

## The Police Officers who Solicit Men on Dating Sites

Aracely Y, CAGE Leadership Member, Advocating against Government Entrapment,  
info@CAGE.fyi

Supposedly trying to save and protect children from online predators, police officers are soliciting men on adult dating sites, using them to role play sexual fantasies with imaginary minors and then charging them for these fictional crimes. In reality, it has nothing to do with protecting children from any real risk or real harm. Rather, it has everything to do with a fantasy forced on other men to create fake cases that reap real benefits in the forms of grant money for law enforcement and career boosters for prosecutors, that are obtained at the cost and harm of the lives of other human beings.

In a typical sting operation, police create fake profiles or ads as adults seeking a man to date or for casual sex. Of the people who use dating sites or apps, 24 percent admitted to using them to find consensual casual sex partners (Pew Research Center). These sting operations target only those in this group who are men or identify as male, none of which are on these adult dating sites seeking minors to exploit and abuse.

Before it was removed in 2018, the “Casual Encounters, No Strings Attached” section of the website *Craigslist* was often used for these “child predator” sting operations. In the month before its removal, Texas DPS officers posted multiple ads as an adult woman seeking a man for a casual encounter. After luring a respondent, police engaged the 22-year-old male in role play while pretending to be a 13-year-old virgin girl wanting to experience sex and desperately looking for a man.

Although this might be the fantasy of some grown men, it is clearly not the behavior of any real 13-year-old girl, and it is unthinkable that a child would solicit adult men online for casual sex. The officers making their fictional young girl a virgin who was simply bored and wanted to experience sex is even more concerning, indicating officers think young virgin girls are obsessed with acting out sexually. The disturbing part is that these officers are forcing this fantasy on other men, a pornographic film plot of a bored lonely underage virgin girl desperate for sex and eager to find any man online to help satisfy her desires. And yet, for their sting operation to work effectively, police have to drag in another unsuspecting man to create the rest of their script for their invented plotline. All the while the shameless lie that is perpetuated by law enforcement is one of saving and protecting these imaginary children from online predators.

Chelsea Reynold’s 2017 research found most Craigslist sex forum users were normal people seeking to explore their sexual desires with strangers online. She described the majority of the users as “sexual outsiders,” people who are LGBTQ, non-monogamous, or kink and fetish community members who are different from most people on regular dating sites. She also discovered “statistically very few” users of the website were victims of sex trafficking, a finding that didn’t match law enforcement’s and the media’s reports of Craigslist personal ads.

Research from website *Screen & Reveal* (Online Predator Statistics, Update 2023) shows nothing concerning online predators seeking minors to exploit on adult dating sites or apps. Like most other research, it shows predators target minors on social media platforms where kids hang out like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat. As many as 89% of those

seeking minors online contact their victims through chatrooms and instant messaging. Why then are most online child predator sting operations conducted on adult dating sites or apps targeting men seeking consenting adults to engage in fantasy sexual conversations and/or to meet for casual sex?

Those conducting these sting operations and their supporters argue, “This could have been a real kid.” And the lumberjack might very well be an ax murder because the logs he splits could be human body parts. Anyone could be a criminal if circumstances are changed around to make them one. The issue though is this isn’t the behavior of any real child; it’s the behavior of an adult who enjoys role playing for sexual purposes. Or in the case of these police officers, pretending to be a minor helps them entrap men and pretend to catch “child predators” which creates benefits for these decoys. Or perhaps officers could be doing it for both reasons, enjoying the act sexually while at the same time easily earning grant money from the taxpayers.

While law enforcement has been wasting years on targeting men online who were not seeking minors to exploit, they have been stealing countless time and resources away from legitimate investigations into those who target minors online causing a rise in the exploitation and abuse of children online. As police continue to manufacture fake cases to make it look like they are addressing a problem of children being lured, exploited, and abused by online predators, they have avoided working on saving and protecting real children from real online risks and real harm. Additionally, these deceptive and wasteful tactics serve only to erode the public’s trust and faith in our law enforcement officers and our criminal justice system. We as a society should not stand for such injustice, and demand that law enforcement be accountable and spend their time, resources, and our taxpayer money on combating actual crimes instead of falsely creating and contributing to additional problems.