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Almond, L, McManus, MA, Giles, S and Houston, E (2015) Female Sex Offenders: An Analysis of Crime Scene Behaviors. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 32 (24). pp. 3839-3860. ISSN 1552-6518

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Female sex offenders: An analysis of crime scene behaviors

Abstract

The concept of the female sex offender is a relatively phenomenon within the social research literature. Studies of female rape, male rape, paedophilia and juvenile sex offenders have suggested that different styles of offending are reflected in the different types of behaviors committed by offenders at the crime scene. These studies suggest that there are three distinct themes of behaviour; Hostility, Impersonal and Involvement. Multidimensional analysis is carried out on 35 crime scene behaviors of 73 female sex offenders from UK and US law reports. The proposed framework was found to be a useful way of classifying female sex offenders with 84% displaying a dominant theme. These resulted in 52% classified as displaying Involvement, 17% as Control and 15% Hostility. Finally, the implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Female sex offenders: An analysis of crime scene behaviors

Introduction

Even in modern society, the perception of women is predominantly based on stereotypical views, of which female sex offenders (FSO) cannot elude (Herzog & Oreg, 2008). Traditional roles of females as non-violent, non-sexual, caregivers have caused a hindrance in the reporting and identification of counter-stereotypical sexual crimes committed by FSO (Denov, 2001; Hislop, 2001; Wijkman, Bijleveld, & Hendriks, 2010). Researchers suggest that FSO may go undetected because they engage in offence behaviours during conventional care-giving activities, such as bathing an infant (Allen, 1991; Ferguson & Meehan, 2005). As a consequence the literature on females who sexually harm is significantly under-researched, especially in comparison to male sexual offending (Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Matthews, Matthews & Speltz, 1989; Wijkman, Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2011).

Additionally, the lack of research in this area can be moderately attributed to the low prevalence of FSO within the criminal population. Based on recent international statistics, females have been found to contribute to only 4 to 5% of all sexual offences (Cortoni & Hanson, 2005; Cortoni, Hanson & Coache, 2010). These figures demonstrate a slight increase in offending, as previous estimates indicated that less than 1% of all rape and sexual assault offenders were female (Greenfeld, 1997). Within the UK, rates from 2011 indicate that females accounted for 1.8% of prosecutions for sexual offences (Home Office, 2013). The Home Office (2013) also reported that in 2011 there were 103 females serving custodial sentences for sexual offences, with this rate 15% lower than in 2010.

Thus, figures indicate the occurrence of FSO may be increasing. However, with ratios demonstrating female to male sexual offending at approximately 1:20, the presence of FSO is still considerably low (Cortoni et al., 2010). Despite this infrequency of female sexual offending, FSO are deemed very serious perpetrators and are associated with high risks for potential victims (Beech, Parrett, Ward & Fisher, 2009). Sexual assault by a female offender can be more significant and traumatic than by a male offender, especially when it involves mothers abusing their own children, half of male victims and three-quarters of female victims felt so damaged they felt little hope of recovery (Bunting 2006). Victims of female sexual assault often feel a greater sense of stigmatization and shame resulting in them struggling more with their individual and sexual identify. Bunting (2006) argues that this results in an increased risk for the victim to in the future become a sexual offender, when compared to the victims of male sexual assault. Further research is, therefore vital to understand the characteristics and motivations of these offenders.

Empirical research has found that FSO are a heterogeneous group, with differences in age, background characteristics, psychiatric history and offence behaviour (Marshall & Hall, 1995; Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006). The age range of FSO has been proposed to be anywhere between 13 to 83 years, demonstrating the diversity in offender age (Brown, Drucker, Hull & Panesis, 1984; Faller, 1995; Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Rowan, Rowan, & Langelier, 1990; Sandler & Freeman, 2007). However, the 'typical' offender is consistently reported to be in the age range of 26 to 36 years, with an average age of 31 years at the time of her first sexual offence (Vandiver & Walker, 2002). Additionally, other research has examined marital status, which varied among studies. In a review of 72 FSO, Faller (1987) reported 38% of offenders as married; other studies found the majority of FSO to be single

(Brown et al. 1984; Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Miccio-Fonseca, 2000). The lowest percentages of FSO in all of these studies were divorced.

Furthermore, high rates of mental illness have been found among samples of sexually harmful females, with some studies reporting a prevalence rate of 30-50% in their sample (Faller, 1995; O'Connor, 1987). Different frequencies of diverse mental illnesses in FSO have also been established, including schizophrenia, depression and borderline personality disorder (Lewis & Stanley, 2000; Matthews et al., 1989). The commonality of these disorders has also been linked to adverse childhood conditions, including sexual and physical abuse, which are observed in many samples of FSO (Lewis & Stanley, 2000).

Heterogeneity in offences committed by FSO's have been found to range from rape, sexual penetration to aiding and abetting, with numerous offences involving several types of abuse (Nathan & Ward, 2002). In a review of 12 FSO, Nathan and Ward (2002) established that FSO with male co-perpetrators engaged in various behaviours, such as, aiding and abetting their co-offenders in vaginal, anal and oral sex. Other FSO were found to have had vaginal intercourse or oral sex with the male co-perpetrators in the presence of their victims. However, FSO who committed the abuse alone, were established to be more likely to perform oral sex on the victim, or force the victim into oral copulation.

Further research identifies other sexual offences committed by FSO, including noncontact crimes (i.e. obscene phone calls and exhibitionism), prostitution and child pornography, indicating the wide differences in FSO behaviour (Knopp & Lackey, 1987). As a result of this heterogeneity, a number of offender typologies have been derived to condense and generalise this information on FSO (Sandler & Freeman,

2007). Offender typologies expand upon the one-dimensional approach, i.e. using one factor such as offender age to differentiate between offenders, and empirically classify characteristics of sex offenders and their offences (Almond & Canter, 2007; Robertiello & Terry, 2007). Consequently, typologies are beneficial tools in understanding offending patterns.

Female typologies:

Matthews, Matthews & Speltz (1989) proposed one of the earliest and well-known female typologies, and identified three categories of FSO; (1) “teacher-lover”, (2) “predisposed” and (3) “male-coerced”. This classification scheme was developed from 16 FSO, and centres on offence type, offender perception of victim, psychological factors and the presence of co-offenders.

The category “teacher-lover” refers to an offender who does not believe her actions are criminal, but educational, beneficial or even ‘true love’. Often these offenders operate in a care-giving role, with offences stemming from a ‘student-teacher’ relationship. These FSO may use different coercive methods to control the victim i.e. giving the victim gifts/bribes. The second offender, the “predisposed” offender, is likely to have a history of childhood sexual abuse themselves. This perpetrator is proposed to initiate the sexual offences, without the assistance of a male partner, and victimizes her own children. Common offence behaviours of this category include physical abuse of the victim, resulting from angry and compulsive sexual urges. Finally, the “male-coerced” offender is intimidated into the sexual abuse by a dominant male partner, therefore, does not commit the abuse in his absence. This type of offence generally involves a passive FSO who feels powerless

and emotionally dependent on the male co-perpetrator (Cortoni et al., 2010). Victims of such offences are frequently her children or children associated with the family.

Vandiver and Kercher (2004) developed a six category typology from a large sample of 471 FSOs. The dominant category of this typology, labelled “heterosexual nurturers”, is comparable to Matthews et al.’s (1989) “teacher-lover”, and includes offenders who target early pubescent males, of which they may have a care-giving role towards. These FSO experience a lack of intimacy in adulthood, and consequently seek emotional compensation from their victim. The next category, the “non-criminal homosexual offender”, involves a FSO, who is to unlikely to have a previous criminal record or use violence during the offence. These perpetrators are predicted to victimize females in their early adolescence.

“Female sexual predators” are Vandiver and Kercher’s (2004) third category, which comprise of FSO with a preference for prepubescent males. Offenders in this group are likely to be arrested for subsequent sexual offences, and have a higher arrest rate than other categories. The next category is the “young adult child exploiters”. These perpetrators have few, if any, arrests outside of their sexual offence and are likely to have a pre-established relationship with their young victims. As these FSO do not have a gender specific victimology, it is hypothesized that they are likely to be mothers who abuse their own children. The fifth category, known as “homosexual criminals”, are older offenders predominantly motivated by economic gain. These FSO display antisocial personality traits, have been arrested numerous times, and frequently forced their female victims into prostitution. Finally, “aggressive homosexual offenders” are a category generally theorized to be representative of homosexual women involved in a domestically violent relationship.

Other FSO typologies have been developed, with Gannon et al. (2014) developing (Gannon et al., 2008) and testing their descriptive model of female sexual offending (DMFSO) which was initially based on 22 UK FSO's, with their follow up study exploring 36 North American FSO's. Like the other models described above, the DMFSO is a model that describes a series of behavioural, cognitive, affective and contextual factors that are associated with FSO's. The DMFSO includes three pathways: Explicit- Approach, Directed Avoidant and Implicit-Disorganising. The Explicit Approach pathway accounted for the largest proportion of their sample (50%) with the main goals of their offending centred on sexual gratification, intimacy and revenge. They describe an example of an FSO who sexually abused her children, describing sexual gratification of watching her husband abuse the children, the sexual abuse she committed was 'intimacy' and 'love' for her children, with much positive affect associated with her offending behaviour. In contrast The Directed Avoidant pathway found themselves in situations where they were either directed or coerced to abuse, with this often controlled by a male, sometimes abusive, partner. Those within this pathway experienced significant negative affect regarding their offending. Finally, the Implicit Disorganised pathway included FSOs with diverse motivations and goals for their sexual offending. Most of this group were impulsive and disorganised within their offending and experienced both positive and negative affect.

Models such as the DMFSO are informative from a clinical perspective in aiding in rehabilitation and treatment, however, may have limited utility from investigative perspective. Although Matthews et al.'s (1989) typology did briefly explore some crime scene behaviours and characteristics, their study has several methodological limitations including a small sample size (Bickley & Beech, 2001).

The additional female typologies (six-category typology) by Vandiver and Kercher's (2004), although devised with a much larger sample, included little information regarding specific offence behaviours, with categories defined by the offenders sexuality. The offender sexuality is likely to be information unknown to police during an investigation. Thus, no models have yet explored in detail FSO offence behaviours. The in-depth examination of offence behaviours may assist in police investigations and offending profiling.

Themes of offence behaviours

Research into male and juvenile sexual offenders has thoroughly examined offence behaviours by observing the various modes of interaction between the perpetrator and the victim (Canter, 1994; Canter, Bennell, Alison & Reddy, 2003; Almond & Canter, 2007). Researchers propose that variations between different types of sex offenders are reflected in differences in crime scene behaviours; with offender-victim interactions being utilized as a crucial tool to differentiate between perpetrators (Canter, Hughes & Kirby, 1998). Regardless of the distinct subset of sex offenders examined and the different labelling of the themes, three key themes have been consistently found which relate to specific crime scene behaviours of sex offenders (see Table 1): Control, Hostility and Involvement (Almond, McManus & Ward, 2013).

Control

Within the Control theme, offenders often display a lack of empathy for their victims, exploiting their victims to achieve sexual gratification, but may also get additional personal gains such as stealing items from the victim (Almond et al., 2013). A number of behaviours in Control suggest the offender interacting with the victim as a sexual object, thus parallels to this theme and Canter's (1994) "victim as object"

interaction can be drawn. Within the crime scene itself there is often a demonstration of power and control, with minimal force used, instead using other methods to demobilize the victim (e.g., blocking entrances and exits, Almond et al., 2013). These offences are committed opportunistically, often when the offender is intoxicated, thus increasing impulsivity and motivation to offend (Canter et al., 1998). Hence, these offenders are usually generalist in their overall offending behaviour. The control theme is comparable to the Male Coerced theme by Matthews et al, (1989), the Homosexual criminal by (Vandiver and Kercher's (2004), the Directed-Avoidant pathway by Gannon et al. (2014), the Object theme identified by Almond et al. (2014), the Victim as object theme identified by Canter (1994), Almond and Canter (2007) and the Criminal opportunistic theme identified by Canter et al. (1998).

Hostility

The theme of Hostility sees the offender use the victim to vent their anger and frustration, with the victim often experiencing degradation, physical and/or verbal violence (Canter et al., 1998). The violence and behaviour of the offender towards the victim usually goes beyond what is required for them to be able to commit the offence, consequently, the assault is less about sexual gratification and more about the display of domination and anger. This theme can be seen to reflect the Predisposed theme of Matthews et al's (1989) and the Aggressive Homosexual Offenders within Vandiver and Kercher's (2004) study. The Gannon Explicit-Approach Pathway includes sexual gratification with revenge and intimacy, therefore, only partly reflects the Hostility theme, as these offenders are less concerned with sexual gratification.

Involvement

The Involvement theme can be seen as the antithesis of the Control theme, in that Involvement offenders often attempt to develop pseudo-intimate relationships with their victim (Almond et al., 2013). This offence is about intimacy and social contact, with the offender lacking in their experience of healthy adult sexual relationships. The victim may be previously known to the offence and these offences may take place over a sustained period of time, rather than a one-off opportunistic attack (Almond and Canter, 2007). The theme of “teacher-lover” within Matthew et al.’s (1989) study replicates many of the behaviours within the Involvement theme. Similarly, the Heterosexual Nurturer from Vandiver and Kercher (2004) displays the key behaviour of the offender believing their relationship is reflecting true love. The desire for social contact is the main purpose for the offence.

Table 1: Themes identified in previous studies

Study	Type of sex offender	Control	Hostility	Involvement
Canter (1994)	Rape	Victim as object	Victim as Vehicle	Victim as Person
Canter, Bennell, Alison & Reddy (2003)	Rape	Control Theft	Hostility	Involvement
Canter, Hughes & Kirby (1998)	Child sexual abuse	Criminal-opportunistic	Aggressive	Intimate
Almond & Canter (2007)	Juvenile	Victim as object	Victim as vehicle	Victim as person
Almond, McManus & Ward (2013)	Male on male	Control	Hostility	Involvement
Matthews, Matthews & Speltz, 1989	Female	Male-coerced	Predisposed	Teacher/lover
Vandiver & Kercher (2004)	Female	Homosexual criminals	Aggressive Homosexual Offenders	Heterosexual nurturer

Aims

The behavioural themes identified by Canter (1994) have been expanded upon, and utilized in additional research into differentiating sex offenders. Studies into female stranger victims (Canter et al., 2003), juvenile sex offenders (Almond & Canter, 2007), male on male sexual assault (Almond, McManus & Ward, 2013) and child sexual abuse (Canter et al., 1998) have developed multivariate models, adopting the notion that modes of interaction between the offender and victim can assist in the differentiation of perpetrators. Studies examining FSO have yet to adopt such methods (Matthews et al., 1989; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004), providing the need for the current study; therefore, this study shall utilize these common themes to examine differences in offence behaviour among FSO, adding to previous research into other sexual offenders.

The current study aims to first explore the usefulness of this classification framework when examining female sex offenders crime scene behaviours. Second the study will examine whether individual offences involve one dominant behavioural theme. It is therefore proposed that the resulting multivariate model will be able to identify any underlying structure of the behaviours of female sex offenders and will help to distinguish one set of assaults from another.

Method

Sample

A sample of 73 female sex offenders were analysed in the study, with a mean age of 32.8 years (S.D = 8.2) and an age range of 18 to 60 years. The mean age of the

victims was 11.7 years (S.D = 4.77), with an age range of 1 to 18 years, 68% were male. Multiple victims were reported in 29 cases, as specific behaviours were often recorded for the individual case not for specific victims therefore each offender was only coded once in the dataset (Almond & Canter 2007). Twelve cases involved the participation of a male co-perpetrator, therefore generally the sample was reflective of an unaccompanied female offender. Thirteen of the female sex offenders were related to their victim (18%).

Data collection

Data for the study were collated from a content analysis of archival data. The criteria for inclusion of a case in the sample included a sexual component to the attack by a female offender. Legal reports from Westlaw (US and UK) were reviewed, with key search terms included: 'female', 'sexual assault', 'child sex offence', 'rape' and 'child molestation'. The legal reports are published in law journals and provide summaries of the case details, including offender's characteristics, victim characteristics and crime scene behaviours. Although previous studies examining crime scene behaviours on the whole use victim statements (Canter et al. 2003; Almond et al 2014), Porter and Alison (2004/2006) have defended the use of law reports as a data source, arguing that it is probably more accurate than police data, as they contain a variety of evidential sources which are triangulated and must undergo stringent legal scrutiny.

Crime-Scene Behaviors Variables

In total, 35 mutually exclusive crime scene behaviors were coded as either present or absent for each offender, these related to sexual behaviors, verbal behaviors, violent behaviors, precautions taken and non-sexual offending behaviors (See Table 2).

Using this dichotomous approach has been found to ensure maximum clarity and reliability when using records not initially collected for research purposes (Almond & Canter, 2007). Crime scene behaviors with greater than 70% prevalence were excluded from this analysis, due to the majority of offenders displaying them they would have limited utility when trying to differentiate assaults (Almond & Canter, 2007).

Statistical Analysis

Using multidimensional scaling procedures that have been used in previous research (Canter, 1994; Canter et al. 2003; Almond & Canter, 2007; Almond et al. 2014), the present study aimed to investigate the crime scene behaviors displayed by female offenders. The data was analyzed using the Smallest Scale Analysis (SSA) whose primary assumption is that any underlying structure can be readily appreciated by examining the relationship each variable has with every other variable (Lingoes, 1977). A measure of association is calculated that indicates the degree of co-occurrence between each crime scene behavior with every other crime scene behavior. Jaccard's coefficient has previously been regarded as the most appropriate measure of association to use for the analysis of data not collected for research purposes, as there is a possibility that variables may not have been recorded even though they were perhaps present (Canter et al, 2003). These associations are then rank ordered and represented as a ranked distance in an abstract 'space'. This visual representation was created such that the higher the correlation between any two given behaviors, the closer they will appear on the spatial plot (Guttman, 1968). The resulting patterns can then be examined allowing for the underlying structure of the crime scene behaviors to be identified, and thematic differentiation can then be defined.

Results

A SSA was carried out on 35 behaviors across the 73 perpetrators. The three-dimensional SSA had a Guttman Lingoes coefficient of alienation of 0.12, suggesting a good fit between the SSA plot and the original association matrix (Canter & Heritage, 1990). Figure 1 below represents vectors 1 and 2 of the three dimensional space, due to limited space behavior labels are given as abbreviations, see Table 2 for full behavior definition. As previously mentioned, the closer any two points are, the more likely the behaviors will have co-occurred together.

Thematic analysis of Crime Scene Behaviors

The studies aim was to examine whether the crime scene behaviors of female sex offenders could be classified into three distinct themes. Figure 1 demonstrates how the co-occurrence of the behaviors within the sample can be divided into three thematically similar subgroups made up of a subset of co-occurring crime scene behaviors. Kuder-Richardson 20 (K-R 20) coefficients were calculated in order to provide an index of internal reliability. The K-R 20 is equivalent to the more common Cronbach's alpha coefficient but can be used with dichotomous data. Figure 1 details the K-R 20 coefficients for each of the three themes; these values are reasonable considering that the data were not collected for research purposes. These values are higher also than other published models in this area which have used this coefficient, such as Canter et al. (2003) and Almond et al. (2007) and are sufficiently high enough to indicate that the themes are meaningful and coherent (Alison & Stein, 2001). Table 2 shows the crime scene behaviors within each theme and their corresponding frequencies. The highest frequency crime scene behaviors in the Control theme were "*offender touched victims' genitals under/through their*

clothes” (26%) “*offender had male co-perpetrator*” (16%), in the Hostile theme they were “*offender used physical force on the victim*” (16%) and in the Involvement theme they were “*abused the victim on more than one occasion*” (58%) and “*offender was vaginally penetrated by the victim’s penis*” (52%).

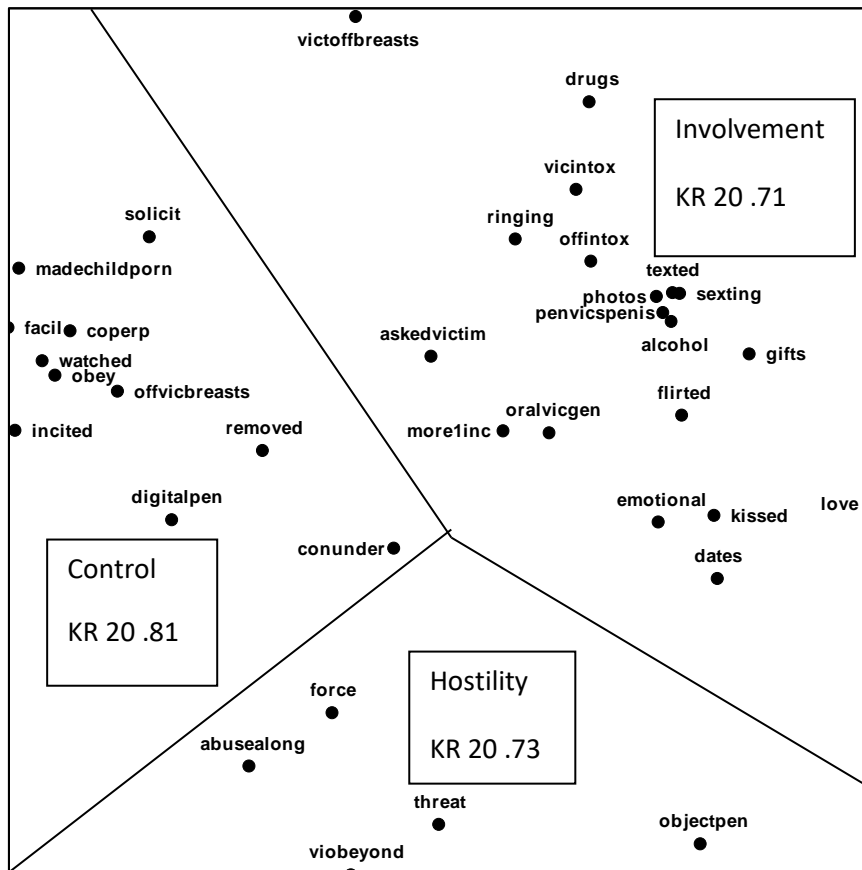


Figure 1. Smallest Space Analysis of Behavioral Themes of Female Sex Offenders. Behavior labels are abbreviations, see Table 2 for full definition.

Control

Those behaviors which are at the left in Figure 1 demonstrate the offenders control over the offence and their victims, in terms of sexual behaviors “*offender touched/fondled the victims genitals under/through their clothes*”, “*offender digitally*

penetrated the victims vagina and *“offender touched the victims breasts”* and also the instrumental gratification gained from the offence *“made child pornography”* and *“solicited the victim”* potentially using their victims for monetary gain. Although in these cases there may be a *“male co-perpetrator”* and the female offender may be *“present/watch an offence take place”*, they still play an active role in the assault by *“facilitating the offence”*, *“encouraging the victim”* *“removing the victims clothes”* and *“obeying the co-perpetrators demands”*.

Much of the behaviors within the Control theme (see Table 2) emphasize the offender interacting with the victim a sexual object, with this key behavior reflecting other models such as Canter's (1994) *“victim as object”*, control theme (Almond et al., 2013) interaction can be drawn. Sexual behaviors such as *“offender digitally penetrated the victim's vagina”*, *“offender touched/fondled the victim's breasts”* and *“victim touched/fondled the offender's breasts”* indicate the FSO are using the victims to satisfy their own sexual gratification. FSO's in this sample seem to also utilize their victims for instrumental gain, fitting accordingly to *“victim as object”* and *“homosexual criminals”* (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). Behaviors such as *“offender tried to/solicited the victim”* and *“offender made child pornography from the offence”* suggest the FSO using their targets to make a profit.

However, these behaviors generally occur in the presence of a male co-perpetrator. Therefore, this theme is largely comparable to Matthews et al.'s (1989) *“male-coerced”* typology, as suggested by the presence of behaviors such as *“offender had a male co-perpetrator during the offence”*, *“offender was present/watched the sexual assault”*, *“offender helped facilitate the offence”*, and *“offender incited/encouraged the victim to allow the sexual assault”*. As a

consequence, it can be suggested that FSO in the Control theme carry out the sexual desires of using the “victim as object” at the demands of their male co-perpetrators.

Finally, the behavior “offender removed the victim’s clothes” indicates attempts to exert control over the victim, which parallels behavior of juvenile offenders in Almond and Canter’s (2007) “victim as object” theme. Similarly, the Directed-Avoidant pathway by Gannon et al. (2014) represented those who offended either out of fear or in order to obtain intimate with their male co-offender, who was often abusive.

Table 2: Behaviors contained within each of the themes.

Theme	Label	Explanation	Freq (%)	
Control	conunder	Offender touched/fondled the victims genitals under/through their clothes	19 (26)	
	coperp	Offender had a male co-perpetrator during the offence	12 (16)	
	watched	Offender was present/watched the sexual assault	10 (14)	
	obey	Offender obeyed co-perpetrators demands during the offence	8 (11)	
	solicit	Offender tried to/solicited the victim	7 (10)	
	facil	Offender helped facilitate the offence i.e. held the victim down while the coperp carried out the assault	7 (10)	
	incite	Offender incited/encouraged the victim to allow the sexual assault	7 (10)	
	porn	Offender made child pornography from the offence	6 (8)	
	removed	Offender removed the victims clothes	6 (8)	
	digitalpen	Offender digitally penetrated the victims vagina	6 (8)	
	offvicbreast	Offender touched/fondled the victims breasts	5 (7)	
	Hostile	force	Offender used physical force on the victim	12 (16)
		abuse	Offender caused injuries during the offence	7 (10)
threat		Offender verbally threatened the victim		
viobeyond		Offender used violence beyond necessary to control the victim i.e. a weapon.	5 (7)	
objectpen		Offender penetrated victim with an object.	3 (4)	
Involvement	more1inc	Offender abused the victim on more than one occasion	42 (58)	
	penvicpenis	Offender was vaginally penetrated by the victims penis	38 (52)	
	oralvicgen	Offender performed oral sex on the victim	20 (27)	
	texting	Offender texted the victim	20 (27)	
	flirted	Offender flirted with the victim	18 (25)	
	sexting	Offender sent sexually explicit texts to the victim	14 (19)	
	kissed	Offender kissed the victim	13 (18)	
	vicintox	Victim was intoxicated	12 (16)	

alcohol	Offender gave the victim alcohol	12 (16)
ringing	Offender rang the victim/spoke on the phone	12 (16)
drugs	Offender gave the victim drugs	11 (15)
love	Offender wrote the victim love letters or told the victim they loved them	10 (14)
gifts	Offender gave the victim gifts	10 (14)
emotional	Offender emotionally blackmailed the victim	10 (14)
photos	Offender sent sexually explicit photos to the victim	10 (14)
offintox	Offender was intoxicated	9 (12)
dates	Offender took the victim out on 'dates'	8 (11)
asked	Offender asked the victim if they wanted sex	8 (11)
vicoffbreast	Victim touched/fondled the offenders breasts	5 (7)

Hostility

Those behaviors at the bottom of Figure 1 suggest the offender was using their victim as a target for their anger and frustration. The behaviors which appear in this theme (see Table 2) reflect acts of physical and verbal violence used to intimidate, threaten and in some cases injure their victim; “*offender uses physical force*”, “*offender verbally threatens victim*” and “*offender caused injuries*”. Behaviors in this theme indicate that the assault is not about sexual gratification, but is primarily about the offender’s venting their anger and frustration with the variables “*Violence beyond that necessary to control the victim*” and “*offender penetrated victim with an object*” which is the only sexual behavior found within this region. As in the case of Canter ‘s (1994) “victim as vehicle”, Canter et al.’s (2003) and Almond et al.’s (2013) “hostility theme” and Canter et al.’s (1998) “aggressive” region, behaviors in this theme are indicative of perpetrators interacting with the victims in a violent and physically aggressive mode. The use of language as a method of aggression is suggested with the variable “offender verbally threatened the victim”. Such verbally aggressive language in order to their victim into obedience has been found in juvenile and adult sex offenders (Almond & Canter, 2007; Canter, 1994; Canter et al., 2003). The only sexual behavior found in this theme was “offender penetrated victim with an object”. As in the theme “victim as vehicle” and the “hostility” region of the male-on-male rape

model, the penetration is suggestive of trying to humiliate and demean the victim as opposed to gaining sexual gratification. The level of physical harm directed at the victim is comparable to Matthews et al, 1989 “predisposed” theme.

Involvement

As demonstrated in Figure 1, a large proportion of the spatial plot is made up of the behavioral theme Involvement. The behaviors reflecting an offence which is very interpersonal with the offender attempting to form some pseudo- intimate relationship with their victim “*victim was abused on more than one occasion*”, “*offender asks the victim to have sex with them*”, “*offender buys gifts; flirts; rings; texts; sends explicit photos, tells the victim they love them*”. The variables, “*offender took their victim of dates*”, “*offender intoxicated*”, “*victims intoxicated*”, “*victim given alcohol; drugs*” indicates the social aspects of these offences (see Table 2). The offenders in these cases may view their victim as being able to consent to their behavior “*offender penetrated by victims’ penis*”, “*kissing*” and “*offender performed oral sex on the victim*” and may even believe that it is true love “*writes love letters to the victim or tells them they love them*”. Furthering this point, offenders “*asked the victim if they wanted sex*” illustrates the need for consensual intimacy. These behaviors alongside the repeat victimization (“*offender abused the victim on more than one occasion*”) reiterates the importance of the relationship and interaction with the victim. The expression of love towards the victim is also consistent with the female typologies of “*teacher-lover*” and “*heterosexual-nurturer*”, which propose that the offender may believe their relationship is ‘true love’ (Matthews et al., 1989; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004).

The importance of this consensual intimacy with the victim prevents the offender from using force to gain compliance and will instead use grooming techniques to bribe, or lower the inhibitions and consenting ability of the victim: “offender gave the victim alcohol”, “offender gave the victim drugs” “victim was intoxicated”, and “*emotional blackmail*”. Within the Involvement theme, “offender intoxicated’ generally co-occurs with ‘victim was intoxicated”. Therefore, supporting the notion that the offender may socially drink with the victim and thereby treat them as a reactive individual. Grooming of the victim has been noted as a common type of behavior in various types of sexual offending behavior, with sexual offenders adapting their grooming strategies to suit the offence and victim type (Craven, Brown & Gilchrist, 2006; Sheehan & Sullivan, 2010): Similarities in offence behaviors in this theme and variables displayed in the “victim as person” theme (Almond & Canter, 2007; Canter, 1994) and in the “involvement” theme (Almond et al., 2013) demonstrate that males, juveniles, and offenders who commit male-on-male rape, commit such offence behaviors to interact and develop a pseudo-intimacy with the victim.

Classifying Female sex offenders in terms of a dominant behavioral theme

The current study proposed that the behaviors during an offence would reflect one dominant theme of behavior. An offence may involve behaviors from more than one theme, but as they are psychologically distinct, it was hypothesized that the majority would be able to be assigned to one dominant theme. In order to identify dominant themes of behavior within the sample, the same criteria used by Almond et al. (2013) were adopted. The percentage of occurrence of the behaviors in the dominant theme had to be greater than the sum of the percentage occurrence for the other two themes.

Each of the 73 cases were examined individually in order to examine whether the offender could be assigned to one dominant theme of behavior. The percentage of Control, Hostility and Involvement behaviors was calculated. Using this method 84% (61 out of 73 total cases) of the offences could be assigned to a dominant behavioral theme, 38 (52%) as Involvement, 12 (17%) Control and 11 (15%) Hostility.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate variations in behavior displayed by FSO's, as previous research has demonstrated the heterogeneity of these offenders (Nathan & Ward, 2002). The study's first hypothesis was that behaviors displayed by FSO could be distinguished into three distinct themes of Control, Hostility and Involvement. The results of the SSA indicate that offence behavior could be differentiated into the three hypothesized themes, based predominantly on modes of interaction with the victim. Each theme is, therefore, distinguishable and contains a subset of theoretically related behaviors which significantly differ from that of the other two behavioral themes.

The second hypothesis of the study proposed that the behaviours exhibited by FSO's during the offence would reflect one dominant behavioural theme. As the majority of offences (84%) could be allocated to one dominant theme the hypothesis was supported. Furthermore, this allocation of behaviours provides empirical support that the research has developed a multivariate model of FSO. The model is able to distinguish one set of offences from another, thus one group of female offenders from another. Thus, the results of the study provide support for the notion that FSO's, like other sexual offender groupings, are a heterogenous group and should be examined within their own right (Gannon et al., 2014).

FSO's showed a high proportion of dominant Involvement theme (52%), which saw the offender attempting to develop a pseudo-intimate, consensual relationship with the victim. The offender would often use various types of non-forceful techniques in attempting to gain compliance and consent from the victim ranging from blackmail, giving alcohol, buying gifts and even asking if the victim wanted to consent to sex. The offence seems to revolve around the interaction with the victim and is less about the sexual gratification, thus replicating other models and pathways reported within FSO offending, such as the teacher-lover theme within Matthews et al. (1989).

In contrast, in the exploration of male-on-male sexual assaults, hostility was seen as the highest proportion within the dominant themes (42%: Almond et al., 2013). Therefore, although both offender groupings were most likely to display a dominant theme that was less about the sexual gratification, for FSO's this was about the development of a consensual relationship, for male-on-males the focus was more on the venting of anger and frustration. Interestingly, the Hostility theme for FSO's was the least frequent dominant theme (15%). This finding reinforces the importance of creating FSO models which are developed and tested on FSO's (Gannon et al., 2014), as although the current sample could be classified under the same three themes used for other sexual offending populations, these themes may differ in their specific behaviours and relative dominance

Potential limitations

The key thing to note is that the data was extracted using archived case files publically available through legal databases. These cases contained both UK and US FSO's and as such there is likely to be differences in various aspects of the

investigation, prosecution and reporting of the case which have not been recorded or controlled for within the study. However, Porter and Alison (2004/2006) have defended the use of law reports as a data source, arguing that it is probably more accurate than police data, as they contain a variety of evidential sources which are triangulated and must undergo stringent legal scrutiny.

Although the study has developed a multivariate model, able to differentiate between females who sexually harm, there are potential limitations of the research. Firstly, sociocultural issues with the reporting and identifying FSO have resulted in the sample only investigating a small proportion of possible offenders (Allen, 1991; Denov, 2001). The small sample size of the study (N=73) is also a result of the low prevalence of FSO in the criminal population (Cortoni et al., 2010). Consequently, in order to analyze a sufficient amount of offence behaviors, multiple offences by the same offender were included in the sample. This contrasts previous research (Almond et al., 2013; Canter et al., 2003) and may cause weighting being given to those frequent offenders who displayed a particular behavior across a variety of offences.

Regardless of these limitations, increases in sample size resulting from access to further data (i.e. data from rape crisis centers) may result in different percentages of dominant themes. However, the fundamental structure of behaviors is not predicted to change as each theme is psychologically distinct, demonstrating the stability of the multivariate model (Almond et al., 2013; Almond & Canter, 2007).

Implications

A range of important implications for the prevention, identification and treatment of FSO emerge as a result of this multivariate model. Specific female typologies, for

instance “teacher-lover” (Matthews et al., 1989), propose the occurrence of particular offence behaviors stemming from a student-teacher relationship, or similar care-giving occupations. A vast amount of these behaviors, i.e. the giving of gifts, were found in the Involvement theme. Additionally, the majority of FSO in this theme offended against a student or an individual they had a care-giving role for, as reported within Matthews et al. (1989) study. Male sexual offending research has shown that male offenders seek occupations that involve children, therefore, findings suggest this may be a commonality among female offenders too (Faller, 1988; Finklehor, Williams & Burns, 1988). Preventive methods such as closely observing student-teacher relationships, and detecting potential offence behaviors associated with FSO in this theme, such as grooming behaviors, can help avert progressions of noncontact sexual behavior to contact sexual behavior. Thus, helping prevent the victimization of future targets.

Additional implications from this model may affect investigative efforts by helping police or other legal bodies distinguish between one set of sexual offences from another. If the model can distinguish between offences, it can also determine similarities in offence behavior, thus assisting in linking a series of crimes to an individual female perpetrator. The model also has potential implications for recidivism, and may assist in the identification of risk for reoffending in each theme. For instance, offenders in theme Hostility theme may be more likely to commit further violent offences due to the high levels of aggression shown in the offence.

By identifying differences in FSO, clinical treatment can be tailored to be responsive to the variations that exist between offenders in each behavioral theme. For instance, FSO’s in the Hostility theme may require clinical intervention to address their anger management issues. However, offenders in Control may not require such

treatment as there is no evidence of aggression or violence during their crimes.

Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach to treatment is not appropriate, and the differentiation of offenders enabled by this model will assist in adapting treatment to fit the individual needs of each offender.

Future research

In conclusion, the current model demonstrates that FSO's can be differentiated into the three themes: Involvement, Control and Hostility. Future research should therefore be aimed at testing the homology of the characteristics of FSO in each theme with their offence behaviors (Mokros & Alison, 2002). By furthering the research findings that offenders commit crimes in a similar style, i.e. offenders in the same behavioral theme have similar background characteristics, this could potentially provide a useful investigative tool in profiling females who sexually harm.

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