

MODUS OPERANDI AND SITUATIONAL ASPECTS IN  
ADOLESCENT SEXUAL OFFENSES AGAINST CHILDREN: A  
FURTHER EXAMINATION

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## ABSTRACT

The relationship between situational factors and the modus operandi of 103 adolescents involved in sexual offenses against children (12 year old or less) is analyzed. Situational factors taken into account in this study are the location of the crime, the offender-victim relationship and the presence of deviant sexual fantasies involving the victim prior to the offense. Modus operandi strategies were measured on the basis of participants' responses to Kaufman's Modus Operandi Questionnaire. Results indicate that modus operandi strategies are influenced by situational factors. Interestingly, it shows that the offender's home (when no one else is home) is likely to be the place and the situation for adolescent offenders to adopt manipulative strategies. Suggestions are made regarding future modus operandi studies.

**KEY WORDS:** Sexual offending, sexual offenders, modus operandi, situational factors, location of the crime.

## INTRODUCTION

According to rational choice theorists (Clarke & Cornish, 2001; Cornish & Clarke, 1986; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994), even though decision-making may be constrained by time, cognitive abilities, and by the availability of relevant information (Cornish & Clarke, 1987; see also Johnson & Payne, 1986), offenders are rational individuals who make choices in an attempt to minimize their risks of apprehension and maximize their gains when committing crimes. In that sense, offenders' behavior is purposive and aimed at achieving various outcomes such as sexual gratification, money, excitement, peer approval, and dominance over others (Clarke & Cornish, 2001). Over the years, studies conducted on the modus operandi of sexual offenders against children showed that these offenders exhibit some rationality in that they adopt strategies along a temporal continuum (e.g. to gain trust, to gain cooperation and to maintain victims' silence following the onset of abuse) to commit their crimes (e.g., Elliott, Browne, & Kilcoyne, 1995; Kaufman, Hilliker, & Daleiden, 1996; Leclerc, Proulx, & McKibben, 2005; van Dam, 2001; Young, 1997). Moreover, in the sexual offending area, researchers developed an offending process model for sexual offenders against children (e.g., Ward, Loudon, Hudson, & Marshall, 1995; Ward, Polaschek, & Beech, 2006). In this model, modus operandi strategies are an integral part of a seduction process which sexual offenders follow to commit their crimes. Interestingly, the authors argue that there are three different foci or goals in a sexual offense, which in turn affect the way the offense itself is carried out (offender's focus, victim's focus and mutual focus). The model also takes into account the contributing role of particular circumstances (e.g., victim vulnerability, offender intoxication) in sexual offenses. Unfortunately, this

offending process model is mainly designed to describe the psychological processes that drive relapses in sexual offenders. It only provides cues about the specific strategies that can be adopted by offenders as well as which situational factors might influence the choices of modus operandi strategies. The above issues can be addressed following a rational choice perspective.

A crucial feature of the rational choice perspective is that it emphasizes the importance of behaviors adopted by the offender to better comprehend the “how” of the crime. From this perspective, analyses of the decisions and behaviors related to the crime-commission process of sexual offenders against children have been carried out (e.g., Beauregard, Proulx, Rossmo, Leclerc, & Allaire, in press; Leclerc, Carpentier, & Proulx, 2006; Proulx, Ouimet, & Lachaine, 1995). Specifically, using multiple correspondence and hierarchical cluster analyses, Beauregard et al. (in press) identified a total of three different crime-commission scripts, that is, coercive (i.e., strategies consisting of using physical force, threats or violence), manipulative (i.e., strategies consisting of manipulating the victim such as giving gifts or desensitizing the victim to sexual contact) and non-persuasive, that is, no particular strategy (i.e., strategies consisting of acting directly on the victim). Overall, this study suggests that sexual offenders can switch from one strategy to another according to situational factors, such as the crime location, when committing crimes.

Another important feature of the rational choice perspective is that it emphasizes situational factors that may influence offenders’ choices and behaviors. These factors may be included in what Cornish and Clarke (1987) called the “choice-structuring properties” of a crime. According to these authors, “Such properties provide a basis for

selecting among alternative courses of action and, hence, effectively *structure* the offender's *choice*" (1987, p.935). In sexual offenses against children, crucial situational factors or choice-structuring properties might be the location of the crime, the offender-victim relationship, and the presence of deviant sexual fantasies involving the victim before the offense (for a review of factors associated with modus operandi, see Leclerc, Proulx, & Beauregard, in press). For instance, the offender may be more willing to sexually abuse a child in a private location such as in his home than in the victim's home because of the lower risks of apprehension. The offender may also offend against a child who is a family member and who in turn, is more accessible and can be sexually abused more easily. In this situation, the offender may benefit from his status and authority as a family member (Kaufman, Holmberg, Orts, McCrady, Rotzien, Daleiden, & Hilliker, 1998). Finally, offenders with deviant sexual fantasies before the offense may be more likely to adopt violence or in contrast, to adopt manipulation to commit their offenses, that is, more sophisticated modus operandi strategies.

No studies have clearly uncovered the links between modus operandi and the location of the crime in sexual offenses against children. However, the location of the crime has been shown to be an important situational factor to consider in this type of offense (Wortley & Smallbone, 2006). Sexual offenses against children have been found to be committed in private as well as in public locations, but mostly in private places such as the offender's home (Elliott et al., 1995; Lang & Frenzel, 1988; Wortley & Smallbone, 2006). Moreover, it was found that offenders frequently abused children in the victim's home (Elliott et al., 1995; Lang & Frenzel, 1988), in an isolated place in the victim's home (e.g. basement), and at a friend or relative's home (Wortley & Smallbone, 2006).

In an exploratory study on the spatial behavior of sexual offenders against children, it was observed that the offender's home appears to be the best possible location to commit an offense because it offers several advantages over other locations (Ouimet & Proulx, 1994). For instance, in his home, the offender has the opportunity to engage in satisfying sexual interactions without interference. This is consistent with a study conducted by Beauregard, Rossmo, & Proulx (in press) in which 35% of sexual offenders were found to have specifically chosen an isolated area (such as the offender's home) in order to prevent being seen or being disturbed by witnesses, and to have some time alone with the victim. Moreover, with the same sample, it was shown that the location of the crime is relevant to understand the strategies adopted by sexual offenders (Beauregard et al., in press). As an example, offenders who adopt manipulative strategies were more likely to commit their crimes in indoor locations familiar to them (their home or workplace), than offenders adopting coercive or non-persuasive strategies.

On the other hand, modus operandi studies on sexual offending against children already show that the offender-victim relationship may structure the choices of strategies adopted to sexually abuse a child. Specifically, it was found that adolescent intrafamilial offenders adopted certain types of strategies across modus operandi stages (e.g. giving gifts to gain victim's trust) more frequently than extrafamilial offenders (Kaufman et al., 1996). Both adolescent and adult extrafamilial offenders more frequently adopted alcohol and drugs strategies to gain victim's cooperation than intrafamilial offenders (Kaufman et al., 1998).

As for deviant sexual fantasies, previous studies indicated that adult offenders with deviant sexual fantasies which involved the victim (48 hours prior to their offense),

were more likely to adopt a manipulative, rather than a non-persuasive strategy (Leclerc et al., 2006). However, this is somewhat inconsistent with results showing that adolescent offenders who used a high level of violence were those who reported a higher frequency of deviant sexual fantasies (Carter, Kaufman, Barber, Galindo, & Marnane, 2002). The presence of deviant sexual fantasies was also found to increase the likelihood of adopting force during sexual offenses against children committed by adolescent offenders (Carpentier, Proulx, & Lussier, 2005). Moreover, in another study, offenders' sexual fantasies was not associated with the adoption of different sets of manipulative strategies (with the exception of drug/alcohol use for adult offenders) for both adolescent and adult offenders (Carter, Kaufman, Estes, & Stotler-Turner, 2005). It suggests that adolescent offenders who have deviant sexual fantasies might be highly motivated to commit sexual offenses, but without any sophisticated modus operandi strategies.

The above studies suggest that the location of the crime, the offender-victim relationship and the presence of deviant sexual fantasies are factors worth examining in order to understand the strategies adopted by offenders in sexual offenses against children. However, the link between the location of the crime and modus operandi strategies in adolescent sexual offenses against children has not been examined. It is not clear if adolescent offenders display a different modus operandi according to where they sexually abuse their victims. Moreover, the links between offender-victim relationship, the presence of deviant sexual fantasies and modus operandi deserve further analysis. First, the link between offender-victim relationship and modus operandi strategies is complex. For instance, it is not known if adolescent offenders who abused both intrafamilial and extrafamilial victims adopt more sophisticated strategies than exclusive

offenders. Second, because there are inconsistent results with the studies that analyzed the link between deviant sexual fantasies and modus operandi, it is not clear if offenders who have deviant sexual fantasies are more likely to be sophisticated offenders and/or to adopt coercion as well. Hence, the aim of this study is to examine the links between three situational factors (location of the crime, offender-victim relationship, and deviant sexual fantasies) relevant to sexual offenses against children and the modus operandi adopted by adolescent offenders. Because so little is known about the relationship between situational factors and modus operandi strategies, the present study was undertaken as exploratory.

## METHOD

### PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

The sample consisted of 103 adolescents (between 13 and 17 years old) who committed at least one official sexual offense against a child (less than 12 years old) at least three years younger than themselves. The mean age of the participants was 14.8 (Range = 12-17 years; SD = 1.34) and 22.3% of them abused only boys, 59.2% only girls, and 18.4% both boys and girls. The participants were recruited from eight treatment programs operating in the province of Quebec, Canada. All participants were undergoing treatment for having committed a sexual offense and were told that their participation in this study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time for any reason without negative consequences. Participants were also assured complete anonymity and were asked to sign a consent form advising them that the information gathered would be used for research purposes only. At the time that the questionnaire



was administered, participants had already completed an average of three months of treatment, which enhances the validity of the results as offenders involved in treatment have been found to be less likely to engage in denial and exhibit cognitive distortions (Abel, Becker, Mittelman, Cunningham-Rathner, Rouleau, & Murphy, 1987).

## MEASURE

A French version of the Modus Operandi Questionnaire (MOQ) developed by Kaufman (1994) was used in this study (the procedure followed for the translation and cross-cultural validation of this questionnaire was the same used for the translation of an earlier version of the MOQ used in another study, see Leclerc et al., 2005). The MOQ is a self-report instrument that assesses the modus operandi of sexual offenders against children. This questionnaire allows for data to be collected on all modus operandi stages, from gaining access to the victim to maintaining their silence about the sexual abuse. It also allows for data to be collected on factors such as the location of the crime. On a Likert-type scale (0 = never; 3 = almost always), participants are asked to indicate how often they had adopted modus operandi strategies as well as used different locations for taking children for sexual contact. Using samples of adolescent offenders, the internal consistency of the modus operandi scales derived from the MOQ has been shown to be good (Cronbach's alpha ranged from .73 to .93, Kaufman et al., 1998).

For the present study, five modus operandi scales were created from the MOQ. Three of those (giving love, attention and gifts to gain victim's trust, desensitizing the victim and giving gifts and privileges to gain victim's cooperation) have been previously conceptualized by Kaufman, McCrady, Holmberg, Rotzien, Orts, Hilliker et al. (1997).

The other scales (emotional blackmail to keep the victim silent and violence behavior) were also constructed from the items of the MOQ. Specifically, from Kaufman's original "benefits/consequences for the offender and victim scale", we constructed another scale which excludes items that are not behaviors (e.g. hoping the victims thought it was their fault). This scale was created because it is more theoretically relevant to include only items that refer to strategies adopted by offenders for the purpose of our study. It should be noted that both the original and revised scales have similar internal consistency ( $\alpha = .90$  and  $.89$ , respectively). Finally, a violence behavior scale was specifically constructed to investigate the possible links between situational factors and violent behaviors before or during sexual episodes.

Table I presents these scales as well as examples of questions from the MOQ. For each scale, a measure of internal consistency is provided (Cronbach's alpha). The most frequent sets of strategies adopted were giving love, attention and gifts to gain trust (88.2%) and desensitizing the victim to sexual contact to gain cooperation (85.4%). Giving gifts and privileges to gain cooperation (43.7%), maintaining the victim's silence by emotional blackmail strategies (51.5%) and violent behaviors (20.4%) were less frequently adopted. The mean frequency of these sets of strategies is 10.18 (Range = 0-36; SD=10.31), 6.94 (Range = 0-27; SD=7.59), 1.98 (Range = 0-11; SD=3.13), 2.96 (Range = 0-15; SD=4.35), and .71 (Range = 0-12; SD=1.95), respectively. There was one missing case for the giving love, attention and gifts set of strategies ( $n=102$ ). Because the distribution was highly skewed, the giving gifts and privileges, the emotional blackmail and the violent behavior scales were dichotomized (0 = absent, 1 = present).

INSERT TABLE I

Situational factors used in this study were also derived from the MOQ. For the location of the crime, adolescent offenders reported that their home was the private place where the offenses occurred most often (77.1%). This was followed by their home once again, but specifically when nobody else was home (47.9%), by an isolated place in the victims' home (someone else was home) (34.4%), by an isolated place in their own home (someone else was home) (33.3%), and by a friend's or relative's home (32.3%). Once again, because the distribution was highly skewed, all location variables were included in the analyses as dichotomized data (0 = absent, 1 = present). There were 7 missing cases for each location variables (n=96). Finally, the offender-victim relationship was exclusively intrafamilial (children were related to the offender and/or lived with him) for 63.1% of offenders, exclusively extrafamilial for 18.4% of offenders, and both intrafamilial and extrafamilial for 18.4% of offenders. As for deviant sexual fantasies, only 30.1% of adolescents reported the presence of such fantasies involving their victim prior to the offense.

## RESULTS

In the following analyses (i.e., from Table II to Table IV), T-Test (giving love/attention/gifts to gain trust, desensitizing the victim to sexual contact to gain cooperation) and chi-square analyses (giving gifts and privileges to gain cooperation, maintaining the victim silence by emotional blackmail strategies and adopting violent behaviors) were completed. The giving love/attention/gifts and the desensitizing the victim to sexual contact sets of strategies were logged to avoid problems of homogeneity

of variances when testing group differences. The mean and standard deviation are presented for these variables. Percentages are presented for giving gifts and privileges, maintaining the victim silence by emotional blackmail and adopting violent behaviors.

As shown in Table II, initial analyses examined the relationship between the location of the crime and modus operandi strategies. For each type of location, the sample was divided in two groups, offenders who did not use the location and offenders who did use the location. Strategies consisting of giving love/attention/gifts to gain trust were more likely to be adopted in the following locations: isolated place in victims' home (someone else was home) ( $t(93) = 2.94, p < 0.01$ ), offender's home (when nobody else was home) ( $t(93) = 4.38, p < 0.001$ ), and isolated place in offender's home (someone else was home) ( $t(93) = 4.41, p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, strategies consisting of desensitizing the victim and giving gifts and privileges to gain cooperation were more likely to be adopted in the offender's home (when nobody else was home) ( $t(94) = 4.37, p < 0.001; \chi^2(1) = 15.01, p < 0.001$ , respectively). Results also show that emotional blackmail strategies to maintain the victim silent were more likely to be adopted in the following locations: offender's home ( $\chi^2(1) = 7.04, p < 0.01$ ), offender's home (when no one else is home) ( $\chi^2(1) = 8.29, p < 0.01$ ), and isolated place in offender's home (when somebody else is home) ( $\chi^2(1) = 3.53, p < 0.10$ ). Finally, Table II indicates that violent behaviors might be more likely to be adopted in an isolated place in victim's home (when somebody else was home) ( $\chi^2(1) = 2.73, p < 0.10$ ).

INSERT TABLE II

As shown in Table III, subsequent analyses examined the relationship between the offender-victim relationship and modus operandi strategies. Adolescent offenders who abused both intrafamilial and extrafamilial victims are by definition repeat offenders (40% of all offenders in this sample). As a result, one control variable (multiple victims, 0= one victim, 1= more than one victim) was introduced when analyzing group differences between the three types of offender-victim relationship and modus operandi strategies. Instead of T-Tests, GLM univariate analyses were conducted when examining the relationship between offender-victim relationship and the following sets of strategies: giving love/attention/gifts and desensitizing the victim to sexual contact. As Table III indicates, there was only a significant association between offender-victim relationship and the giving gifts and privileges set of strategies to gain cooperation (for offenders who abused more than one victim) ( $\chi^2 (2) = 6.08, p < 0.05$ ). It shows that exclusive adolescent offenders were more likely to adopt these strategies than those who abused both intrafamilial and extrafamilial victims.

INSERT TABLE III

As indicated in Table IV, subsequent analyses examined the relationship between the presence of deviant sexual fantasies involving the victim prior to the offense and modus operandi strategies. There was a significant relationship between the presence of deviant sexual fantasies involving the victim prior to the offense and each set of modus operandi strategy ( $p < 0.01$ ). It shows that adolescent offenders who had deviant sexual fantasies involving their victim prior to the offense were more likely to adopt strategies.

INSERT TABLE IV

Finally, as adolescent offenders who abused both boys and girls have been found to adopt a wider repertoire of strategies than adolescents who abused exclusively boys or girls (Kaufman et al., 1996), the possibility was examined that the relationship between situational factors (the location of the crime, the offender-victim relationship and the presence of deviant sexual fantasies) and strategies may be constrained by the gender of the victim. Offenders were analyzed separately by gender exclusivity (0= only boys, 1= only girls,  $n = 84$ ) or in combination (0=boys or girls only, 1= both boys and girls,  $n = 103$ ).

GLM univariate analyses (for giving love/attention/gifts, desensitizing the victim to sexual contact) and logistic regressions (for giving gifts and privileges, maintaining the victim silence by emotional blackmail strategies and adopting violent behaviors) were conducted. Because offenders who abused both boys and girls are by definition repeat offenders, having multiple victims was controlled for in analyses involving gender combination. Only one significant interaction was found. Results showed that the offender's home (when no one else is home) was more likely to be associated with the adoption of strategies consisting of desensitizing the victim to sexual contact when offenders sexually abused exclusively boys or girls ( $F(1,91) = 6.23, p = .014$ ) (see Figure 1). No significant main effects for the offender's home (when no one else is home) ( $F(1,91) = 3.77, p = .055$ ), gender combination ( $F(1,91) = 1.06, p = .305$ ) or multiple victims ( $F(1,91) = .506, p = .479$ ) was found.

INSERT FIGURE I

## DISCUSSION

The main goal of the present study was to examine the link between three situational factors relevant to sexual offenses against children and the modus operandi adopted by adolescent offenders. Although the analyses were exploratory, it indicated that the location of the crime (and the moment) is associated with modus operandi strategies. Furthermore, even though there were only minor differences between the three types of offender-victim relationships and modus operandi strategies (for giving gifts and privileges), the presence of deviant sexual fantasies involving the victim prior to the offense was found to be strongly associated with modus operandi strategies.

Results presented in Table II show that the location of the crime is an important situational factor in determining the choices of modus operandi strategies. Specifically, results suggest that offenders may adopt strategies according to a cost-benefit analysis regarding the location and the moment (the presence of someone who might interfere) in which to sexually abuse. Adopting strategies to gain the trust of the victim is less risky than strategies to gain the cooperation of the victim. In contrast to gaining cooperation, the goal of gaining the trust of the victim does not, by definition, involve the immediate pursuit of sexual contact. Consequently, offenders can gain the trust of their victim in the offender's home, but in the victim's home as well. However, gaining the cooperation of the victim in sexual activity involves the immediate pursuit of sexual contact and thus, high risk of being detected and apprehended. It follows that the cooperation of the victim must be achieved in less risky situations, that is, in the offender's home (when no one else was home).

Results also suggest that emotional blackmail strategies to maintain the victim's silence may be adopted in the offender's home, in the offender's home when no one else is home, and in an isolated place in offender's home when somebody else is home. Such strategies and locations (offender's home) facilitate long-term abuse and thus, require a certain level of intimacy between the offender and the victim. This finding may suggest that these strategies as well as the locations in which they are adopted are part of a particular situation in which an intimate relationship between the offender and the victim is necessary beforehand.

Finally, results indicate that violent behavior might be more frequently adopted in an isolated place in victim's home (when somebody else was home). First, adopting violent behavior suggests that more sophisticated strategies which involve manipulation were not effective or were not in the offenders' repertoire of strategies. Second, sexually abusing in an isolated place in the victim's home may indicate that the offender does not have total control over the victim and needs to isolate him/her before sexual contact. Consequently, offenders who adopt violence in the victim's home (isolated place when somebody else is home) may be less skillful than other offenders.

Results reported in Table III show that there was only a significant association between the offender-victim relationship and the giving gifts and privileges set of strategies to gain cooperation (for offenders who abused more than one victim). Exclusive adolescent offenders may be more likely to adopt these strategies than those who abused both intrafamilial and extrafamilial victims. But why the giving gifts strategies? Due to the nondurable nature of such strategies, the offender must repeat this process each time he seeks to have sexual contact with the victim (Kaufman et al., 1998).



In contrast to exclusive adolescent offenders, those who abused both intrafamilial and extrafamilial (repeat offenders) may have come to understand the limited efficiency of these strategies with offending experience. In future studies, the offending experience should be taken into account to better understand the association between offender-victim relationship and strategies (another factor may be the age of the victim for instance). Overall, it shows that the link between the offender-victim relationship and modus operandi strategies is complex and needs further analysis, particularly concerning offenders who abused both intrafamilial and extrafamilial victims.

Results presented in Table IV show that adolescent offenders who have deviant sexual fantasies involving their victim prior to the offense may be more likely to adopt violent behaviors, but they are also more likely to use various manipulative strategies. Sexually fantasizing about a particular child prior to the offense may imply conscious planning to the extent that the offender is making decisions about which strategies he will adopt to commit his offense. These “conscious” offenders have a clear goal in mind, that is, to achieve a desired outcome. Therefore, they are deliberately initiating contact and adopting strategies for sexual purposes (e.g., Hudson, Ward, & McCormack, 1999; Ward, Loudon, Hudson, & Marshall, 1995). It suggests that offenders plan the strategies they will adopt in prior deviant sexual fantasies. More importantly, it also suggests that the offenders who have these fantasies are the more strategic ones. Finally, it indicates that offenders having such fantasies are highly motivated to commit their offense and consequently, willing to adopt any strategies in their repertoire to reach their goal.

Figure I showed that the offender’s home (when no one else is home) may be more likely to be associated with the adoption of strategies consisting of desensitizing the

victim to sexual contact when offenders sexually abuse exclusively boys or girls. First, recall that most adolescent offenders abused an intrafamilial victim (80%). Therefore, for most adolescent offenders, sexually abusing only boys or girls may be a direct consequence of their immediate environment. They probably only have one younger brother or sister, which gives them more opportunities to be alone with him/her in order to adopt desensitization strategies than if they have many brothers and/or sisters (e.g., in context of babysitting). Desensitization strategies are more likely to be sexually explicit in nature (e.g. touching the child sexually more and more from one time to the next) and consequently, require more time alone with the victim than any other strategies. Moreover, if the offender has only a younger brother, he does not have immediate access to a younger girl. As a result, the adolescent might choose to sexually abuse his younger brother for sexual experience even if he prefers girls. Thus, the opportunity structure may best explain this result. Overall, it follows that other situational factors such as the number of younger siblings as well as the age of the victim could further explain this relationship.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, we examined the relationship between situational factors (location of the crime, offender-victim relationship, and the presence of deviant sexual fantasies involving the victim prior the offense) and the modus operandi in adolescent sexual offenses against children. Our main results indicated that the location and the moment of the crime are relevant variables to better understand the crime-commission process in sexual offending against children. For instance, it showed that strategies consisting of

gaining the cooperation of the victim in sexual activity may be more likely in less risky situations, that is, in the offender's home when no one else is there. Moreover, in a friend or a relative's home, the offender is less able to foresee what might happen. For instance, in another person's home, someone could come home at time; as a result the offender cannot plan the offence as easily as he can in his own home. In our study, this location was not associated with the adoption of strategies. It suggests that these offenders adopt specific sets of strategies and commit their crime once they assess the costs and benefits involved. Results also suggested that offenders who have deviant sexual fantasies involving the victim prior to the offense may be more likely to adopt different sets of strategies to commit their offense (e.g., giving love/attention to gain trust, desensitizing to gain cooperation). This indicates that these offenders could be the more strategic ones. This hypothesis is consistent with recent findings showing that adult offenders who have deviant sexual fantasies are more likely to adopt various manipulative strategies (Leclerc et al., 2006). Overall, it suggests that the above situational factors, especially the location and the moment of the crime and deviant sexual fantasies involving the victim, may structure the offender's choice of modus operandi or at least, have an influence on it.

This study has certain limitations. First, because too few offenders used violence in the sample (20.4%), it is difficult to interpret results indicating that the location of the crime, as used in this study, is weakly associated with violence. It should be noted that offenders have been found to under-report their use of threats, coercion and violence (Kaufman, Hilliker, Lathrop, & Daleiden, 1993). This may be responsible for the low frequency use of violence reported in this study and may influence the results. Second, since the MOQ only determines that the victims were actually children (less than 12 years

old), data concerning the age of the victim was not available for this study. The age of the victim has been found to have an impact on modus operandi (e.g., Kaufman et al., 1996; Leclerc et al., 2006) and should be an interesting control variable to include in future studies. Other situational factors like the presence of younger siblings or half-brothers and sisters in the immediate environment and the age differential between the offender and the victim should be considered as well.

Because victim characteristics and situational factors have an impact on modus operandi strategies chosen to commit a sexual offense against a child, it would be relevant to examine if the modus operandi has a purpose and determines or at least tailors the sexual behaviors adopted by the offender and the victim in sexual episodes. It follows that it would be necessary to examine if victim characteristics and situational factors condition the impact of the offender's modus operandi on sexual behaviors. For instance, because male victims have been found to participate more in sexual activity than female victims (e.g., Erickson, Walbeck, & Seely, 1988), one might examine if the impact of the offender's modus operandi on sexual behaviors adopted by the offender and the victim, is mediated by the gender of the victim. Hopefully, these modus operandi studies will help in gaining a better understanding of the crime-commission process in sexual offenses against children. This way, situational prevention strategies could be eventually developed to prevent this type of offense (Wortley & Smallbone, 2006).

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Table I

Modus operandi scales with example items of the MOQ

Types of strategies	Example items	Alpha
Strategies to gain trust		
Love, attention and gifts	Spending a lot of time with them Giving them a lot of attention Telling them how special they are	.91
Strategies to gain cooperation		
Desensitizing victim	Talking more and more about sex Touching them sexually more and more from one time to the next Telling them that their other friends have had sex by now	.91
Gifts and privileges	Giving them money from time to time Giving them gifts from time to time Saying you will take them places	.81
Strategies to maintain silence		
Emotional blackmail	Saying that <u>you</u> would go to jail or get in trouble if they told anyone Saying that <u>they</u> would go to jail or get in trouble if they told anyone Saying you would give them special privileges or rewards if they didn't tell anyone (like staying up late)	.89
Strategies of violence		
Violent behaviors (before sexual contact)	Using physical force to make them come along Hurting them to make them come along Hurting them to make them do sexual things	.84

Table II

Modus operandi sets of strategies by location of the crime

	Type of location <sup>a</sup>									
	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)	
	No (n=22)	Yes (n=74)	No (n=63)	Yes (n=33)	No (n=50)	Yes (n=46)	No (n=64)	Yes (n=32)	No (n=65)	Yes (n=31)
Strategies to gain trust										
Giving love/attention/gifts	.73 (.44)	.90 (.45)	.76 (.42)	1.04 (.45) <sup>c</sup>	.68 (.44)	1.05 (.38) <sup>b</sup>	.73 (.42)	1.12 (.40) <sup>b</sup>	.84 (.42)	.89 (.52)
Strategies to gain cooperation										
Desensitizing victim	.56 (.41)	.76 (.43) <sup>d</sup>	.67 (.38)	.81 (.52)	.55 (.38)	.90 (.42) <sup>b</sup>	.65 (.41)	.84 (.45) <sup>d</sup>	.71 (.43)	.72 (.44)
Giving gifts and privileges, % (Yes)	27.3	44.6	38.1	45.5	22.0	60.9 <sup>b</sup>	34.4	53.1 <sup>d</sup>	40.0	41.9
Strategies to maintain silence										
Emotional blackmail, % (Yes)	27.3	59.5 <sup>c</sup>	49.2	57.6	38.0	67.4 <sup>c</sup>	45.3	65.6 <sup>d</sup>	52.3	51.6
Strategies of violence										
Violent behaviors, % (Yes)	18.2	21.6	15.9	30.3 <sup>d</sup>	20.0	21.7	18.8	25.0	20.0	22.6

a. (1) = Offender's home, (2) = Isolated place in victim's home (somebody else was home), (3) = Offender's home (no one else was home), (4) = Isolated place in offender's home (somebody else was home), (5) = A friend's or relative's home.

b.  $p < 0.001$  (2-tailed).

c.  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed).

d.  $p < 0.10$  (2-tailed).

Table III

Modus operandi sets of strategies by offender-victim relationship

	Offender-victim relationship		
	Intrafamilial ( <i>n</i> =65)	Extrafamilial ( <i>n</i> =19)	Both type ( <i>n</i> =19)
Strategies to gain trust			
Giving love/attention/gifts	.90 (.46)	.84 (.45)	.70 (.38)
Strategies to gain cooperation			
Desensitizing victim	.75 (.43)	.61 (.48)	.66 (.36)
Giving gifts and privileges			
One victim	43.8	28.6	-----
More than one victim <sup>a</sup> , % (Yes)	58.8	60.0	21.1
Strategies to maintain silence			
Emotional blackmail			
One victim	52.1	57.1	-----
More than one victim, % (Yes)	58.8	60.0	36.8
Strategies of violence			
Violent behaviors			
One victim	16.7	14.3	-----
More than one victim, % (Yes)	23.5	40.0	26.3

a.  $p < 0.05$  (2-tailed).

Table IV

Modus operandi sets of strategies by the presence of deviant sexual fantasies

	Deviant sexual fantasies	
	No ( <i>n</i> =72)	Yes ( <i>n</i> =31)
Strategies to gain trust		
Giving love/attention/gifts <sup>a</sup>	.76 (.41)	1.07 (.45)
Strategies to gain cooperation		
Desensitizing victim <sup>a</sup>	.60 (.39)	.94 (.42)
Giving gifts and privileges <sup>a</sup> , % (Yes)	31.9	61.3
Strategies to maintain silence		
Emotional blackmail <sup>a</sup> , % (Yes)	41.7	74.2
Strategies of violence		
Violent behaviors <sup>a</sup> , % (Yes)	11.1	41.9

a.  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed).

Figure I

Gender of the victim for offender's home (when no one else is home)

