



Psychiatry & Behavioral Science Section - 2016

I21 The Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) Use for Psychopath Diagnosis — A Study of a Sample of Italian Female Offenders Deemed a Danger to Society

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After attending this presentation, attendees will recognize characteristics of Italian female offenders deemed a danger to society.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by identifying any psychopathological and phenotypic gender-specific factors related to psychopathy.

In Italy, the treatment of mentally ill offenders found not guilty (or partially guilty) by reason of insanity and at risk for recidivism (“a danger to society”) is entrusted to the Judicial Psychiatric Hospital (OPG). The OPG is a high-security hospital, directly managed for more than 100 years by the Department of Justice and at present managed by the Department of Health. Their cultural and treatment profile has been maintained even after the reform law on assistance to the mentally ill in 1978, which in Italy determined the closure of psychiatric hospitals and the establishment of a community psychiatric-assistance model; however, a recent law ratified the closure of the OPGs, scheduled for March 31, 2015, and planned the transfer of the patients from the OPGs to community facilities located in their own regions. The six Italian OPGs accommodated approximately 1,500 patients, mostly men. The OPG of Castiglione delle Stiviere in northern Italy is the only one that admitted women; all women who have committed a crime on Italian territory and are at risk for recidivism are sent to the OPG of Castiglione. From this unique trait of the Castiglione OPG, came the idea for research on possible gender-specific factors related to psychopathy. The lower prevalence of psychopathy in women than in men may be due to several causes: sampling errors; errors related to gender differences in assessment tools; and differences in the phenotypic expression of antisocial behavior due to biological, cultural, and social variables. Several studies have reported a significant correlation, more prevalent in women than in men, between psychopathy and Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). It has been suggested that BPD in women represents the phenotypic expression of psychopathy.

This study was conducted in the OPG of Castiglione delle Stiviere from February 1, 2013, to the end of 2013. At that time, the population of the OPG women’s section was composed of 86 women (men’s section=230m).

The main purpose of this research was to identify any psychopathological and phenotypic gender-specific factors related to psychopathy.

Method: The survey was conducted in regard to the rules considered by the ethics committee of the structure. This study subjected all 86 women, who had given their consent, to clinical and anamnestic evaluations. This study administered SCID I and II interviews and other mental tests (MMPI-2, MCMI-III, R-Bans) to the entire sample, after a period of observation. A clinical-anamnestic assessment was performed to investigate age, marital status, education, personal and family psychiatric history, legal status (infirmity/partial infirmity), type of crime (property/person), and pharmacological therapy. To evaluate the index of psychopathy, the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) was used. In this research, a score of ≥ 25 (the recognized European cut-off level) was considered indicative of psychopathy.

Psychopathy, Women Offenders, Gender-Specific Factors