



A comparison of latent profiles in antisocial male offenders

Josi M.A. Driessen^{a,b,*}, Kostas A. Fanti^c, Jeffrey C. Glennon^b, Craig S. Neumann^d,
Arielle R. Baskin-Sommers^e, Inti A. Brazil^{a,f}

^a Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

^b Cognitive Neuroscience, Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

^c Department of Psychology, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

^d University of North Texas, Denton, TX, United States

^e Yale University, New Haven, CT, United States

^f Forensic Psychiatric Centre Pompestichting, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Within forensic settings, the tools used to evaluate subtypes of antisocial offenders (e.g. interview-based measures such as the Psychopathy Checklist) are expensive and time consuming. The purpose of the present study was to identify and validate distinct antisocial profiles in male offenders using questionnaires. In the future, this approach could help us identify antisocial profiles in a cost-effective way.

Method: First, we investigated the robustness and replicability of the profiles reported by previous profiling studies by performing latent profile analysis using the Self-Report Psychopathy Short-Form. Second, we studied how these profiles were linked to personality correlates that have been used to differentiate between groups of antisocial offenders. Third, we investigated how each profile was related to a broad range of behaviours seen in antisocial populations.

Result: Four antisocial profiles were identified: *generic offenders*, *impulsive-antisocial traits offenders*, *non-antisocial psychopathic traits offenders*, and *psychopathic traits offenders*. The validity of these profiles was supported by their links with external personality and behavioural correlates.

Conclusion: Consistent with previous research using interview-based measures, these findings provide support for the presence of four distinct antisocial profiles based on self-report psychopathy scores in male offenders. Furthermore, findings provide relatively extensive and multifaceted characterizations of each profile.

Antisocial behaviour is a heterogeneous construct that covers a wide range of behaviours that cause harm to others. There is evidence supporting the existence of different subtypes of antisocial individuals (for an overview see Brazil, Dongen, Maes, Mars, & Baskin-Sommers, 2016). These subtypes of individuals engage in different types of behaviours (DeLisi et al., 2011; Odgers et al., 2007; Patrick, Hicks, Krueger, & Lang, 2005; Vincent, Vitacco, Grisso, & Corrado, 2003) and purportedly represent the outcome of different etiological pathways (Baskin-Sommers, Curtin, & Newman, 2015). One way researchers and clinicians attempt to differentiate subtypes of antisocial individuals is to distinguish between antisocial individuals with and without psychopathy (Brazil et al., 2016; Kiehl & Hoffman, 2011). Psychopathy is considered as a severe disorder typified by interpersonal-affective dysfunctions (e.g., lack of empathy, manipulateness) combined with severe antisocial behaviour and an erratic lifestyle. Psychopathy is linked to increased chance of recidivism (McCuish, Corrado, Hart, & DeLisi, 2015), excessive use of aggression, and large financial costs to society (Kiehl &

Hoffman, 2011).

Currently, the dominant approach to differentiate between psychopathic- and non-psychopathic antisocial individuals is based on the framework developed by Hare and colleagues (1980). Driven by the idea that there was no appropriate measure to diagnose antisocial individuals at the time, Hare developed the Psychopathy Checklist (Hare, 1980), and later on the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003; Hare et al., 1990). The PCL-R is a semi-structured interview that can be combined with criminal records to derive a score that indicates the extent to which psychopathic characteristics are present in an individual. An individual is diagnosed with psychopathy if the total score of the PCL-R is ≥ 30 in the U.S., or ≥ 26 in Europe (Cooke & Michie, 1999). As this framework incorporates antisocial features as a separate component (or facet) that is embedded within the construct of psychopathy, it allows for the quantification of broad range of antisocial behaviours that are not unique to psychopathy (see also Brazil et al., 2016 for an overview of studies using the PCL-R for subtyping antisocial

* Corresponding author at: Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour, Radboud University Nijmegen, P.O. Box 9104, 6500 HE Nijmegen, The Netherlands.
E-mail address: j.driessen@donders.ru.nl (J.M.A. Driessen).

individuals).

The PCL-R score represents the combination of four dimensions or facets believed to constitute psychopathy. The “interpersonal” facet concerns arrogant and deceitful interpersonal style, which is characterized by superficial charm, grandiosity, manipulative behaviour and deceitfulness. The “affective” facet captures the degree of disturbed affective experience, which encompasses callousness, lack of empathy, failure to accept responsibility and lack of remorse or guilt. The “lifestyle” facet describes an impulsive-irresponsible behavioural style, which is typified by impulsivity, boredom, sensation seeking, a parasitic lifestyle, irresponsibility, and lack of goals. Finally, the “antisocial” facet encompasses aggressiveness, early behaviour problems, juvenile delinquency and criminal versatility (Hare & Neumann, 2005). These facets are inter-related and load on a set of second-order factors, forming an Interpersonal-Affective Factor (Factor 1; F1) and a Lifestyle-Antisocial Factor (Factor 2; F2). Whereas the Interpersonal-Affective factor captures the core features that are unique to psychopathy, the Lifestyle-Antisocial factor represents a more general set of antisocial tendencies that can be found across several subtypes of antisocial individuals (Hansen, Johnsen, Thornton, Waage, & Thayer, 2007; Hare, 2003). The PCL-R framework is well supported in a wide variety of samples and is now regarded as the most reliable method to measure psychopathic traits (Hare, Clark, Grann, & Thornton, 2000; Hare & Neumann, 2006; Neumann, Schmitt, Carter, Embley, & Hare, 2012).

Using the PCL-R framework, researchers also propose further distinctions based on scores within the factors of the PCL-R and external correlates (see Brazil et al., 2016). One of the most prominent distinctions is that between primary and secondary psychopathy, which has been defined in various ways. For instance, primary psychopathy has been described as antisocial individuals that score relatively high on F1 traits compared to F2 traits, whereas secondary psychopathy has been characterized by relatively high F2 traits relative to F1 traits (Skeem, Poythress, Edens, Lilienfeld, & Cale, 2003; Wong & Hare, 2006). A second distinction highlights how these subtypes differ based on levels of anxiety: primary psychopathy defined as a high PCL(-R) total score and a low level of anxiety and secondary psychopathy defined as a high PCL(-R) total score with a high level of anxiety (Lykken, 1995; Skeem, Johansson, Andershed, Kerr, & Loudon, 2007). Finally, primary and secondary psychopathy are distinguished based on differences in behavioural motivation. Primary psychopathy is typified by an underactive behavioural inhibition system (BIS) in those scoring above the PCL-R cutoff score, while secondary psychopathy concerns an overactive behavioural activation system in these individuals (BAS; Newman, MacCoon, Vaughn, & Sadeh, 2005; Ross et al., 2007). Another common approach to distinguishing subtypes within psychopathy is by focusing on the expression of emotion (Hicks, Markon, Patrick, Krueger, & Newman, 2004; Hicks & Patrick, 2006) and externalizing behaviour (a common factor underlying antisocial behaviour and disinhibitory behaviours, such as substance dependence), where F1 traits were negatively associated with low negative affectivity and low externalizing behaviours, and F2 traits were positively associated with high negative affectivity and high externalizing behaviours (Patrick et al., 2005). While these approaches have been immensely helpful in identifying and parsing the heterogeneity of psychopathy, many of these proposals are based on theoretical assumptions (e.g., Murphy & Vess, 2003; Skeem et al., 2003), use diverse methodologies (e.g. cluster analysis, latent variable- and person-centered approaches), and have different sample selection procedures (e.g. including violent offenders, psychopathic offenders, sex offenders or mixed offenders) (Neumann, Vitacco, & Mokros, 2016).

In order to address these limitations, recent studies employ structural equation modeling as a quantitative approach to subtyping of antisocial individuals, broadly, and more specifically within the construct of psychopathy. For example, Skeem et al. (2007) performed a model-based cluster analysis on a sample of Swedish male offenders with a PCL-R score ≥ 28 . The clustering was based on the four PCL-R

facet scores and a self-report measure of trait anxiety. The analysis resulted in two clusters with one type (60% of the sample) scoring high on PCL facets 1–3 (interpersonal, affective, lifestyle), but low on anxiety and the other type (40% of the sample) showing a moderate score on PCL facets 1–3 and high on anxiety. Notably, the antisocial facet did not differ between the two clusters. A more recent study by Mokros et al. (2015) used Latent Class Analysis (LCA) on PCL-R data from male offenders with a high PCL-R score (> 27). Three subtypes were obtained: manipulative (Latent Class 1), aggressive (Latent Class 2) and sociopath (Latent Class 3). The manipulative and aggressive classes reflected early clinical conceptualizations of psychopathy and were proposed to represent empirically derived variants of primary psychopathy that differ in the manifestation of F1 and F2 traits. Moreover, the sociopath class was believed to reflect secondary psychopathy as this latent class was characterized by social deviance, and low expression of the affective features of psychopathy. Whereas these previous studies were conducted using offender samples with high PCL-R scores, some recent studies have examined the full range of PCL-R scores in mixed offender (Hare, 2016) and sex offender (Krstic et al., 2017) samples. These studies provided evidence for the existence of four latent classes: psychopaths, callous-conning offenders, sociopaths and general offenders. The general offenders were at the low end of the psychopathic spectrum, and the psychopaths were at the high end of the spectrum. The sociopaths showed mainly elevated F2 traits, while elevated F1 traits were the most prominent features of the callous-conning offenders. Taken together, findings from these studies suggest that antisocial behaviour can be subtyped by using psychopathy measures, and these subtypes represent different profiles with regard to psychopathic traits.

Notably, the vast majority of the current empirical research on subtyping of psychopathy predominantly has been based on the PCL (-R). However, administering and scoring the PCL-R requires a relatively large time and financial investment. Therefore, self-report questionnaire measures of psychopathy are gaining popularity in forensic research, especially in studies that are interested in subtyping psychopathic traits in the general population (e.g., Collins, Fanti, Salekin, & Andershed, 2017). The Self-Report Psychopathy checklist (SRP; Hare, 1985) is a well-known self-report questionnaire for psychopathic traits which uses a similar four-dimensional structure to the PCL-R. The SRP is significantly associated with the PCL-R (latent $r = 0.68$) and has been shown to be valid across genders (Neumann & Hare, 2008; Neumann & Pardini, 2014). However, to date, there are no studies addressing the suitability of self-report measures for subtyping of adult offenders based on psychopathic features.

The main purpose of the present study was to identify different antisocial profiles in a sample of male offenders and investigate how these profiles differ based on general personality factors and other traits linked to criminogenic factors. To achieve this, we (1) performed latent profile analysis (LPA)¹ on the SRP-Short Form and compared our results with the three only previous studies that employed LPA in adult offenders, (2) studied how the profiles differed on descriptive and personality factors traditionally believed to be relevant for distinguishing among subtypes based on levels of psychopathy (e.g., anxiety, valence of affect, motivational tendencies), and (3) sought to further extend previous studies on subgrouping in adult offenders by also obtaining a more detailed view of how the profiles differed on externalizing behaviours commonly seen in antisocial offender populations (i.e., aggression, disinhibition, substance abuse). Based on previous research

¹ LPA is a data-driven approach that classifies individuals or cases into homogenous groups (i.e., latent profiles) based on conditional probabilities. This is in contrast with the majority of the subtyping studies that have used hypothesis-driven analyses and are dependent on strong a priori assumptions. Given that there have only been three studies examining PCL-based subtypes of offenders using LCA in incarcerated adult offenders and that these studies differed in the number of latent classes identified, it is important to test whether these results are stable and replicate when using alternative measures of psychopathy derived from the PCL-R.

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