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Interdiction for the protection of children: Preventing sexual exploitation one traffic stop at a time☆

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an innovative policing approach for identifying potential exploitation of children during roadside traffic stops and other interactions with citizens. The goal of the Interdiction for the Protection of Children program (IPC) is to train law enforcement officers to identify: (a) individuals who pose a high risk to children; (b) children who are being trafficked, exploited, or abused by one or more adults; and c) children who are at risk for various forms of exploitation (e.g., runaways, abductees). The training component first provides law enforcement officers with a conceptual framework for understanding child sexual exploitation. Next, instructors train participants to identify overt as well as subtle indicators that an individual with whom they are interacting may be a child victim, a child at risk for victimization, or a perpetrator of a sexual crime. Trainers emphasize the importance of working within multidisciplinary child protection systems to ensure the well-being and safety of each child. Upon the completion of training, officers utilize their skills on the street to better detect and intervene in matters involving child sexual exploitation, and intelligence analysts and researchers collect data from field personnel to improve program effectiveness. In the current document we describe the program's methodology and application, including results of two major operations. We also discuss implications and provide suggestions for future directions.

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The sexual exploitation of children encompasses myriad offenses: "hands-on" sexual assault (e.g., molestation, rape), technology-facilitated crimes (e.g., production and distribution of child exploitation material [CEM], online solicitation of minors), certain missing children cases (e.g., abductions and runaways), and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC; including human trafficking and traveling sex offenders). Minors may be abused and exploited by a stranger or – as in most cases – a trusted relative, a well-known friend of the child's family, or an adult in a position of authority (Cawson, Wattam, Brooker, & Kelly, 2000; Cole & Sprang, 2015; Finkelhor, Hammer, & Sedlak, 2008; Richards, 2011).

The investigation of child sexual abuse and exploitation presents a challenge to law enforcement because the offenses occur in secrecy and typically are never reported (Belknap, 2010; Campbell, 2012; Chon, 2014; Rennison, 2002). Authorities often become aware only if a child reports an online solicitation, discloses his or her sexual abuse, or is identified as a victim of produced CEM.[1] Unfortunately these events represent the tip of the iceberg; most sexual crimes go undetected, and hundreds of thousands of victims of sexual exploitation remain in the shadows (Chon, 2014; Taylor & Gassner, 2010).

In the current document we describe the Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) program in general and the training component in particular. A discussion of IPC "indicators" follows, and specific information is provided to demonstrate how they are derived and how they may be used to protect children during police encounters with citizens. Next, we offer examples of the IPC program as it appears when it is put into practice ("Crimes Against Children Patrol Operations"), including the results from these efforts. Note that the results of the operations are offered merely for illustration purposes – the current paper is not an empirical examination of IPC's efficacy. At the outset, however, it may be useful to define some of the more common categories of victims officers are likely to encounter.

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[1] Programs such as the U.S. Homeland Security Agency's Project VIC go to extraordinary lengths to identify children depicted in child exploitation material; nevertheless, many victims remain unidentified.

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1. At-risk youth

We define an "at-risk youth" as any individual younger than 18 years of age who is in a situation in which he or she is vulnerable for becoming a victim of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse; child neglect; or any form of sexual exploitation. The child need not be aware of his or her peril. Exploitative and abusive acts include rape, molestation and fondling; being forced to perform a sexual act; and being photographed, videorecorded, or broadcast online for a sexual purpose.

1.1. Noncustodial familial abductees

Each year more than 200,000 children are illegally taken by a family member – many more than are kidnapped by strangers – and this number is increasing (FBI, 2013; Hammer, Finkelhor, & Sedlak, 2002). People kidnap children in their families for a variety of reasons, most typically to retaliate against a partner (FBI, 2013). Other motivations include misguided attempts to force reconciliation or continued interaction with a former partner, and fears of losing custody or visitation rights. In rare cases, the adult family member may abduct a child based on a belief they are protecting him or her from perceived abuse or neglect (Johnston, Sagatun-Edwards, Blamquist, & Girdner, 2001).

1.2. Nonfamilial abductees

This category includes children who are victims of kidnapping by someone outside their family, and includes youth who are trafficked. The abductor is not always a stranger; he or she could be someone with whom the child has some familiarity. Some victims are foreign nationals; due to language and cultural barriers and the lack of any support system, young foreign nationals are at unique risk for nonfamilial abductions (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, n.d.).

1.3. Endangered runaways

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) defines an "endangered runaway" as any minor under the age of 18 who has left his or her home voluntarily and whose whereabouts is unknown to a parent or legal guardian (Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, 2015). Runaway and homeless teenagers are particularly vulnerable. Youth who have left their home typically lack basic necessities for survival and they often find themselves resorting to "survival sex" to obtain food and other necessary goods (O'Leary & Howard, 2001). They are also much more likely to be forced into the world of sex trafficking; NCMEC (2015a) estimates that approximately one in six endangered runaways are sex trafficking victims. Some missing children may have urgent or specialized needs that make them critical cases. Examples include children who need intensive supervision due to cognitive impairment or mental illness, as well as youth who are in need of medication or other medical treatment.

1.4. Lost, injured, or otherwise missing children

This category includes instances where a child has been reported missing but the circumstances surrounding his or her disappearance are unknown. Although there is no way to know exactly how many children in the United States go missing annually (many children are never reported missing), nearly 467,000 cases were reported to NCMEC in 2014 (NCMEC, 2015b).

1.5. Neglected children

This group consists of youth, usually female teenagers younger than 16, who are in the company of an older male. The minor may consider this individual her "boyfriend," and she may have met him and "fallen in love" online. Despite the difference in their ages (the adult often is more than five years older than the child), the sexual relationship may be tolerated or even condoned by one or both parents. In addition to their involvement in an inherently exploitative relationship, these youth are at significantly greater risk for pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and falling prey to human trafficking and other street crimes. For this reason, we consider the identification and removal of such youth from this situation both a *rescue* from an unhealthy environment as well as a *proactive measure* against more egregious forms of sexual exploitation and violence.

1.6. Undocumented children

Undocumented children ("Unaccompanied Alien Child" under U.S. law) are minors who have no lawful immigration status in the U.S. and have no parent or legal guardian in the U.S. ("A guide to children,", 2015). According to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (2016), 67,339 unaccompanied children were encountered at the southwest border, alone, between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014. These children are frequently targeted by sexual abusers and traffickers because they are traveling alone without a trusted guardian. According to Dirks-Bihun (2014),

> Fueled by a demand for prostitution and pornography, an untold number of children are trafficked and illegally smuggled into the United States. . Many of these children are victimized by human traffickers because of factors such as economic necessity, a history of physical and sexual abuse, or being abducted and placed into the trade. . Even undocumented children living in the United States who aren't survivors of human trafficking or who haven't crossed the border alone are at risk of this abuse (p. 22).

2. High-risk threats to children

"High-risk threats to children" include adults who have neglected, exploited, or abused a child. The abuse may be physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, or a combination of these types. Individuals also are considered a high-risk threat to children if their presence with a certain minor, or any minors, is specifically prohibited by law. Finally, the category includes cases where the individual does not match any of these descriptions but extant factors suggest he or she is likely to abuse, neglect, endanger, or exploit a child. Examples follow.

2.1. Abductors

Abductors include anyone who has kidnapped or illegally taken custody of a minor. These subjects include stranger abduction cases, nonfamily abductions (this person may be someone the child knows well but is not a family member), and noncustodial family member abductions.

2.2. Undetected sex offenders

These offenders have committed hands-on abuse (e.g., fondling, oral sex, nonconsensual sexual intercourse) or engaged in "hands-off" sexual exploitation (e.g., voyeurism, exhibitionism, crimes involving child pornography) and these crimes are not known to individuals with whom the offender interacts, especially those responsible for the care and supervision of children. There are a number of reasons why this may be the case. In some situations the victims may be unaware they were victimized due to their cognitive state (e.g., infants and preverbal children; cognitively impaired youth or adults; unconscious or otherwise incapacitated individuals). Even noncognitively impaired youth may not understand they are being victimized (e.g., they may believe the relationship is "consensual") as a result of the sophisticated grooming techniques of sex offenders and traffickers. In other situations

the victim may have been aware of the offense but did not disclose to a parent or other trusted adult for any number of reasons (e.g., fear, threats, trauma bonds). In still other cases where an adult was informed, he or she may have decided to "handle" the matter in a manner that did not involve contacting law enforcement or child protection officials. Unfortunately, some known offenders relocate in an attempt to achieve a "blank slate" in new communities, a potential danger that is mitigated by sex offender registration.

2.3. Known sex offenders

As the name implies, known sex offenders have a history of abusing and/or exploiting youth or sexually assaulting adults. These offenders may have conditions of release that prohibit them from being in the company of minors. They may be listed on a sex offender registry or they may be out of compliance with the registration laws in their state of residence.

2.4. Traffickers

A simple definition of sex trafficking is sexual slavery. A sex trafficker is an individual who compels another person to engage in commercial sex acts against his or her will through the use of violence, fraud, and coercion (National Human Trafficking Resource Center [NHTRC], n.d.). In the case of minors, however, any person under the age of 18 who performs a commercial sex act is considered a victim of human trafficking, regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion was present. Sex trafficking involves victims of both genders and across the life span. Although the majority of trafficked persons are adults, the average age of entry into the sex trade in America is 12 to 14 years old (Smith, Healy Vardaman, & Snow, 2009).

Interdiction for the protection of children program

The Interdiction for the Protection of Children program is an innovative, proactive policing approach designed to prevent criminal offenses through active intervention as well as intelligence gathering. There are three specific goals. First, the program is designed to identify and rescue child victims of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, as well as minors considered at risk for becoming victimized (e.g., runaways, youth in the custody of noncustodial adults). Second, the program is committed to the investigation of criminal activity and the identification of offenders and other individuals who pose a high risk to children (e.g., acquaintances, pimps, non-custodial relatives, sex offenders who are noncompliant with sex offender registries). Third, the program allows for the collection of intelligence on the methodology used by offenders as well as other information relevant to law enforcement intervention efforts.

Table 1
IPC training program components.

I. Introduction to IPC
II. Introduction to Victims
a. Types of at-risk children
b. Victim-centered approach
III. Introduction to Offenders
a. Types of Sex Offenders
IV. Working with Victims
a. Module 1: Crisis reaction, child development, and trauma
b. Module 2: Understanding victimization
c. Module 3: Talking to children
d. Module 4: Collaboration with other resources
e. Module 5: Case illustration - Working with children roadside
V. Patrol Officers Introduction
a. Officers' role
b. Understanding indicators
VI. Indicators
a. Part 1: Physical appearance; Property
b. Part 2: Property (cont.); Situational factors
c. Residence
VII. Interview
a. Roadblocks
b. General Knowledge
c. Nature of Relationship
d. Registered Sex Offenders
VIII. Technology
a. Seizure and Analysis of Evidence
IX. Case Studies
X. IPC Scenarios

Program origins

The second author (DP) created the conceptual underpinnings of the IPC program after he observed that 57,472 reports of children were recorded as having gone missing in Texas in 2008. In that year DPS troopers initiated 2,891,441 traffic stops, during which they recovered 1812 stolen automobiles, seized 69,063.99 lb of marijuana, arrested 12,615 wanted fugitives, and seized $16,351,102 related to illegal activity. Despite the nearly three million contact stops, not one missing or at-risk child was reported rescued.[2] This issue was not specific to Texas. A survey of 10 other states[3] revealed that highway patrol officers in these jurisdictions collectively made more than 3.5 million traffic stops in 2012; again, no rescues of at-risk children were reported (Texas Crimes Against Children Center [TCACC], 2015).

Given that the patrol function is the most plentiful resource within law enforcement, why do these crimes operate "under the radar?" Although record-keeping procedures may partially account for the low statistics, a better explanation for the low detection rates for missing, exploited and at-risk children has to do with training and awareness. Law enforcement officers are trained to look for signs of specific criminal behavior but are not taught how to look for indicators of child exploitation, or even what those indicators are. As a result, they receive training on how to identify vehicles smuggling noncitizens across the border, trucks carrying loads of illicit drugs, and individuals who are driving while impaired. Crimes involving sexual assault, abuse and neglect, however, occur in plain sight yet remain undetected.

Because most police officers receive no training in recognizing signs of child exploitation, it is understandable that the percentage of arrests for crimes against children is very low. In response to this problem, victim services professionals, intelligence analysts, and troopers from the Texas DPS and partner agencies realized law enforcement personnel needed specialized training in how to recognize signs of child exploitation and related factors. They designed the IPC program to help identify and rescue at-risk and exploited minors, as well as to facilitate the gathering of relevant intelligence on those who pose a high risk to children.

The IPC training course. Initially, one of the foremost areas of concern for the developers of IPC was child abduction. The focus then broadened to include trafficking, with an emphasis on domestic child sex trafficking, since police officers also encounter such children on our nation's roadways. The program has since evolved to include other at-risk children and, at the time of this writing, investigations for a wide variety of sex crimes have occurred as a result of IPC traffic stops.

In October 2013 the Texas Rangers Division of the Texas DPS assumed responsibility for the IPC training component as well as for the ongoing development and improvement of the model. An outline of the training components is presented in Table 1. The Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) of the U.S. Marshals Service currently assists with

[2] We are not implying that troopers did not inform Child Protective Services and other appropriate agencies about at-risk youth they encountered; rather, we are pointing out that statistics were not recorded on how many of these youth were reported missing, victims of exploitation or were at risk for abuse, neglect or exploitation. This speaks to the lack of attention given to this issue and the lack of training that was provided to personnel at that time.

[3] Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wisconsin.

coordinating research efforts. The BAU collaborates with the Texas Joint Crimes Information Center, the Texas Rangers Division, and other law enforcement partners to validate indicators and analyze data. These efforts, in turn, help develop new strategies and tactics to prevent future harm.

The first IPC training course was conducted in 2009 after approximately two years of development, and since that time nearly all courses have been facilitated by two commissioned officers and a victim services professional (VSP) from the Texas DPS. More recently a "train the trainer" model has been adopted; as a result, qualified instructors have been certified and are able to conduct the course in their respective jurisdictions. During the two-day course,[4] law enforcement officers are taught to recognize indicators of child sexual exploitation during traffic stops and other routine encounters with citizens. Importantly, the program not only encourages officers to look for signs a youth has suffered from a sexually motivated crime, but also focuses on identifying children who may be at significant risk for such victimization. IPC trainers emphasize that law enforcement professionals cannot wait for children to cry out for help, nor assume individuals will disclose when they are being victimized, assaulted, exploited, or abused.

Although the Texas Rangers may be the most recognized law enforcement entity in Texas, the instructors do not presume to be experts on the social, legal, cultural, or political issues facing any other locale. To address the particular needs in each community where training is provided, the IPC model calls for the inclusion of local professionals from various disciplines to supplement and round out the team of instructors. The IPC course is taught by a multidisciplinary team to leverage the expertise of each instructor and to model the philosophy and approach of the training course. An instrumental component of the program is the inclusion of VSPs. VSPs typically are licensed mental health professionals who provide specialized and comprehensive services to victims of crime and other traumatic events. When the program was designed they served a critical role in creating those sections of the training that relate to understanding the dynamics of victimization, the impact of trauma and stress on children, and how officers should interact with children in a sensitive, victim-centered and developmentally-appropriate manner.

During the training, VSPs provide officers with suggestions on how to better collaborate with various governmental and nongovernmental agencies and programs to assist children in need of support services. They highlight the need to ensure follow-up services are available to the child and his or her family to mitigate trauma impact and address issues that have placed a child at risk for harm. A module entitled "Talking with Children" explicitly outlines the risks involved with conducting interrogative or forensic interviews, and discourages officers from conducting such interviews during traffic stops. The officers are informed about the risk of retraumatization as well as the effects their interviews may have on subsequent efforts to prosecute the suspects. Instead, the officers are taught to engage in an initial contact interview to verify the identity of the child and to gather only the information necessary to assess the safety of the child and determine if urgent investigative needs are present. This approach instills confidence in officers with regard to their interactions with children, increases the likelihood they will identify potential child victims or at-risk children, and helps them effectively work with the proper resources. VSP instructors have experience interviewing children and providing or arranging for clinical services, and they are able to provide examples that clearly illustrate these skills. Patrol officers are encouraged to become acquainted with child advocacy centers in their area where appropriate interviews can occur.

Several VSPs are co-trainers for IPC courses and travel as part of the team. Their role is not only to provide instruction but also to serve as subject matter experts from whom the students can learn throughout the course. Additionally, they are responsible for providing guidelines and preparation to the local child advocacy center, VSP, and child protective services guest instructors who are asked to provide the students with information on local resources. Following the training, the VSP instructors make themselves available to help trained agencies implement the program in their area. The dedication of the team of VSPs has generated a new level of awareness for law enforcement and other child protection professionals on collaborative models for working with children and multi-disciplinary approaches to protecting children.

Participants who complete the training are encouraged to use the methodology in the field as soon as possible. When questions or issues regarding implementation arise, they are able to seek consultation and support from their local trainers as well as their chain of command. They also are asked to participate in a "feedback loop" with researchers and intelligence analysts by submitting reports about IPC-related stops they made; information on this phase of the program is described in greater detail below. In return, former students are provided with periodic updates to the program and are informed about success stories. The reports contain useful information that enhances their awareness of relevant issues, and the case studies help maintain a level of awareness that helps integrate the program into their routine duties.

Criminal indicators. Obviously it would be advantageous if police not only found more effective ways to investigate crimes but also discovered ways to *prevent* the offenses from occurring. For decades personnel from police departments and drug enforcement agencies have attempted to locate and stop the flow of dangerous drugs before they reach our communities (United States, 2015). Similarly, every patrol officer scans for vehicles that appear to be operated by impaired drivers, a practice that inarguably prevents serious injuries and traffic-related deaths (Benson, Mast & Rasmussen, 2000). These missions obviously differ in significant ways, but they share an important feature – in each case intelligence analysts or officers endeavor to prevent acts of harm by identifying *precursive* and *indicative* behaviors that correlate with the target behavior.

Precursive behaviors are actions that are associated with and precede a target behavior. Examples include purchasing "lures" – items intended to attract children (e.g., stuffed animals), or spending a significant amount of time in places where vulnerable youth can be found (e.g., bus or train stations).

Indicative behaviors, on the other hand, correlate and may temporally coexist with factors of interest; they suggest or "point toward" the presence of the target factor. For example, an adult who insists on speaking for the child when the child is asked a question, or a teenager who does not know the date, where she is, or her destination. As one might expect, some crimes are associated with more indicative behaviors than others. For reasons outlined below, indicators of CSE are notoriously difficult to identify, a problem the current program hopes to ameliorate.

Sex offender characteristics

Sex offenders "do not have horns or speak 'monster'" (Sullivan, 2014). They are found across all socioeconomic strata, within every profession, and in all racial and cultural groups (Center for Sex offender Management [CSOM], n.d.). Because they do not "burn out" and are capable of offending across the life span, they do not necessarily fall into any particular age group (CSOM, n.d.). Put simply, they are the man or woman next door. As Lanning (2010) noted:

> [A sex offender] cannot be identified by physical description and, often, not even by 'bad' character traits. Without specialized training or experience and an objective perspective, he cannot be distinguished from others (p. 8).

Because most sex offenders are adept at compartmentalizing their deviance and appear quite "normal," investigators must find ways to draw back this curtain of normalcy.

[4] The courses have varied in length from 8 h (in 2009) to 40 h. The current length of the Train the Trainer program is 40 h and the basic IPC course is 16 h in duration.

One interesting way investigators peer into the recesses of offenders' minds occurs when they examine material that is viewed, downloaded, and traded by individuals engaged in online criminality. Such illegal behaviors allow detectives and agents, such as those affiliated with Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task forces, to identify individuals who are sexually interested in children. Officers can track these offenders as they produce and/or trade CEM, engage in explicit online communication with children, and solicit minors to engage in sexual activity.

Possession of CEM strongly suggests the presence of a sexual attraction to children[5] (Seto, Cantor, & Blanchard, 2006), and the majority of individuals found in possession of CEM admit they have engaged in the hands-on abuse of children (Bourke et al., 2015; Bourke & Hernandez, 2009; Seto, Hanson, & Babchishin, 2011). Therefore, the possession of CEM may be considered an indicative behavior (and can also be a precursive behavior) for the hands-on sexual abuse of minors.[6]

Although the predilections of pedophiles may be vicariously observed in their online behavior, identifying sexual offenders "offline" often proves much more difficult. Sex offenders are masters at creating a façade of normalcy, and there typically is a paucity of overt evidence to indicate these men and women are sexually attracted to children. When the sheep's clothing is removed, exposing the wolf underneath, the public is often shocked by what they failed to observe.

The task becomes more challenging for law enforcement personnel when they are asked to distinguish potential offenders from non-offenders, or at-risk youth from children who are not at risk, during brief, routine encounters with citizens (e.g., roadside traffic stops). One might reasonably wonder if it is even possible to reliably identify individuals who pose a high risk to children during a brief traffic stop (the average traffic stop may last only seven to 11 min). Are there clues that can prompt an officer to suspect a minor in the back seat of a vehicle is the victim of a noncustodial abduction? Do adults who travel to meet a child for a sexual encounter exhibit specific behaviors? Are there signs that suggest a subject intends to exploit (or is already exploiting) runaway or homeless youth?

IPC indicators. IPC indicators are signs observable to law enforcement officers during encounters with one or more persons that suggest something is amiss. Although some signs are obvious, others are subtler; without training these indicators can be easily overlooked or explained away by even experienced officers. For example, individuals who sexually exploit others for commercial gain (e.g., "pimps") may use certain symbols and tattoos to reflect their involvement in their particular criminal "subculture." With training, law enforcement personnel learn to quickly recognize these symbols, just as gang investigators learn to recognize and interpret the cryptic graffiti and tattoos of street gang members.

The indicators used in the IPC program are discovered in three primary ways. First, we regularly review the extant literature to identify signs observed in other examinations of this topic. Second, the U.S. Marshals Service BAU collects observations from non-law enforcement professionals who work in the field of child exploitation. The professionals come from around the world and include child advocacy center staff, child forensic interviewers, attorneys, researchers, intelligence analysts, medical personnel, and hotel staff. We add their observations to a database to mitigate the problem where knowledge tends to stay within a professional "cell" and is not communicated to other disciplines. For example, U.S. Marshals BAU personnel interviewed a physician in Costa Rica who regularly performs physical examinations and autopsies with child exploitation victims. She was able to provide observations (e.g., physical signs a child has been choked) that directly informed the IPC component on what officers might notice on the face of an abused child. It is particularly helpful when the individual providing observations has had significant interactions "on the street" with child victims of sexual crimes.

By collating the observations of professionals BAU personnel are able to observe factors and trends that otherwise would go unnoticed. For example, suppose an officer makes a traffic stop and notices a teenage girl in the back seat. The officer also observes the presence of three condom wrappers on the floorboard of the vehicle. Based on her experience, the officer decides it is unusual for someone to have so many condom wrappers in his vehicle. Further, the driver indicates he is driving his niece to her grandmother's house and he has no explanation for why he would leave the condom wrappers in plain view. The officer passes along her observation for potential inclusion in the BAU database. The important point is that while the observation may be simply an uncommon occurrence for any particular officer, patterns can emerge when it is combined with observations by numerous officers. We are attempting to capture indicators through "collective wisdom" that otherwise would have been lost as soon as the officers left the scene.

The third method involves data analysis. The U.S. Marshals Service BAU examines data from hundreds of thousands of arrests and attempts to identify factors that statistically discriminate between specific groups of offenders, or between groups of offenders and nonoffenders. Where possible, BAU staff apply empirical data to the anecdotal reports. For example, recently an officer wrote us with an observation; he said he thought certain tattoos might be associated with a specific type of sexually criminal behavior. We tested this anecdotal report by examining the tattoos of a sample of men ($n = 600$) who had been arrested for the crime in question, and compared them to a sample of similar offenders ($n = 600$; matched on age, race, and gender) who had not engaged in that behavior. We found a statistically significant difference between the two samples which supported the observation from the field.

The process of recognizing signs of child exploitation is a dynamic endeavor. We continue to identify potential *indicators of child exploitation* as well as *indicators of risk for child exploitation.* Anecdotal reports from the field, as well as results from data analysis, allow us to improve our detection methodology. The goal is to push this knowledge to the field to help officers more accurately identify crimes that have occurred or are occurring, to better engage in effective and proactive law enforcement. We concentrate on eight categories of indicators:

1. *Behaviors exhibited by the potential high-risk threat to children*. Troopers and police officers tend to focus on the driver of an automobile or truck (and in many cases drivers are traveling without other adult passengers), but IPC-relevant behaviors may be exhibited by anyone in the vehicle who may present a threat to a child. Of course, the behavior of these individuals may not be merely related to illegal activity with minors, but may also be signs of other forms of criminality

Note that a child does not have to be present for an individual to be identified as a potential high-risk threat to children, as the following case illustrates:

> In September 2013 a trooper conducted a traffic stop of a recreational vehicle. During the stop the driver immediately exited the vehicle instead of rolling down the window. He began to cry excessively for no reason and continued crying even after being told he would be getting a warning. He began stuttering and shaking when asked about the contents of his vehicle. During a consent search of the vehicle, the trooper found $5000 in cash and a homemade child-sized doll on the bed. There were clear signs the man had been engaging in regular sexual activity with the doll (TCACC, 2015).

2. *Behaviors exhibited by any children who are present*. The mannerisms and utterances of any children on scene may be the greatest potential source of information to a trained observer. That being said,

[5] As a rule, individuals seek pornography that matches their sexual interests (see Seto, Maric, & Barbaree, 2001).

[6] Not all CEM possessors are hands-on offenders, but in extant studies between 55% and 85% of individuals arrested for CEM possession acknowledge committing undetected hands-on acts of abuse. Not surprisingly, studies that use data collected in treatment settings or through the use of polygraph examination find a higher correlation than those that simply rely on criminal records.

officers are taught that they should not expect a victim will cry out for help simply because a police officer arrives on the scene, such as the well-known cases of Elizabeth Smart (Smart & Stewart, 2013) and Shawn Hornbeck (Snow, 2008). In some cases children may not understand they are being victimized, or they may not have the ability to disclose what is happening. In fact, there are a number of factors that could prevent a child from acknowledging the abuse occurred or influence them to recant statements they made. Despite assurances from professionals that they are now safe, it is reasonable to expect a child victim can take weeks, months, or even years – if ever – before they provide a full disclosure. Officers are made aware that a child's silence can give the appearance that he or she is being dishonest when this is not the case.

Given the challenges of creating environments where victims feel sufficiently safe to reveal their circumstances, it is unrealistic to expect abused or otherwise exploited children will disclose what is happening to them during roadside encounters. In the IPC model officers are taught to approach interactions with children from a victim-centered perspective. Officers are taught to engage the child in a nonjudgmental, understanding, and compassionate manner. They are reminded that adolescents who engage in survival sex or who are trafficked do not meet the legal definition of, and therefore should not be considered, "prostitutes". Education is also provided about the impact of trauma and how it affects the victims' behavior.

The IPC program does not teach patrol officers to conduct interrogative or forensic interviews. Instead, it provides them skills to engage in an *initial contact interview*. This interview consists of obtaining basic information from all persons present, including children. After attempts are made to confirm the information is accurate, officers are instructed to assess the well-being of any children present. This is referred to as *minimal fact finding*. To ensure the safety and privacy of the victims, officers routinely separate them from the potential perpetrator as soon as feasible and prior to asking sensitive questions. If the officer determines there is a need for additional services, the individual is informed about and connected to appropriate resources.

3. *Physical characteristics of the potential high-risk threat to children*. During the IPC training officers are taught to notice specific physical characteristics of the driver and other adults in the vehicle. This instruction complements training the officers may have previously received on identifying signs of other criminal activity (e.g., substance use, human or drug smuggling, stolen vehicles) and indicators relevant to officer safety (e.g., concealed weapons, needles). These characteristics include tattoos that reflect identification with a criminal lifestyle or an over-identification with children.

4. *Physical characteristics of children who are present*. Officers are encouraged to take note of any visible physical characteristics of the youth, such as track marks from intravenous drug use, restraint marks on the wrists, tattooed "brands" on the neck or torso, and abrasions or bruises (Prestridge & Bourke, 2015). Unlike children who receive bruises from normal play, exploited children may be reluctant to explain the etiology of potential signs of physical abuse (Shackelford, 2014).

In June 2014 a UHP trooper was able to implement the Texas Department of Public Safety's Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) training during an otherwise routine traffic stop… During the traffic stop the trooper [noted] small bruise-like marks on the neck of the female adult and female minor. . . After verifying the identity of the driver as a registered sex offender and additional questioning of the driver and passengers, the trooper determined a crime had occurred based on the totality of the information. The trooper attributes the skills learned during the IPC training for the recovery of two endangered passengers; one juvenile female and one male adult with diminished capacity (Utah Statewide Information & Analysis Center, 2014).

5. *Property of the potential high-risk threat to children*. Officers are asked to note items that are observable during the stop or encounter. These items may be in plain view, or may come to light as a result of a search of the vehicle. Examples of potential indicators of trafficking include numerous hotel key cards, multiple cell phones, stashes of condoms, large sums of cash, and legal pornography. Possible indicators of other forms of child exploitation include the presence of infant's/children's clothing (particularly when there are no children in the vehicle or they have no children), toys or stuffed animals, or other items belonging to a child (e.g., backpacks, school books).

6. *Property of children who are present*. The items children have in their possession can be significant, as are items one would expect them to have but are absent. Examples of the former include a false identification card or license and a prepaid cell phone. Examples of the latter include a lack of identification and minimal warm clothing (i.e., youth is dressed inappropriately and/or is underdressed for cold weather).

7. *Vehicle characteristics*. The characteristics of the vehicle include the interior as well as the exterior. Officers should look for items that are contextually inappropriate (e.g., sex toys in plain view) or are atypical (e.g., potential child lures).

Highway Patrol troopers conducted a traffic stop. During the stop they noticed a small stuffed toy hanging from the rear bumper of the vehicle. The single male occupant showed signs of nervousness and unusual statements about his travel history. The man gave troopers permission to search his flash drive and computer. During the search, the troopers identified indecent images of children (TCACC, 2015).

Less common but quite significant are visual symbols that are known to represent deviant subcultural groups, such as stickers or decals from organizations that support adult-child sexual contact.

8. *Situational characteristics*. Situational characteristics are the most diverse and include things that simply "don't make sense." examples include stories that seem far-fetched or that do not match verifiable facts. Also, stories that contradict an earlier version of the story by the same reporter, or that depart from the reports of other subjects at the scene

Situational characteristics also can include information available online. For example, if the officer is able to locate a child's social networking profile and finds sexually explicit content, this finding would be an indicator. It also would be relevant if the officer is able to ascertain that the child is not enrolled in school, or that he or she is often absent from school.

> During a traffic stop an adult driver informed the state trooper he just met the female passenger on a social media site, and he admitted he did not know her name or age. The child said she was 14 years old, and when asked the name of the driver, she provided an incorrect name. During the interview the adult gave the Trooper consent to search his phone, and the trooper discovered a sexually inappropriate online conversation the man had with the youth. The trooper contacted the child's mother, who thought the youth was in her bed. The adult later was charged with 'Enticing a Child' (TCACC, 2015).

Crimes against children patrol operations

In 2014 the Texas DPS decided to conduct several multi-agency Crimes Against Children Patrol Operations. These operations were designed based on other similar high intensity traffic enforcement operations, such as seatbelt compliance and drunk driving enforcement campaigns. The stated goals were to (a) increase awareness of the department's initiative to proactively protect children through routine traffic stops, uniformed officer investigations, and consensual contacts; (b) locate missing, exploited, and at-risk children; (c) collect information about suspicious activity; (d) identify individuals who may be a high risk to children; and (e) apprehend registered sex offenders who are out of compliance with their registration requirements (Arizona Department of Public Safety, 2015; Texas Crimes Against Children Center, 2015). During these 72-hour joint operations a greater number of officers were exposed to the principles and techniques taught in the IPC training classes in a relatively short period of time. An increase in

awareness led to increased implementation and, ultimately, a sizable impact on the fight against child sexual exploitation.

Each participating law enforcement agency used different methods to achieve these goals. Some, for example, increased the allocation of resources during the time frame of the operation; others did not make any changes to the number of personnel working each shift. Agencies were encouraged to determine what methods to use to provide them with the greatest amount of flexibility and freedom to make decisions based on resource availability. This approach also allowed comparison of the various methods to determine which were the most effective, as well as identify important factors to be considered when planning future operations.

The CAC Patrol Operations were conducted by uniformed patrol officers (primary participants) as well as specialized units (secondary participants). This two-pronged strategy ensured there was sufficient investigative support to respond to calls for assistance, collect information, and initiate investigations. Participating agencies spanned 11 states in the U.S. as well as the Durham Constabulary in the U.K.

Results

From an anecdotal perspective, the officers who have undergone the training have informed us they find the program effective "on the ground." As one officer noted:

> I recently worked a case where I dealt with a 17-year-old female who was being trafficked/prostituted for narcotics. Though I would have worked this case with due diligence, I feel like the IPC course revised my investigative skill set and allowed me to properly identify the many clues I may have otherwise not noticed. These clues presented in the course led to me asking questions about a potential human trafficking/prostitution situation, which in this case had been ongoing for three years (TCACC, 2015).

From a quantitative perspective, the Texas Crimes Against Children Center (TCACC) has collected data on IPC recoveries since 2010. That data, displayed in Fig. 1, show the program rescued 146 children in the five-year period between 2010 and 2014. This number, of course, continues to grow. At the time of this writing, more than 200 missing or exploited children have been rescued.

By all measures, the CAC Patrol Operations were an unequivocal success. During 2015 the two operations resulted in the rescue of 11 children who ranged in age from 10 to 17 years old. Fourteen investigations were initiated as a result of IPC stops including one case of contributing to the delinquency of a minor, one for sexual conduct with a minor, one for furnishing harmful items to a minor, one for sexual exploitation of a minor, two potential child sex trafficking violations, one case involving human trafficking of an adult, one rescue of a child missing from foster care, one sex offender registration violation, and one assault of a child.

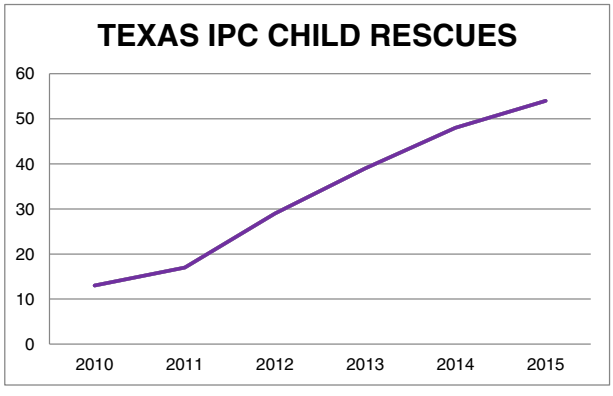

Fig. 1. Texas IPC child rescues.

During the operations, IPC-trained patrol officers came into contact with 446 registered sex offenders. During these encounters the officers were able to verify compliance with registration requirements and, when warranted, refer the case for further investigation. As the lead agency responsible for identifying, locating, and apprehending noncompliant sex offenders, the U.S. Marshals Service supported the operations by providing points of contact in each region to support participating agencies.

We would also note that the operations allowed thousands of officers to receive direct guidance, instruction, and encouragement from command staff, thus increasing the likelihood they will incorporate IPC techniques into their daily routine in the future. The "ripple effect" of these operations undoubtedly will be seen over time, and the results will highlight the importance of adopting IPC as a universally-accepted standard of practice in policing.

Discussion and future directions

Quantifying the results of crime prevention programs can be challenging under the best of circumstances. In the case of the IPC program, it is impossible to know how many of the youth who were rescued from high-risk situations would have become victims of CSE had that intervention not occurred. Similarly, we do not know how many individuals officers felt were "up to no good," but where there was no probable cause to make an arrest, later committed a sexual offense after being told they were free to go on their way. From a practical standpoint these limitations are unavoidable and inevitable.

The IPC program has encountered some challenges. The first and most concerning issue relates to funding. To date the training has been provided free of charge to requesting agencies; this arrangement has been made possible by a microgrant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office. The grant (2014CKWX0040) is a two-year project that will soon expire, requiring supporters, participants and requestors to search for other funding sources. Second, the IPC training is only provided to agencies who request it, and for a variety of reasons (e.g., resource availability) not all law enforcement agencies are able to take advantage of this opportunity.

From a resource standpoint, the program has several noteworthy advantages. It is designed to utilize resources already available to departments. The program has low fiscal impact and does not require new software or additional personnel. Further, it can be implemented immediately by agencies of any size. Put simply, IPC's effectiveness is attributable to perspective. The training allows officers to view their encounters with citizens through a new lens – a lens created by multi-disciplinary teams using evidence-based practices. This lens allows them to more quickly and effectively identify situations where police intervention can make a difference in the well-being of a child – at that moment or in the future.

At present the IPC program is experiencing a type of contagion, where the concept is spreading informally by word of mouth as well as formally via a "train the trainer" approach to sharing indicators. At the time of this writing, 15 states have received the training and five states and the District of Columbia have adopted a "train the trainer" model. The program has also been presented to officials from an additional 10 U.S. states as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and several Australian states. The authors find this heartening and see the "taking a life of its own" phenomenon as an indication the program is working. To illustrate, the Arizona Department of Public Safety was one of the first departments to participate in the IPC training. They subsequently completed the IPC train the trainer program and then independently hosted several IPC trainings for their agency personnel. As a result of their efforts, the agency has seen considerable success in the implementation of the program; in fact, at the time of this writing

Arizona DPS troopers, using IPC techniques, have rescued 43 children in the past 18 months. An Arizona DPS commander recently wrote the second author and stated, in relevant part:

> Of the six human trafficking incidents this year, five of the troopers attended the IPC program. They all said the class helped them recognize indicators and or helped them to know what to do when they saw the indicators. One trooper told me the child told the trooper she had been stopped numerous times by law enforcement, and she gave the same false identity as she gave the trooper. The other times, however, the officer would just become frustrated and let her go down the road. She thanked the trooper for taking the time to help her. She said she was just glad this was over and wanted to go home.

The program also has begun to spread internationally; in 2013 a team of instructors traveled to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Academy in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, to provide the basic training. More recently, in 2014 a member of the Durham Constabulary in the U.K. traveled to Dallas to meet with instructors and obtain information about the program. After three days of continuous meetings the Durham officer returned home to begin implementing portions of the IPC approach. In 2015 the Durham Constabulary reported they rescued a child from an exploitative situation during the second 72-h operation. Other agencies from around the globe also have expressed considerable interest in bringing the program to their respective countries.

It is important to note that the evolution of the IPC model is the result of the collective wisdom of all participating agencies. The success of the program is attributable to the ongoing efforts of individual law enforcement officers, with the support and collaboration of victim services professionals, crime intelligence analysts, child protective service professionals and child advocacy professionals who have been trained in the model and who consciously apply the principles to their work in the field. By combining their feedback and street intelligence with data analysis we are able to produce better assessments and revise program practices. The beneficiaries of our collaborative efforts are children who otherwise would go unidentified and un-rescued.

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