Female Sex Offenders: An Analysis of Crime Scene Behaviors

Louise Almond, Michelle A. McManus, Susan Giles, and Elisabeth Houston

Abstract
The concept of the female sex offender (FSO) is a relatively new phenomenon within the social research literature. Studies of female rape, male rape, pedophilia, 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 behavior: Hostility, Impersonal, and Involvement. Multidimensional analysis is carried out on 35 crime scene behaviors of 73 FSOs from U.K. and U.S. law reports. The proposed framework was found to be a useful way of classifying FSOs with 84% displaying a dominant theme. These resulted in 52% classified as displaying Involvement, 17% as Control, and 15% as Hostility. Finally, the implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords
sexual assault, female offenders, women offenders

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 nonviolent, nonsexual,

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caregivers have caused a hindrance in the reporting and identification of counterstereotypical sexual crimes committed by FSO (Denov, 2001; Hislop, 2001; Wijkman, Bijleveld, & Hendriks, 2010). Researchers suggest that FSO may go undetected because they engage in offense behaviors during conventional caregiving activities, such as bathing an infant (Allen, 1991; Ferguson & Meehan, 2005). As a consequence, the literature on females who sexually harm is significantly underresearched, especially in comparison with male sexual offending (Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Mathews, Matthews, & Speltz, 1989; Wijkman, Bijleveld, & Hendriks, 2011).

In addition, 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 offenses (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 United Kingdom, rates from 2011 indicate that females accounted for 1.8% of prosecutions for sexual offenses (Home Office, 2013). The Home Office (2013) also reported that in 2011, there were 103 females serving custodial sentences for sexual offenses, with this rate 15% lower than in 2010.

Thus, figures indicate that 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 as 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 identity. Bunting (2006) argued that this results in an increased risk for the victim to become a sexual offender in the future, when compared with 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 offense behavior (Marshall & Hall, 1995; Ward, Polaschek, & Beech, 2006). The age range of FSO has been proposed to be anywhere between 13 and 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 offense (Vandiver & Walker, 2002). In addition, 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% to 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; Mathews 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 offenses committed by FSO has been found to range from rape, sexual penetration, to aiding and abetting, with numerous offenses 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 behaviors, 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 was established to be more likely to perform oral sex on the victim or force the victim into oral copulation.

Further research identifies other sexual offenses committed by FSO, including noncontact crimes (i.e., obscene phone calls and exhibitionism), prostitution, and child pornography, indicating the wide differences in FSO behavior (Knopp & Lackey, 1987). As a result of this heterogeneity, a number of offender typologies have been derived to condense and generalize this information on FSO (Sandler & Freeman, 2007). Offender typologies expand upon the one-dimensional approach, that is, using one factor such as offender age to differentiate between offenders, and empirically classify characteristics of sex offenders and their offenses (Almond & Canter, 2007; Robertiello & Terry, 2007). Consequently, typologies are beneficial tools in understanding offending patterns.

**Female Typologies**

Mathews et al. (1989) proposed one of the earliest and well-known female typologies and identified three categories of FSO: (a) “teacher-lover,”
(b) “predisposed,” and (c) “male-coerced.” This classification scheme was developed from 16 FSO and centers on offense 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 caregiving role, with offenses stemming from a “student–teacher” relationship. These FSO may use different coercive methods to control the victim, that is, 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 offenses, without the assistance of a male partner, and victimizes her own children. Common offense behaviors 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 offense generally involves a passive FSO who feels powerless and emotionally dependent on the male cop perpetrator (Cortoni et al., 2010). Victims of such offenses 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 FSO. The dominant category of this typology, labeled “heterosexual nurturers,” is comparable with Mathews et al.’s (1989) “teacher-lover” and includes offenders who target early pubescent males of which they may have a caregiving role toward. These FSO experience a lack of intimacy in adulthood and consequently seek emotional compensation from their victims. The next category, the “noncriminal homosexual offender,” involves FSO, who are unlikely to have a previous criminal record or use violence during the offense. These perpetrators are predicted to victimize females in their early adolescence.

“Female sexual predators” is Vandiver and Kercher’s (2004) third category, which comprises of FSO with a preference for prepubescent males. Offenders in this group are likely to be arrested for subsequent sexual offenses 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 offense and are likely to have a preestablished 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,” is 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, Rose, & Ward, 2008) and testing their descriptive model of female sexual offending (DMFSO) which was initially based on 22 U.K. FSO, with their follow-up study exploring 36 North American FSO. Like the other models described above, the DMFSO is a model that describes a series of behavioral, cognitive, affective, and contextual factors that are associated with FSO. The DMFSO includes three pathways: Explicit Approach, Directed Avoidant, and Implicit Disorganizing. The Explicit-Approach pathway accounted for the largest proportion of their sample (50%) with the main goals of their offending centered on sexual gratification, intimacy, and revenge. They describe an example of a female offender 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 behavior. 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 Disorganized pathway included FSO with diverse motivations and goals for their sexual offending. Most of this group were impulsive and disorganized 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 an investigative perspective. Although Mathews et al.’s (1989) typology did briefly explore some crime scene behaviors 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 (2004), although devised with a much larger sample, included little information regarding specific offense behaviors, with categories defined by the offenders sexuality. The offenders’ sexuality is likely to be information unknown to police during an investigation. Thus, no models have yet explored in detail FSO offense behaviors. The in-depth examination of offense behaviors may assist in police investigations and offending profiling.

**Themes of Offense Behaviors**

Research into male and juvenile sexual offenders has thoroughly examined offense behaviors by observing the various modes of interaction between the
Researchers propose that variations between different types of sex offenders are reflected in differences in crime scene behaviors, 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 labeling of the themes, three key themes have been consistently found which relate to specific crime scene behaviors of sex offenders (see Table 1): Control, Hostility, and Involvement (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2014).

**Table 1. Themes Identified in Previous Studies.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Type of Sex Offender</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Hostility</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canter (1994)</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>Victim as object</td>
<td>Victim as vehicle</td>
<td>Victim as person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canter, Bennell, Alison, and Reddy (2003)</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>Control theft</td>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almond and Canter (2007)</td>
<td>Juvenile</td>
<td>Victim as object</td>
<td>Victim as vehicle</td>
<td>Victim as person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almond, McManus, and Ward (2014)</td>
<td>Male on male</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathews, Matthews, and Speltz (1989)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male coerced</td>
<td>Predisposed</td>
<td>Teacher/lover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Control. Within the Control theme, offenders often display a lack of empathy for their victims, exploiting their victims not only to achieve sexual gratification but may also get additional personal gains such as stealing items from the victim (Almond & Canter, 2007; Canter, 1994; Canter, Bennell, Alison, & Reddy, 2003).
Hence, these offenders are usually generalist in their overall offending behavior. The control theme is comparable with the male-coerced theme by Mathews et al. (1989); the homosexual criminal by Vandiver and Kercher (2004); the Directed-Avoidant pathway by Gannon et al. (2014); the object theme identified by Almond, McManus, and Ward (2014); the victim as object theme identified by Canter (1994) and 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 and physical and/or verbal violence (Canter et al., 1998). The violence and behavior of the offender toward the victim usually goes beyond what is required for them to be able to commit the offense; 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 Mathews et al.’s (1989) study 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 victims (Almond et al., 2014). This offense 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 offender, and these offenses may take place over a sustained period of time, rather than a one-off opportunistic attack (Almond & Canter, 2007). The theme of “teacher-lover” within Mathews et al.’s (1989) study replicates many of the behaviors within the Involvement theme. Similarly, the Heterosexual Nurturer from Vandiver and Kercher’s (2004) study displays the key behavior of the offender believing their relationship is reflecting true love. The desire for social contact is the main purpose for the offense.

Aims

The behavioral 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 et al., 2014), 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 (Mathews 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 offense behavior 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 FSO crime scene behaviors. Second, the study will examine whether individual offenses involve one dominant behavioral theme. It is therefore proposed that the resulting multivariate model will be able to identify any underlying structure of the behaviors of FSO and will help to distinguish one set of assaults from another.

**Method**

**Sample**

A sample of 73 FSO were analyzed in the study, with a mean age of 32.8 years ($SD = 8.2$) and an age range of 18 to 60 years. The mean age of the victims was 11.7 years ($SD = 4.77$), with an age range of 1 to 18 years; 68% were male. Multiple victims were reported in 29 cases, as specific behaviors were often recorded for the individual case not for specific victims; therefore, each offender was only coded once in the data set (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 FSO were related to their victims (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 (United States and United Kingdom) were reviewed, with the following key search terms: “female,” “sexual assault,” “child sex offense,” “rape,” and “child molestation.” The legal reports are published in law journals and provide summaries of the case details, including offender characteristics, victim characteristics, and crime scene behaviors. Although previous studies examining crime scene behaviors on the whole use victim statements (Almond et al., 2014; Canter et al., 2003), 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 that are triangulated and must undergo stringent legal scrutiny.
**Crime Scene Behavior 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 nonsexual 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 (Almond & Canter, 2007; Almond et al., 2014; Canter, 1994; Canter et al., 2003), the present study aimed to investigate the crime scene behaviors displayed by female offenders. The data were 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, 1973). 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**

An 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 represents Vectors 1 and 2 of the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>conunder</td>
<td>Offender touched/fondled the victim’s genitals under/through their clothes</td>
<td>19 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coperp</td>
<td>Offender had a male coprerpeterator during the offense</td>
<td>12 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>watched</td>
<td>Offender was present/watched the sexual assault</td>
<td>10 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>obey</td>
<td>Offender obeyed coprerpeterator’s demands during the offense</td>
<td>8 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>solicit</td>
<td>Offender tried to or solicited the victim</td>
<td>7 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>facil</td>
<td>Offender helped facilitate the offense, that is, held the victim down while the coprerpeterator carried out the assault</td>
<td>7 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incite</td>
<td>Offender incited/encouraged the victim to allow the sexual assault</td>
<td>7 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>porn</td>
<td>Offender made child pornography from the offense</td>
<td>6 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>removed</td>
<td>Offender removed the victim’s clothes</td>
<td>6 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>digitalpen</td>
<td>Offender digitally penetrated the victim’s vagina</td>
<td>6 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offvicbreast</td>
<td>Offender touched/fondled the victim’s breasts</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>force</td>
<td>Offender used physical force on the victim</td>
<td>12 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>abuse</td>
<td>Offender caused injuries during the offense</td>
<td>7 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>threat</td>
<td>Offender verbally threatened the victim</td>
<td>6 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>viobeyond</td>
<td>Offender used violence beyond necessary to control the victim, that is, a weapon</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>objectpen</td>
<td>Offender penetrated victim with an object</td>
<td>3 (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 1. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>more inc</td>
<td>Offender abused the victim on more than one occasion</td>
<td>42 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>penis</td>
<td>Offender was vaginally penetrated by the victim’s penis</td>
<td>38 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>oralvigen</td>
<td>Offender performed oral sex on the victim</td>
<td>20 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>texting</td>
<td>Offender texted the victim</td>
<td>20 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>flirted</td>
<td>Offender flirted with the victim</td>
<td>18 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sexting</td>
<td>Offender sent sexually explicit texts to the victim</td>
<td>14 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kissed</td>
<td>Offender kissed the victim</td>
<td>13 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vicintox</td>
<td>Victim was intoxicated</td>
<td>12 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>alcohol</td>
<td>Offender gave the victim alcohol</td>
<td>12 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ringing</td>
<td>Offender rang the victim/spoke on the phone</td>
<td>12 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>drugs</td>
<td>Offender gave the victim drugs</td>
<td>11 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>love</td>
<td>Offenders wrote the victim love letters or told the victim they loved them</td>
<td>10 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gifts</td>
<td>Offender gave the victim gifts</td>
<td>10 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>emotional</td>
<td>Offender emotionally blackmailed the victim</td>
<td>10 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>photos</td>
<td>Offender sent sexually explicit photos to the victim</td>
<td>10 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offintox</td>
<td>Offender was intoxicated</td>
<td>9 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dates</td>
<td>Offender took the victim out on “dates”</td>
<td>8 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asked</td>
<td>Offender asked the victim whether they wanted sex</td>
<td>8 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vicoffbreast</td>
<td>Victim touched/fondled the offender’s breasts</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

three-dimensional space, and 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 study’s aim was to examine whether the crime scene behaviors of FSO 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 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 also higher than other published models in this area that have used this coefficient, such as Canter et al. (2003) and Almond and Canter (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 victim’s genitals under/through their clothes” (26%) and “offender had male coperpetrator” (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%).

**Control.** Those behaviors which are at the left in Figure 1 demonstrate the offenders’ control over the offense and their victims, in terms of sexual behaviors “offender touched/fondled the victim’s genitals under/through their clothes,” “offender digitally penetrated the victim’s vagina,” and “offender touched the victim’s breasts,” and also the instrumental gratification gained from the offense “made child pornography” and “solicited the victim” potentially using their victims for monetary gain. Although in these cases there may be a “male coperpetrator” and the female offender may be “present/watch an offense take place,” they still play an active role in the assault by “facilitating the offense,” “encouraging the victim,” “removing the victim’s clothes,” and “obeying the coperpetrator’s demands.”

Much of the behaviors within the Control theme (see Table 2) emphasize the offender interacting with the victim as a sexual object, with this key behavior reflecting other models such as Canter’s (1994) “victim as object,” and Almond et al. (2014) control theme’s. 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 that the FSO are using the victims to satisfy their own sexual gratification. FSO 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 offense” suggest that the FSO use their targets to make a profit.

However, these behaviors generally occur in the presence of a male coperpetrator. Therefore, this theme is largely comparable with Mathews et al.’s (1989) “male-coerced” typology, as suggested by the presence of behaviors
such as “offender had a male coperpetrator during the offense,” “offender was present/watched the sexual assault,” “offender helped facilitate the offense,” 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 coperpetrators.

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 to obtain intimate with their male co-offender, who was often abusive.

**Hostility.** Those behaviors at the bottom of Figure 1 suggest the offenders were using their victims 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 victims: “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 (2014) “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 to force 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 (Almond et al., 2014), 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 with Mathews et al.’s (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 offense which is very interpersonal with the offenders attempting to form
some pseudo-intimate relationship with their victims were as follows: “victim was abused on more than one occasion,” “offender asks the victim to have sex with them,” and “offender buy gifts, flirts, rings, texts, sends explicit photos, and tells the victims they love them.” The variables, “offender took their victims on dates,” “offender intoxicated,” “victim intoxicated,” and “victim given alcohol and drugs,” indicate the social aspects of these offenses (see Table 2). The offenders in these cases may view their victims as being able to consent to their behaviors “offender penetrated by victim’s penis,” “kissing,” and “offender performed oral sex on the victim,” and may even believe that it is true love indicated by the variables “writes love letters to the victim” and “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”) reiterate the importance of the relationship and interaction with the victim. The expression of love toward the victim is also consistent with the female typologies of “teacher-lover” and “heterosexual-nurturer,” which propose that the offenders may believe their relationship is “true love” (Mathews 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 offense and victim type (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist, 2006; Sheehan & Sullivan, 2010): Similarities in offense 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., 2014) demonstrate that males, juveniles, and offenders who commit male-on-male rape commit such offense behaviors to interact and develop a pseudo-intimacy with the victim.

**Classifying FSO in Terms of a Dominant Behavioral Theme**

The current study proposed that the behaviors during an offense would reflect one dominant theme of behavior. An offense 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. To identify dominant themes of behavior within the sample, the same criteria used by Almond et al. (2014) 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 was examined individually 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 offenses 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, 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 offense 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 that significantly differ from that of the other two behavioral themes.

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

FSO 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 nonforceful techniques in attempting to gain compliance and consent from the victim ranging from blackmail, giving alcohol, buying gifts, and even asking whether the victim wanted to consent to sex. The offense 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 Mathews 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., 2014). Therefore, although both offender groupings were most likely to display a dominant theme that was less about the sexual gratification, for FSO this was about the development of a consensual relationship, and for male-on-males the focus was more on the venting of anger and frustration. Interestingly, the Hostility theme for FSO was the least frequent dominant theme (15%). This finding reinforces the importance of creating FSO models that are developed and tested on FSO (Gannon et al., 2014); 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 behaviors and relative dominance.

**Potential Limitations**

The key thing to note is that the data were extracted using archived case files publicly available through legal databases. These cases contained both U.K. and U.S. FSO and as such there is likely to be differences in various aspects of the investigation, prosecution, and reporting of the case that 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. First, 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, to analyze a sufficient amount of offense behaviors, multiple offenses by the same offender were included in the sample. This contrasts previous research (Almond et al., 2014; Canter et al., 2003) and may cause weighting being given to those frequent offenders who displayed a particular behavior across a variety of offenses.

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 & Canter, 2007; Almond et al., 2014).
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” (Mathews et al., 1989), propose the occurrence of particular offense behaviors stemming from a student–teacher relationship or similar caregiving occupations. A vast amount of these behaviors, that is, the giving of gifts, were found in the Involvement theme. In addition, the majority of FSO in this theme offended against a student or an individual they had a caregiving role for, as reported within Mathews et al.’s (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; Finkelhor, Williams, & Burns, 1988). Preventive methods such as closely observing student–teacher relationships, and detecting potential offense 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 prevents 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 offenses from another. If the model can distinguish between offenses, it can also determine similarities in offense 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 Hostility theme may be more likely to commit further violent offenses due to the high levels of aggression shown in the offense.

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 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 can be differentiated into 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 offense behaviors (Mokros & Alison, 2002). By furthering the research findings that offenders commit crimes in a similar style, that
is, 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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