Psychopathy in females

Vivienne de Vogel
Antwerp, 5 dec 2014
Workshop outline

• Psychopathy and violence in women
• Results multicenter study
  – Criminal characteristics
  – Motivations index offense
  – Violence risk factors
  – Treatment
• Case Lisa
• Treatment issues
Ladykillers: Hurricanes with female names deadlier
Stereotypes of women

Compared to criminal / violent men:
  - More often seen as victim / mentally disordered / acting with male accomplice
  - Tendency to treat female offenders more leniently with respect to arresting and sentencing

Jeffries et al., 2003; Kruttschnitt & Savolainen, 2009
Female violence

- Female violence seems to be on the rise
- Comparable prevalence rate men / women for:
  - Inpatient violence
  - Violence towards own children
  - Intimate partner violence
- Intergenerational transfer

Nicholls et al., 2009; Serbin et al. 1998; De Vogel et al., 2012
Nature of violence by women

- **Less visible**: more domestic, less serious physical injuries
- **Different expression**: more reactive and relational; less sexual and instrumental
- **Different motives**: emotional, relational, jealousy

See de Vogel et al., 2012; Nicholls et al., 2009
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?

Garcia-Mansilla et al., 2009; McKeown, 2010; de Vogel & de Vries Robbé, 2013
Additional guidelines to HCR-20 / HCR-20$^\text{V3}$ 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 (M + SD; experimental)

<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>14-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>&gt; 23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
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?

- **Behavioral expression**: more histrionic, manipulative sexual behavior, lure others to criminal behavior
- **Interpersonal symptoms** like grandiose sense of self-worth more muted
- **Psychological meaning**: promiscuity as strategy
- Societal norms may affect coding (e.g. financial dependency)

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
Acknowledgments

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- Marike Lancel (GGz Drenthe)
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- Nienke Verstegen (Van der Hoeven)
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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxonomy of motivations inspired by Coid (1998)</th>
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</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>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coping</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relief of tension/dysphoria, Hyperirritability</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphilia, Sexual gratification, Sexual conflict</td>
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</tbody>
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Two studies into psychopathy

1. Comparison women with and without psychopathy

2. Gender differences manifestation psychopathy (de Vogel & Lancel, in preparation)
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 Tuente, de Vogel, & Stam, 2014
Procedure

• N = 197 women and 197 matched men
• PCL-R was used (66% in consensus)
• Psychopathy was defined as:
  – Women: PCL-R ≥ 23 (n = 38)
  – Men: PCL-R ≥ 30 (n = 41)
• 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>3.0%</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 23

197 men
Official cut-off 30
Gender differences in PCL-R scores

- Women significantly higher scores on:
  - Many short term marital relationships

- No significant differences:
  - Conning / manipulative
  - Poor behavioral control
  - Impulsivity

- Men significantly higher scores on all other items

\( p < .01 \)
General characteristics
Psychopathic versus non-psychopathic

• Both psychopathic men / women: more often unemployed, no diploma, 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 for the offense

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

All $p < .05$
Motivations index offenses women

PCL-R < 23
More ‘Sad’

PCL-R ≥ 23
More ‘Bad’

$\textit{p} < .001$
Motivations index offenses men

- **PCL-R < 30**
  - More ‘Coping’
  - Bad: 16%
  - Sad: 17%
  - Mad: 18%
  - Relational: 21%
  - Sexual: 25%

- **PCL-R ≥ 30**
  - More ‘Bad’
  - Bad: 71%
  - Sad: 7%
  - Mad: 12%
  - Relational: 7%
  - Sexual: 2%

\( p < .001 \)
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 in FAM scores

Psychopathic women versus men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women $\geq 23$</th>
<th>Men $\geq 30$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Prostitution</td>
<td>• Young age at first violent incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pregnancy at young age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suicidality / self-harm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Victimization after childhood</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

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 $p < .05$
Overlap APD and psychopathy

women versus men
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 (AUCs .71 - .76)

All $p < .05$
Conclusions Study 2

- Clear differences between both women and men with psychopathy versus without

- 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
Future studies

More research is needed

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

• Gender-responsive treatment
• Clear policies (e.g., intimate relationships)
• Staff: training, intervision, coaching
• Collaboration general psychiatry
Case Lisa

Now....whose mind shall I fuck with today.......?
Case Lisa

- 30 Year old woman
- Youth: lying, skipping school, stealing
- 13 years: offending, drugs, sexually active
- 18 years: prostitution
- Unstable and violent intimate relationships
- Index-offense: accessory to rape / violence
Case Lisa

- Diagnoses: ASPD, BPD, NPD
- PCL-R = 25
- Treatment
  - Emotional outbursts
  - Manipulative
  - Relationships
  - Drug dealing
  - Turmoil surrounding Lisa
FAM Gender-specific items Lisa

**Historical items**
- Prostitution
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**Clinical items**
- Covert / manipulative behavior
- Low self-esteem

**Risk management items**
- Problematic child care responsibility
- Problematic intimate relationship

Code 1  
Code 2
Case Lisa
Conclusions

• FAM: risk of violence to others is low, but risk of inciting someone else to violence and risk of non-violent offending high

• C6: Covert / manipulative behavior important risk factor

• Risk management: relationship therapy, control, cost/benefit analyses
How to deal with intimate relationships in the hospital?

Children?

Effect on staff (e.g., risk of being falsely accused sexual intimidation)?

Biological factors (birth control, hormones, menopause, pms, other effects of medication?)

Risk of victimization: do we see enough?

Social desirability / adaptive skills more prevalent in women?
Specific dilemma’s female forensic patients with psychopathy

- Manipulative skills?
- Effect on environment
- Do we see enough?
- Social desirability / adaptable skills more prevalent in women
Treatment women with psychopathy
Richards et al. 2003

- 404 female inmates in substance abuse treatment program
- Psychopathy related to poor treatment response:
  - Rule violation
  - Noncompliance
  - Low attendance / drop out
  - Violent incidents
Recommendations:

1. Feedback results PCL-R to woman
2. Psychopathy as responsivity factor; e.g., emotional bonding and empathy training not effective
3. Alert to signals of psychopathic behavior and effect on group / climate; intervene when needed
Treatment women with psychopathy
Recommendations Logan & Weizmann-Henelius (2012)

Clinical practice

1. One to one meeting: prepare strategy and verify with colleagues
2. Group processes: structured observation
3. Acknowledgement of challenges / burden for staff
   • Being cognizant about toll on staff
   • Insight in own behavior and feelings
As male staff member you can never be alone with a female patient (with psychopathy).
These 2

Working on a group with only women is a too heavy burden for staff.
These 3

Intimate relationships / sex should be prohibited within forensic settings.
These 4

Gender mixed treatment is irresponsible; risk of re-traumatizing is too big.
More information

Uitzending Nieuwsuur 28 juni 2014:

vdevogel@hoevenkliniek.nl
www.violencebywomen.com


References


Vogel, V. de, & Lancel, M. (in preparation). Gender differences in the manifestation of psychopathy: Results from a multicentre study in forensic psychiatric patients


