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

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IAFMHS, Toronto, June 21, 2014
Psychopathy and violence in women
Results multicenter study
  – Criminal characteristics
  – Motivations index offense
  – Violence risk factors
  – Treatment
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?

Garcia-Mansilla et al., 2009; McKeown, 2010; de Vogel & de Vries Robbé, 2013
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?

Logan, 2009; Logan & Weizmann-Henelius, 2012; McKeown, 2010; Nicholls et al., 2005; Vitale et al., 2002
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

Roberts & Coid, 2007; Strand & Belfrage, 2005; Warren et al., 2005; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2010

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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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 psychodiagnostic, 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
Additional guidelines to HCR-20 / HCR-20\textsuperscript{V3} 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PCL-R</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>14-22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>$&gt; 23$</td>
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de Vogel et al., 2012; de Vogel, & de Vries Robbé, 2013
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^{V3}
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 Tuenté, 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 ≥ 23
  – Men: PCL-R ≥ 30
• Taxonomy of motivations inspired by Coid (1998)
## Prevalence psychopathy

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

All $p < .05$
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 ≥ 23
- More fraud
- Diminished accountable
- Older at first conviction

Men ≥ 30
- More sexual offenses
- More often accountable

All $p < .05$
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Taxonomy of motivations</strong> inspired by Coid (1998)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mad</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotic, Compulsive urge to harm/kill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bad</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive aggression, Power domination and control, Illicit gain, Excitement, Undercontrolled aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sad</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cry for help/attention seeking, (Extended) suicide, Despair, Influenced by partner</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relational frustration</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenge, Jealousy, Threatened/actual loss, Displaced aggression, Victim precipitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief of tension/dysphoria, Hyperirritability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphilia, Sexual gratification, Sexual conflict</td>
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</table>
Motivations index offenses women

**PCL-R < 23**
- More ‘Sad’

**PCL-R ≥ 23**
- More ‘Bad’

- **Bad**: 47%
- **Sad**: 36%
- **Mad**: 6%
- **Relational**: 6%
- **Coping**: 6%
- **Sexual**: 10%

*p < .001*
Motivations index offenses men

PCL-R < 30
More ‘Coping’

PCL-R ≥ 30
More ‘Bad’

$p < .001$
Gender differences motivations
Psychopathic women versus men

Women $\geq 23$
More Relational frustration

Men $\geq 30$
More ‘Bad’

$p < .01$
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

All $p < .05$
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

All $p < .05$
Gender differences FAM scores
Psychopathic women versus men

Women ≥ 23
- Prostitution
- Pregnancy at young age
- Suicidality / self-harm
- Victimization after childhood

Men ≥ 30
- Young age at first violent incident

Higher scores, all $p < .05$
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

All $p < .05$
Psychiatric / treatment
Psychopathic women versus men

Women ≥ 23
- More BPD
- More self-destructive
- More manipulative
- More treatment dropout

Men ≥ 30
- More ASPD
- More violent incidents
- More sexual incidents

All $p < .05$
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)

All $p < .05$
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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www.violencebywomen.com


