was 43 minutes, the longest sting was 1.5 years, and the average sting is 1-2 weeks which consist of recorded phone calls, recorded dialogue, and the offender shows up to meet.

Question #8: How many, if any, other counties or states are doing something similar to Cheezo?

Answer #8: I think a program called Operation Blue Thunder in Virginia. What makes Cheezo so successful is the willingness to devote and sacrifice our time. We don't get paid overtime. We carry multiple cell phones with us at all times and are always available to the predator just like a child would be. We text and talk on the phone constantly, to make it believable.

Question #9: Have any high profile perpetrators been caught?

Answer #9: Yes, we have caught lawyers, a police officer, a priest, and the Head of Homeland Security for New York.

Question #10: What are the best prevention methods Cheezo has put into place?

Answer #10: Community outreach, our Cheezo website, and our Facebook site. Having that direct kid communication.

Appendix B

Follow-up Questions to Mike Harris, Jeffco DA Investigator for the Cheezo Unit, via email on March 19, 2013

Question #1: Are the methods used to sting predators going after boys any different from those going after girls?

Answer #1: Really there are no different methods going after someone who has sexual desires for children. I know from years of working sex offenders that they are very manipulative. Sex Offenders are very good at recognizing vulnerabilities in children. In portraying myself as a 12, 13, or 14 year old teen we present vulnerabilities which are very attractive and recognizable to sex offenders. We have to allow ourselves to be manipulated to some extent. So in conducting these investigations it's more about how you portray yourself as the child. The sex offenders whether it be one's looking just for girls, boys or both will find us. We go into a variety of areas online where all children go. Simply our method isn't so much about going after the predator but how good we are at portraying ourselves as the child.

Question #2: Are sting procedures different for "high profile" cases? Is more care needed or different techniques used?

Answer #2: NO. We follow all procedures in all cases, as if we differ we can be attacked on a credibility and integrity of these investigations. Often times we have no idea how "high profile" the case is until we make the arrest. Sometimes we don't have the suspect identified until the arrest. As with our arrest of a Catholic Priest it wasn't until after we arrested him that we found he was a man of the cloth.

Question #3: What changes over time has the program experienced and what was the outcome of the changes?

Answer #3: There have been a few changes since starting in 1996. In the beginning it was bulletin boards and chat rooms. Everything was on the computer. It was actual very simple and easy to work these cases. In the last 5 years, everyone including children have cell phones. Cell Phones is where everything is at now. If it starts on the computer it generally goes to the cell phone very quickly. Now we have to be more responsive more hours of the day to respond like a child. Children have their cell phones all the time. Therefore we portraying a child have to have our cell phones with us and respond all the time like a "real child".

The other big change is our sexualized environment. Children more than ever are far more sexualized or maybe it is they are desensitized to sex. It is far easier to talk sexually and send suggestive or naked pictures than ever before. We are seeing this from 11-year-olds and up.

Question #4: Have any additional specific prevention methods or programs been developed from your sting activities, such as in different jurisdictions or states?

Answer #4: We have trained Denver PD, Gilpin County Sheriff's Office, Adams County Sheriff's Office, and in 1998 initially trained the original investigators with Colorado Internet Crimes Against Children based out of Colorado Springs. We have consulted with numerous agencies both in state and out of state of how we conduct our investigations. There are some things we started before anyone in the U.S. We were the first to utilize chat rooms in all Spanish Chat Rooms. This consisted of training individuals who could type and speak Spanish with suspects in these chat rooms. We also have a number of investigative techniques we started five years ago that some agencies are just now doing.

This last question is tough as it is hard to tell what agencies have taken from us and added to their programs. The bottom line is "We are all in this together". So if I get them great, if they get them great. When it comes to a child, who cares who gets the "Creeper", as long as someone gets them before a child is hurt.

Question #5: Is it okay if I directly name and reference the Jeffco District Attorney's Office and the Cheezo program, to include any information you provided online on your website, and names?

Answer #5: Yes that's fine, it's public record.

Appendix C

Follow-up email communications between March 28th and April 7th

Question: Is there any data on race of the offenders?

Answer: Definitely White Males. Unfortunately we don't have the manpower resources to track this, but it is very evident it's white males, then Hispanics, then Middle Eastern males.

Question: Why is there a difference between what is listed on the website for arrests and numbers provided in conversation?

Answer: In 2012 we had 79 arrests and court cases are anywhere from 6 months to 14 months from resolution. There are also failure to appears and some juveniles which can't be shown on the website. From 1996 to 2005 we worked dual areas of responsibilities and not full time in this area. We only had 88 arrests from 1996 to 2005.

Question: Is there specific jurisdiction statutes to reference?

Answer: The jurisdiction is where the crime occurs. What is unique with the Internet is the jurisdiction can be where the communications are occurring, for example here in Jefferson County, or as with the guy I am working right now in Utah. Technically I could file the case either in Jefferson County or contact the jurisdiction in Utah and they could file it there. Depending on the severity of the case there is also the possibility of filing the case Federally as in all Internet cases the transmissions are across state lines.