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# Gender issues in the assessment of psychopathy: Results from a multicenter study

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# Presentation outline

- Psychopathy and violence in women
- Results multicenter study
  - Criminal characteristics
  - Motivations index offense
  - Violence risk factors
  - Treatment



# Psychopathy and violence risk assessment in women

- Significant differences men / women in the expression of violence, violence risk factors and manifestation of psychopathy
- Most tools developed / validated in males
- PCL-R item descriptions focus on 'male' (overt antisocial) behavior

**Are commonly used tools, like the HCR-20 or PCL-R well enough suited for use in women?**

# PCL-R in women

- Lower scores and prevalence rate psychopathy (9-23% ♀ vs 15-30% ♂)
- Interrater reliability: moderate to good
- Predictive validity: equivocal

True lower prevalence psychopathy in women, or is the PCL-R not optimally fit to assess psychopathy in women?

# Women high on psychopathy

## Summary research results

- Compared to **women low on psychopathy**
  - More instrumental violence / to strangers
  - More chronic offenders, less often murder
- Compared to **men high on psychopathy**
  - More fraud, deceit
  - More often a score 2 on the items:
    - *Conning / manipulative*
    - *Promiscuous sexual behavior*



# Different manifestation of psychopathy in women?

- More histrionic, manipulative sexual behavior
- Lure others to criminal behavior
- More emotionally unstable, impulsive



# Different manifestation of psychopathy in men and women?



**“What drives both psychopathic men and women is: power over others, the expectation of gain and glorification of the self”**

***Logan & Weizmann-Henelius, 2012, p. 107***

# Psychopathy in women

## Overall conclusions literature

- Manifestation in women more nuanced and hidden, but still highly destructive to others
- PCL-R has relevance in violence risk assessment in women, but more research and refinement in assessment is necessary



# Dutch Multicenter study

## Characteristics of women in forensic psychiatry



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# Multicenter study

## Aims

- To gain more insight into criminal and psychiatric characteristics of female forensic psychiatric patients, especially characteristics that may function as risk or protective factors for violence.
- Possible implications for psychodiagnostics, risk assessment and treatment in forensic psychiatric settings, but possibly also in general psychiatry or in the penitentiary system.

# Multicenter study

## Method

- Five Dutch forensic psychiatric settings
- Ongoing study
- $N > 300$  female forensic psychiatric patients
- $N = 275$  males matched on year of birth, admittance, judicial status
- Comprehensive questionnaire including several tools (a.o., PCL-R, Historical items HCR-20 / FAM) was coded based on file information by trained researchers

# Female Additional Manual (FAM)



Additional guidelines to HCR-20 / HCR-20<sup>V3</sup> for women:

- New items and additional final risk judgments
- Additional guidelines to several Historical factors, e.g., use of lower PCL-R cut-off score

No	PCL-R = 0-14
Possible	PCL-R = 14-22.9
Yes	PCL-R $\geq$ 23

# FAM Gender-specific items

## Historical items

- Prostitution
- Parenting difficulties
- Pregnancy at young age
- Suicide attempt / self-harm
- Victimization after childhood\*

## Clinical items

- Covert / manipulative behavior
- Low self-esteem

## Risk management items

- Problematic child care responsibility
- Problematic intimate relationship

\* This item is no longer needed with HCR-20<sup>V3</sup>

# Previous results

Psychopathic vs. non-psychopathic women (N = 221)

## Criminal characteristics:

- Younger age at first conviction
- More criminal versatility
- More often stranger victims
- Less often arson and lethal violence
- More often 'bad' motives for offenses less often 'sad'



All  $p < .05$ ; Klein Tunte, de Vogel, & Stam, 2014

# Present study

## Comparison men and women with psychopathy

### Procedure

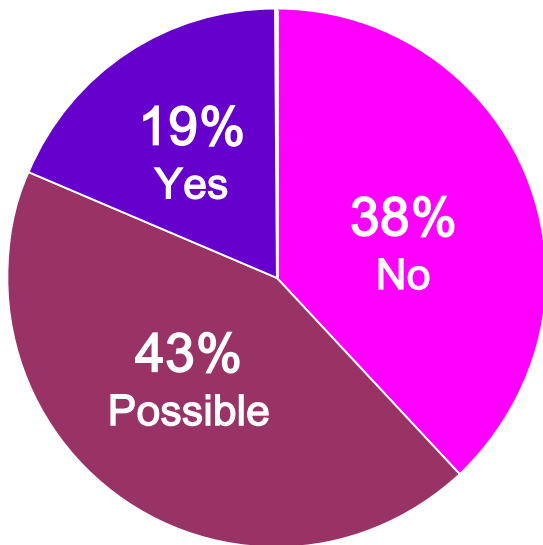
- N = 197 women and 197 matched men
- PCL-R was used (66% in consensus)
- Psychopathy was defined as:
  - Women: PCL-R  $\geq$  23
  - Men: PCL-R  $\geq$  30
- Taxonomy of motivations inspired by Coid (1998)



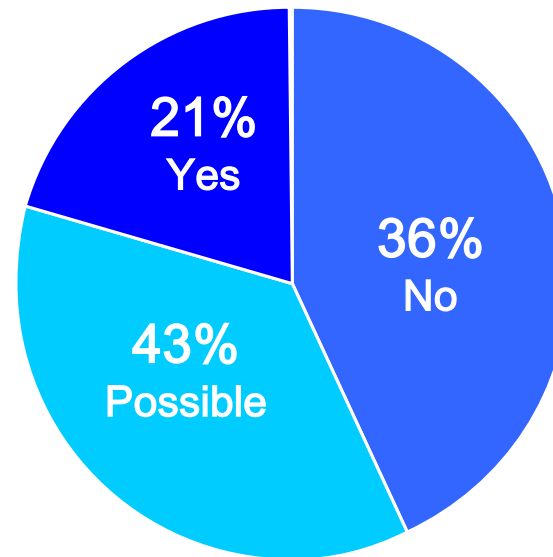
# Prevalence psychopathy

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Mean PCL-R score	16.5 (6.7)	21.4 (8.6)
Range	0 - 33.3	1- 38.9
Official cut-off score	2.7%	20.8%
FAM cut-off score	19.3%	49.2%

# Prevalence psychopathy



197 women  
FAM cut-off



197 men  
Official cut-off

# General characteristics

## Psychopathic versus non-psychopathic

- **Both psychopathic men / women:** more often unemployed, no education, financial problems
- **Psychopathic men** more often:
  - Victimized during childhood
  - Upbringing not by biological parents
- **Psychopathic women:**
  - Less often sexually victimized in adulthood
  - More often children

# Criminal characteristics

## Psychopathic versus non-psychopathic

### Both women / men

#### More often:

- Younger age first conviction
- Criminal versatility
- Strangers as victims
- Intoxicated while offending
- Financial problems at time of offense

#### Less often:

- Arson
- Lethal violence
- Judged as *Not accountable / responsible*



All  $p < .05$

# Gender differences

## Psychopathic women versus men

### Women $\geq$ 23

- More fraud
- Diminished accountable
- Older at first conviction

### Men $\geq$ 30

- More sexual offenses
- More often accountable

# Taxonomy of motivations inspired by Coid (1998)

**Mad**

Psychotic, Compulsive urge to harm/kill

**Bad**

Expressive aggression, Power domination and control, Illicit gain, Excitement, Undercontrolled aggression

**Sad**

Cry for help/attention seeking, (Extended) suicide, Despair, Influenced by partner

**Relational frustration**

Revenge, Jealousy, Threatened/actual loss, Displaced aggression, Victim precipitation

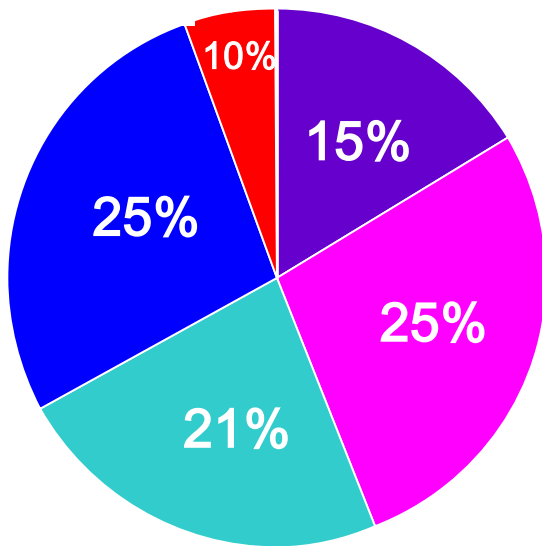
**Coping**

Relief of tension/dysphoria, Hyperirritability

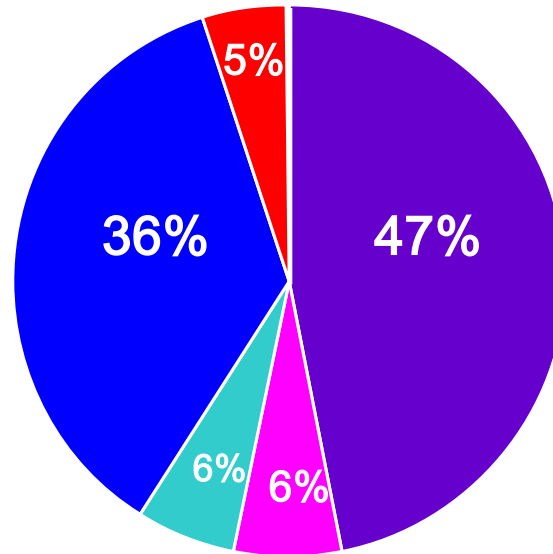
**Sexual**

Paraphilia, Sexual gratification, Sexual conflict

# Motivations index offenses women



**PCL-R < 23**  
**More 'Sad'**

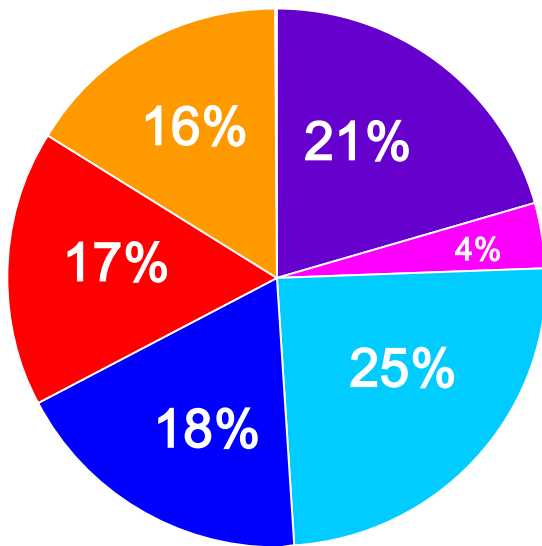


**PCL-R ≥ 23**  
**More 'Bad'**

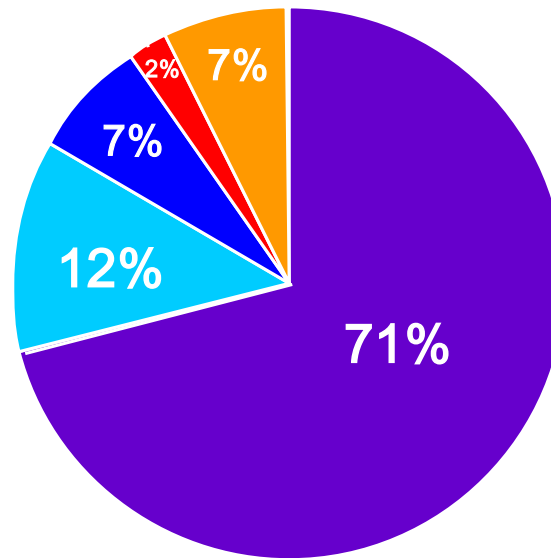
- Bad
- Sad
- Mad
- Relational
- Coping
- Sexual

*p* < .001

# Motivations index offenses men



**PCL-R < 30**  
**More 'Coping'**



**PCL-R ≥ 30**  
**More 'Bad'**

- Bad
- Sad
- Mad
- Relational
- Coping
- Sexual

*p* < .001



# Gender differences motivations

## Psychopathic women versus men

**Women  $\geq 23$**

More Relational frustration

**Men  $\geq 30$**

More 'Bad'



$p < .01$

# Violence risk factors

## Psychopathic versus non-psychopathic

### Both women / men

#### Higher scores on:

- Young age at first violent incident
- Employment problems
- Substance use problems
- Problematic behavior during childhood
- Prior supervision failure

#### Lower scores on:

- Major mental illness

# Violence risk factors

## Psychopathic versus non-psychopathic

### Psychopathic women vs non-psychopathic women

- Higher scores on:
  - Prostitution
  - Pregnancy at young age
- Lower scores on:
  - Suicide attempt / self-harm



### Psychopathic men vs non-psychopathic men

Higher scores on:

- Relationship instability

# Gender differences FAM scores

## Psychopathic women versus men

### Women $\geq 23$

- Prostitution
- Pregnancy at young age
- Suicidality / self-harm
- Victimization after childhood

### Men $\geq 30$

- Young age at first violent incident

Higher scores, all  $p < .05$

# Psychiatric / treatment

## Psychopathic versus non-psychopathic

### Both women / men

- More often ASPD
- More treatment dropout in history
- Incidents during most recent treatment
  - More often manipulative behavior
  - Less often self-destructive behavior

# Psychiatric / treatment

## Psychopathic women versus men

### Women $\geq 23$

- More BPD
- More self-destructive
- More manipulative
- More treatment dropout

### Men $\geq 30$

- More ASPD
- More violent incidents
- More sexual incidents



# Predictive validity

## Incidents during treatment

### Women:

- PCL-R total score moderate predictor of manipulative behavior and verbal violence / threats (AUCs .60 -.67)

### Men:

- PCL-R total score good predictor of violence, verbal violence / threats, manipulative behavior and internal transfer (AUC = .71 - .76)

# Conclusions

- **Clear differences between both women and men with versus without psychopathy**
- **Psychopathic women are more ‘like men’, but still several gender differences:**
  - Pathology: more BPD
  - Motivations: more relational frustration
  - Incidents during treatment: more manipulative and self-destructive behavior
  - Predictive accuracy PCL-R lower



# Implications

- Gender-responsive treatment (e.g., more attention to trauma, parenting skills)
- Clear policies (e.g., intimate relationships)
- Staff:
  - Training, intervision, coaching
  - Support considering high burden BPD
- Collaboration general psychiatry



# Future studies



- Effect on staff
- Effect on children
- Dynamic risk and protective factors
- Predictive validity tools for women
- Adapted version of PCL-R?

**More information:**

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