The Difficulty of Assessing Female Psychopathy: Methods of Measuring Psychopathy and Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) Function, and Misdiagnosis in Females-A Work in Progress.

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Introduction

In deciphering why psychological assessments for psychopathy in females is problematic, a look at the symptoms of personality disorders is important.

Psychopathy Symptoms (Hare, 993):
- Gib and superficial
- Egocentric and grandiose
- Lack of remorse or guilt
- Lack of empathy
- Deceitful and manipulative
- Shallow emotions
- Impulsive
- Poor behavior controls
- Need for excitement
- Early behavior problems
- Adult antisocial behaviors

BPD Symptoms (Kreisman & Straus, 1989):
- Troubled interpersonal relationships
- Self-destructive impulsivity in two or more area
- Extreme mood swings
- Inappropriate rage
- Frequent cries for help
- Suicidal gestures or threats
- Self-mutilation
- Identity uncertainty
- Chronic boredom
- Abandonment issues

Research Questions

1) What types of antisocial behavior do females engage in?
2) How are the female antisocial behaviors different than males?
3) Do males develop psychopathy more so than females?
4) What are the differences in male and female socialization?
5) What are the differences when comparing the male and female brain?
6) Are females more likely to develop BPD than males?
7) Are males more likely to be diagnosed with psychopathy?
8) Is the disparity in gender prevalence merely a measurement error?

Abstract

If the average person is asked to name a female psychopath from a movie, s/he might name Charlize Theron’s portrayal of Aileen Wuornos from Monster or Glenn Close as Alex from Fatal Attractions, but s/he would be only half-right. Aileen Wuornos was clearly a psychopath; Glenn Close’s character displayed BPD. Similarities between psychopathy and BPD, particularly in the presentation of BPD (i.e. mood swings or affect) at the time of assessment can be confusing. Male psychopathy assessment is more precise while the female assessment seems ambiguous and indistinct. An in-depth literature review of the personality disturbances and the different psychopathy scales, such as Hare’s Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R), will be beneficial in discerning why female psychopathy is often misdiagnosed.

Examples of Females in Movies with Psychopathy and BPD

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Psychopathy</th>
<th>Female Psychopath and BPD</th>
<th>BPD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girl, Interrupted</td>
<td>Girl, Interrupted</td>
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Types of Measurement for Psychopathy

Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) (Hare, 1993)
Psychopathic Personality Inventory Revised (PPI-R) (Edens & McDermott, 2010)
Personality Assessment Inventory (Edens & McDermott, 2010)
The Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-III-R Personality Disorder Personality Questionnaire (SCID-II-PQ) (Sturek, Loper, & Warren, 2008)

References


Acknowledgements

Windy K. Wilkins, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Gloria C. Cox, Ph.D., Dean, Honors College
Andrea Kirk, Ph.D., Honors College
Craig Neumann, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences