

ASSESSING RISK IN WOMEN WHO HAVE SEXUALLY OFFENDED: THE ROLE
OF PSYCHOPATHY

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DEDICATION

To my mother and father, thank you for providing me with all the necessary resources to make this thesis happen. I would not be here today without your love, support, or money.

To my little sister, Phuong, thank you for being my soundboard and dose of reality whenever I needed you.

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis was to examine whether current risk assessment tools predicted recidivism in a group of women who sexually offended. To date, psychopathy is one of the best predictors for aggression and antisocial behavior. Past research has examined the utility of The Psychopathy Checklist – Revised (PCL-R) in justice-involved men, including men who sexually offended, and has exhibited solid support. However, results for justice-involved women were mixed. This study aims to fill the gap in research by examining the utility of the PCL-R in a sample of 242 women incarcerated, and subsequently released, in Texas for an index sexual offense. Logistic regressions were used to examine whether PCL-R scores could predict overall recidivism, general recidivism, or violent recidivism. Results indicated the PCL-R was a significant predictor for overall and general recidivism, but not violent. Additionally, age and total prior arrests were considered significant control variables when predicting recidivism. Only one woman in the sample sexually recidivated. The findings provide modest support for the utility of the PCL-R in the risk assessment of females who have sexually offended. Because there are no validated risk assessments for females who have sexually offended, current results will help guide assessment of this group of offenders.

KEY WORDS: Women who sexually offend; Psychopathy; PCL-R; Recidivism

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The stereotype of an individual who commits sexual offenses typically involves a strange, old man that drives a windowless van and lures children with candy or toys (Pedneault, 2019). The reality is that men and women who commit sexual offenses rarely meet those descriptors. The current literature suggests those who commit sexual offenses are part of a larger heterogeneous group, and the characteristics and motivations of these individuals tend to differ (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). Past research has extensively focused on men who have committed sexual offenses with studies focusing on women recently emerging. Society has resisted the idea that women can commit such horrendous offenses because such acts violate assumptions of femininity and traditional gender roles (Cain et al., 2015; Gölge et al., 2021; Miller, 2013). Studying women is important to understand how gender differences affect an individual's motivation to offend as well as inform decisions about risk assessments and treatment options for these individuals (Cortoni et al., 2015; Marshall & Miller, 2019a, 2019b; Wijkman et al., 2010).

There is a popular misconception that individuals who have sexually offended will commit another sexual offense if released back into the community (Klein & Mckissick, 2019; Vandiver et al., 2017). However, the current literature suggests recidivism of those who commit sexual offenses is actually much lower than what was originally thought (Barroso et al., 2019; Rettenberger & Craig, 2020). Regardless, understanding the level of risk for individuals who commit sexual offenses is important in determining whether they can be released to the community and under what conditions. Proper risk assessment tools can be used to predict potential dangerousness

by assigning a level of risk (low, moderate, and high) to registered individuals. The sex offender registry was intended to keep the public aware of individuals who pose a potential risk as well as establish restrictions for individuals who commit sexual offenses and are released back into the community (Cain et al., 2015; Laws, 2016; Tewksbury, 2002).

Compared to men, women who commit sexual offenses have low recidivism rates in general and even lower recidivism rates for sexual offenses (Cain et al., 2015; Cortoni et al., 2010; Cortoni & Stefanov, 2020b). Additionally, current risk assessment tools have only been validated for men who have sexually offended and have not been fully tested for accuracy towards women who have sexually offended (Vandiver et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2019). For example, Marshall et al. (2021) tested whether the Static-99R measure, one of the risk assessment tools originally developed for men, would accurately predict risk in a sample of 739 women who have sexually offended. Results from this study suggested items on the Static-99R were not significantly associated with sexual recidivism for women who sexually offended (Marshall et al., 2021). The Static-99R did have a significant association with general recidivism for these individuals, but the effect size was small (Marshall et al., 2021).

To date, one of the most effective tools for assessing recidivism risk with justice-involved individuals is the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R). The PCL-R assesses the extent an individual exhibits psychopathic personality traits (Hare, 1999a; Hare et al., 2000; Murphy et al., 2016; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2015). While the PCL-R was not originally intended to assess risk per se, clinicians and researchers have found the tool aided in the prediction of general and violent recidivism (Weizmann-Henelius et al.,

2015). This assessment tool has been used internationally to assess recidivism in criminal populations. For example, Hare et al. (2000) conducted a content analysis to assess the PCL-R's predictive validity in studies with international samples, specifically in England, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal. Researchers found that high PCL-R scores helped predict recidivism in England and Belgium and indicated misconduct and maladaptive prison behaviors in Spain and Portugal (Hare et al., 2000). Although the PCL-R has shown some effectiveness with general and violent recidivism prediction, more studies have begun looking into its abilities to predict sexual recidivism. Harris et al. (2017) assessed whether PCL-R scores could predict recidivism of sexual offenses or recidivism of sexual and violent offenses combined in a sample of 687 men who committed sexual offenses. Researchers found the PCL-R scores were able to predict recidivism when sexual and violent offenses were combined, but not when sexual offenses were separated (Harris et al., 2017). These studies demonstrate how recidivism can be predicted in general justice-involved men and men who have sexually offended.

Although the PCL-R has shown to be effective at predicting recidivism in men, more research is needed to assess whether it is effective at predicting recidivism in women. Previous studies have assessed whether the PCL-R is an accurate assessment tool for general justice-involved women. These studies have demonstrated that the PCL-R is able to predict general recidivism but has mixed results in predicting violent recidivism for women (Eisenbarth et al., 2012; Falkenbach, 2008; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2015). As there has yet to be a risk assessment tool that assesses recidivism risk in women who sexually offend, it is best to assess the applicability of the tools currently available.

This study aimed to assess psychopathy as a predictor for risk and recidivism in a sample of women who had committed sexual offenses. A sample of 242 women who sexually offended completed the Dynamic Risk Assessments (DRA) within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice prior to their release from prison. The DRA combines scores from the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) and the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) to determine level of risk for the sex offender registry. This study focused on the PCL-R and whether specific items can predict general and violent recidivism for this specific group of women, intending to contribute to the existing research on women who have committed sexual offenses, psychopathy, and risk assessment tools.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Initial research on both psychopathy and those who commit sexual offenses has historically focused on male populations (Vandiver, 2006; Verona et al., 2013). However, there has been increased attention on women with psychopathy and women who have sexually offended separately. Studies that have focused on women have faced difficulties with using small sample sizes, relying on self-reports, and drawing data from forensic and psychiatric groups (Colson et al., 2013). Recent studies have made attempts to circumvent such challenges by increasing sample sizes and revising methodologies. With such changes, the research examining women who have committed sexual offenses has helped identify patterns and characteristics among this group. Additionally, research about individuals with psychopathy has helped understand how certain behaviors and personality traits play a role in criminal behavior. This chapter addresses what is currently known about women who have sexually offended and how psychopathy is used to assess risk in justice-involved individuals.

Psychopathy

Conducting research on psychopathy and understanding the construct has allowed professionals to make better-informed decisions about risk assessment, treatment, and punishment of individuals with such traits (Wynn et al., 2012). Generalizing what is currently known about psychopathy to women is considered problematic because initial research has primarily focused on men (Wynn et al., 2012). There has been an emerging interest in understanding how psychopathy is portrayed in women. Before applying

psychopathy to women, it is better to understand the construct as a whole, how it overlaps with other diagnosable disorders, and how it can be used to assess risk.

Psychopathy as a Construct

Hervey M. Cleckley is often cited as a fundamental figure in modern research of individuals with psychopathy. Cleckley's book *The Mask of Sanity* details his interpretation of what psychopathy looks like, based on direct experience with individuals high in psychopathy (Patrick et al., 2009). The first edition of the book listed 21 characteristics, but newer editions have slightly condensed the list to 16 characteristics: (1) superficial charm and good intelligence; (2) absence of delusions and other signs of irrational "thinking"; (3) absence of "nervousness" or psychoneurotic manifestations; (4) unreliability; (5) untruthfulness and insincerity; (6) lack of remorse or shame; (7) inadequately motivated antisocial behavior; (8) poor judgment and failure to learn by experience; (9) pathologic egocentricity and incapacity for love; (10) general poverty in major affective reactions; (11) specific loss of insight; (12) unresponsiveness in general interpersonal relations; (13) fantastic and uninviting behavior, with drink and sometimes without; (14) suicide rarely carried out; (15) sex life impersonal, trivial, and poorly integrated; and (16) failure to follow any life plan (Cleckley, 1955, pp. 539–540; Lilienfeld et al., 2018). Cleckley (1955) emphasized that an individual with psychopathy wears "a convincing mask of sanity" to disguise their true nature, specifically "what seems to be a solid and substantial structural image of the sane and rational personality" (p. 595). Individuals with psychopathy struggle to meet the stereotypical image of a mentally ill person because they are capable of making rational decisions, aware of the

potential costs and benefits, and lack delusions or irrational thought (Cleckley, 1955; Hare, 1999b).

Robert D. Hare operationalized psychopathy with the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare et al., 1991). The PCL-R relied on a two-factor model for diagnosing psychopathy: Factor 1 encompasses interpersonal and affective characteristics, while Factor 2 encompasses characteristics of an impulsive, antisocial, and unstable lifestyle (Hare, 1999b, 2003; Hare et al., 1991). Factor 1 traits are glibness and superficialness, egocentricity and grandiosity, remorselessness and lack of empathy, deceitfulness and manipulation, and shallow emotions (Hare, 1999b, 1999a, 2003; Hare et al., 2000). Factor 2 traits are poor behavioral control and aggression, need for excitement and stimulation, lack of responsibility, and behavioral problems demonstrated in early life as well as adulthood (Hare, 1999b, 1999a, 2003; Hare et al., 2000). Both factors can be further expanded into different models. The four-factor model of the PCL-R separates the traits combined in the two-factor model into singular dimensions: Factor 1 refers to the interpersonal characteristics, such as glibness/superficial charm and grandiose self-worth; Factor 2 refers to the affective characteristics, such as shallow affect and lack of remorse; Factor 3 refers to the lifestyle characteristics, such as impulsivity and irresponsibility; and Factor 4 refers to antisocial characteristics, such as poor behavior controls and criminal versatility (Hare, 2003; Hare & Neumann, 2008). Hare (1999b) found individuals with psychopathy made up a minor proportion of criminal populations; however, most of these individuals had committed serious crimes.

Although the PCL-R traditionally relies on the two-factor model, there have been some arguments advocating for the use of a four-factor model instead. As previously

mentioned, the four-factor model expands on the two-factor model by separating traits previously combined into separate dimensions (Hare, 2016; Hare & Neumann, 2008). The recent empirical literature has supported the use of the four-factor model over other models (Hare, 2016; Weaver et al., 2006). The four-factor model of the PCL-R proves beneficial to understanding how the core components of psychopathy may vary in predicting psychopathy among individuals who commit sexual offenses (Hare, 2016; Krstic et al., 2018). Further, examining the characteristics of psychopathy as separate dimensions allows researchers to understand how certain aspects contribute to criminal behavior, as some believe criminality is considered a byproduct of psychopathy (Hare, 2016; Weaver et al., 2006). Krstic et al. (2018) examined psychopathic traits in 958 men that sexually offended using the four-factor model of the PCL-R. Results suggested the four-factor model provided an accurate representation of the dimensions of psychopathic traits (Krstic et al., 2018). Factor 2, the affective facet, and Factor 4, the antisocial facet, demonstrated the greatest strength for predicting future violent sexual acts (Krstic et al., 2018). Critics of the four-factor model disagree with measuring antisocial characteristics separately (Hare, 2016). Some argue antisocial tendencies already overlap with the other three factors and does not need to be measured as a separate dimension (Hare, 2016). However, empirical literature has deemed antisocial characteristics necessary to the definition of psychopathy (Hare, 2016).

Other models of psychopathy have been developed. For example, Patrick et al. (2009) measured psychopathy in a triarchic model that focuses on three distinct components: disinhibition, boldness, and meanness. Disinhibition refers to impulsive tendencies and the need for immediate gratification (Patrick et al., 2009). Boldness refers

to fearlessness and resilience in intense situations (Patrick et al., 2009). Meanness refers to antagonism and the inability to form close relationships (Patrick et al., 2009). Studies on the triarchic model have observed some similarities with the PCL-R. Compared to the four-factor model of the PCL-R, the components of the triarchic model overlap as follows: disinhibition was most similar to Factor 3 lifestyle characteristics, boldness was most similar to Factor 1, and meanness was most similar to Factor 2 (Hare, 2016; Patrick & Drislane, 2015).

Overlaps with Antisocial Personality Disorder. The current edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) does not provide clinicians with a specific diagnosis for individuals with psychopathic personalities. Simply put, people cannot be clinically diagnosed as a "psychopath" in the DSM-5. However, there are diagnosable disorders sharing similar characteristics with psychopathy. The disorder most comparable with psychopathy would be antisocial personality disorder (ASPD). To be diagnosed with ASPD, individuals must exhibit a "pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others," specifically deceitfulness, impulsivity, irritability, recklessness, irresponsibility, and remorselessness (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 659). Additionally, these individuals struggle to conform to societal norms and act out in ways traditionally frowned upon, such as criminal behavior (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The DSM-5 considers deceitfulness and manipulation to be the core features of this disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

On the surface, psychopathy and ASPD are interchangeable to describe remorseless, callous individuals. For example, Murphy et al. (2016) found ASPD

characteristics strongly overlapped with Factor 2 traits in the PCL-R. In another study, Coid and Ulrich (2010) interviewed 496 prisoners from England and Wales to determine whether psychopathy was a separate diagnosis or extension of ASPD. Researchers found a positive correlation between PCL-R scores and an ASPD diagnosis, implying individuals with higher levels of psychopathy were more likely to have a severe ASPD diagnosis (Coid & Ullrich, 2010). Although psychopathy and ASPD share overlapping characteristics, measurable differences between the two exist. Most notably, a lack of empathy and shallow emotions are identified in individuals with psychopathy but are not necessary to diagnose someone with ASPD (Johnson, 2019; Shepherd et al., 2018). Although many individuals with psychopathy will fit the criteria for ASPD, individuals diagnosed with ASPD will not always fit the criteria for psychopathy (Shepherd et al., 2018).

Using Psychopathy to Assess Risk

The construct of psychopathy has impacted how risk is assessed in both criminal and clinical populations (Krstic et al., 2018). Risk assessment tools measuring psychopathy are useful to predict future criminal activity considering individuals with psychopathy were more likely to exhibit antisocial behaviors and engage in a criminal lifestyle (Burt et al., 2016; Hare & Neumann, 2005). Rates for offending are much higher in individuals with psychopathy, compared to individuals without (Burt et al., 2016; Hare, 1999a). Clinicians and researchers found the PCL-R aided in determining general and violent recidivism, despite the tool not being originally intended to assess risk in criminal offenders (Hare, 2016; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2015). Items on the PCL-R are intended to measure antisocial behaviors, including criminality, as indicators of

psychopathic traits (Cooke et al., 2018; Hare & Neumann, 2005). Individuals with high PCL-R scores had higher rates of violent recidivism, institutional misconduct, and failing conditional release (Burt et al., 2016). Compared to individuals who did not recidivate, recidivating individuals with psychopathy were more likely to have been younger at the time of initial release, had fewer ties to the community, and had lower Factor 1 and higher Factor 2 scores (Burt et al., 2016; Leung et al., 2021). Today, the PCL-R is one of the most frequently used tools for general and violent risk assessment, civil commitment inquiries, and sentencing assessments (Hare, 2016).

Initial studies in psychopathy and its assessment primarily focused on understanding the construct in male populations. Olver and Wong (2015) found the PCL-R was a valid predictive measure for short- and long-term recidivism in a sample of 273 incarcerated men with psychopathy. PCL-R total scores were able to predict nonviolent recidivism overall follow-up periods, general recidivism over 3-, 5-, and 10-year follow-ups, and predict violent recidivism over 3- and 5-year follow-ups (Olver & Wong, 2015). Factor 2 demonstrated greater predictive efficacy than Factor 1 (Olver & Wong, 2015). This tool has varying success for assessing general and violent recidivism with justice-involved men and men who have sexually offended. Leung et al. (2021) expanded on findings from Burt et al. (2016), comparing recidivating and non-recidivating individuals with psychopathy, by specifically looking at individuals with histories of sexual offenses. Leung et al. (2021) found Factor 2 scores were effective in predicting general and violent recidivism in men who had sexually offended. However, the prediction for sexual recidivism was considered weak at best (Leung et al., 2021).

To date, there is still a lack of standardized risk assessments and treatments meant specifically for women (Cortoni & Stefanov, 2020; Gölge et al., 2021; Marshall et al., 2021). Some researchers consider the PCL-R to be male-centered with questionable effectiveness for women (Eisenbarth et al., 2012; Salekin et al., 1998). For example, Salekin et al. (Salekin et al., 1998) studied the effectiveness of three different instruments measuring psychopathy and found the PCL-R to be a moderate predictor for general recidivism in women. In a more recent study, Eisenbarth et al. (2012) examined the validity of the PCL-R in a sample of German justice-involved women and found the PCL-R, especially the lifestyle aspects, had only a moderate effect in predicting general recidivism. A study by Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2015) found the PCL-R to be a poor predictor of violent recidivism in female offenders. Additionally, Banasik et al. (2017) argued women express aggression and antisocial traits in ways that cannot be measured by the PCL-R factors, possibly explaining why women rarely receive a total score equal to or above 30.

McCoy (2015) used the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) and the PCL-R to assess different types of recidivism in a sample of 244 women that committed sexual offenses. In this study, 21.3% of the sample was rearrested for an offense, with the average time to recidivism being 21.15 months after completing the assessments (McCoy, 2015). Results showed most of the women in the sample who recidivated were rearrested for committing a general offense (19.7%), a few (3.7%) were rearrested for committing a violent offense, and none were rearrested for committing a sexual offense (McCoy, 2015). McCoy (2015) found age, total number of arrests, and higher PCL-R scores helped predict overall recidivism. When looking at the specific factors of the PCL-

R, Factor 2 accounted for significantly more variance with general recidivism but only marginal variance with violent recidivism (McCoy, 2015). The McCoy (2015) study primarily focused on the two-factor model for their analyses, which can exclude some items from the PCL-R. Results from McCoy (2015) had limited generalizability because it exclusively focused on a sample within Texas, disregarding individuals, arrests, and charges from other states and countries.

Psychopathy in Women

Since the psychopathy construct was originally based off adult male characteristics, there are some questions regarding its applicability to other groups (McKeown, 2010). Past studies investigated the gender differences in psychopathy, specifically whether certain traits are biased. In general, women typically have lower scores on the PCL-R than men (Dolan & Völlm, 2009; Forouzan & Cooke, 2005; Preston et al., 2018). The base rate and prevalence of psychopathy is typically lower in women than in men (Rogstad & Rogers, 2008).

Forouzan and Cooke (2005) looked at gender differences in how women with psychopathy expressed their behaviors, interpersonal characteristics, and motivations. Impulsivity in women was not characterized by violent behaviors the way it was in men, specifically behaviors such as running away, self-harm, theft, and fraud (Forouzan & Cooke, 2005). Women high in psychopathy did not exhibit grandiose sense of self-worth or superficial charm as strongly as men, except in extreme cases (Forouzan & Cooke, 2005). Women high in psychopathy tend to rely on promiscuous sexual behaviors (e.g., flirting) to manipulate others (Forouzan & Cooke, 2005). This emphasis on promiscuous

sexual behaviors is similar to a report by Grann (2000), which found women scored higher on Item 11 (promiscuous sexual behavior).

Banasik et al. (2017) looked at whether there were gender differences in aggressiveness and the intensity of psychopathic symptoms. Levels of aggression were better represented by increased tendencies towards promiscuous behaviors and criminal versatility (Banasik et al., 2017). Additionally, aggression was related to impulsivity in justice-involved women (Banasik et al., 2017).

Women who have Sexually Offended

The concept of women being capable of sexual offenses can be difficult to grasp, as gender roles do not typically view women as sexual or violent beings towards men and children (Cortoni, 2018; Cortoni & Stefanov, 2020; Gölge et al., 2021). Women are just as capable of forcing victims to have sexual intercourse, fondling their victims, and penetrating their victims (Cain et al., 2015; Dara Shaw et al., 2020). Like their male counterparts, women who sexually offend encompass a variety of criminal behaviors and histories, very rarely fitting one stereotype (Cortoni, 2018; Pedneault, 2019). Sexual acts by women who sexually offend can range from possession of child pornography to forcible fondling, with a small proportion committing acts with penetration (Cortoni & Stefanov, 2020; Vandiver, 2006). It was previously assumed that not enough women committed sexual offenses, women committed sexual offenses due to mental impairment, or women were always coerced into committing sexual offenses (Cortoni, 2018). Women are typically considered victims, with some health professionals and law enforcement officers assuming such crimes are the result of a serious mental illness (Colson et al., 2013; Gölge et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2019). While records indicate women make up a

small proportion of individuals who commit sexual offenses, numbers ranging from 2-12%, the reality is that there are many women who may be unreported (Christiansen & Thyer, 2002; Cortoni et al., 2017; Gölge et al., 2021; Vandiver et al., 2019).

Early studies by Vandiver (2006) and colleagues (Vandiver & Kercher, 2004) suggested that the typical woman who sexually offends was white, between 22-33 years old at the time of the offense, experimented with drugs and alcohol, and harmed victims she was previously acquainted or related to. Evidence suggested these women exhibit symptoms of serious mental illness, but this observation may be controversial due to past studies using small clinical samples (Gölge et al., 2021; Marshall & Miller, 2019b; Miller et al., 2009; Vandiver, 2006; Vandiver & Kercher, 2004). Compared to men, women who have sexually offended more often reported histories of traumatic childhoods, neglect, or abuse; many of these women experienced either physical abuse, sexual abuse, or both at some point in their lives (van der Put et al., 2014; Wijkman et al., 2010, 2011). All in all, the increased research on women who have sexually offended suggests this initial profile is still being developed.

Earlier studies have also focused on comparing women who have sexually offended by themselves (solo offenders) to women who have sexually offended with either a single partner or multiple partners (co-offenders). Women who sexually offend are still considered threatening regardless of whether they are working with a partner or not (Colson et al., 2013). Compared to co-offenders, solo offenders were more likely to victimize unrelated persons, victimize boys, and have higher rates of general and violent recidivism (Miller & Marshall, 2019; Williams et al., 2019). Solo offenders were also more likely to report mental health issues and psychological vulnerabilities, higher levels

of negative mood and aggression, lower levels of self-esteem, and more difficulties with self-management (Budd et al., 2017; Cortoni & Stefanov, 2020; Miller & Marshall, 2019; Williams et al., 2019). Co-offenders were more likely to have experienced abuse during childhood and adulthood, especially sexual abuse in adulthood (Miller & Marshall, 2019). Additionally, Wijkman et al. (2010) found co-offenders whose partners were men were more frequently specialists, implying they were more likely to commit sexual offenses, compared to solo-offenders. There have been little to no significant differences between groups regarding prior criminal history, or specific victim demographics, like age or race (Budd et al., 2017; Miller & Marshall, 2019; Vandiver, 2006).

Wijkman et al. (2011) studied a sample of 135 women who committed sexual offenses to understand the extent sexual offenses were a part of their criminal careers. Researchers grouped their sample by the following: once-only offenders, those who commit only one sexual offense; generalists, those who commit sexual offenses as well as violent offenses; and specialists, those who mostly commit sexual offenses (Wijkman et al., 2011). Individuals in the once-only group did not have statistically significant distinguishing factors in their personal characteristics, compared to the other two groups (Wijkman et al., 2011). Generalists tend to begin lengthy criminal careers at younger ages, experience physical maltreatment in childhood, experiment with drugs more frequently, commit serious offenses in addition to their sexual offense, and victimize strangers (Wijkman et al., 2011). Simply put, generalists typically fit the “general prototype of the antisocial offender” (Wijkman et al., 2011, p. 42). Specialists tend to experience more sexual abuse in childhood, have a history of traumatic events, co-offend with men, commit more sexual offenses, rarely have other minor or serious offenses in

their criminal history, and victimize those they knew beforehand (Wijkman et al., 2011). The results from this study show how diverse criminal histories are for women who have committed sexual offenses.

Victims of Women who have Sexually Offended

Abuse by women, regardless of whether it is sexual or not, has been perceived by the public as less serious and less harmful than abuse committed by men (Cortoni, 2018; Gölge et al., 2021). However, abuse perpetrated by women can be just as traumatic as abuse perpetrated by men; some victims who had been abused by both genders claimed the psychological impact of being abused by a woman was more damaging (Christensen, 2018). When a woman holds a caretaking role in the victim's life, some professionals assume the victims were either misinterpreting the adult's actions or acting out a fantasy (Christensen, 2018; Cortoni, 2018; Gölge et al., 2021). When a woman victimizes a boy or man, traditional views of masculinity consider boys who are victimized to be voluntary participants and their abuse to be a fantasy (Christensen, 2018; Gölge et al., 2021). These rationalizations minimize the crime committed and dismiss the pain felt by the victims, contributing to long-term trauma (Cortoni, 2018). Additionally, these perceptions can dissuade victims from disclosing their abuse (Cortoni, 2018). Past studies investigated the prevalence of women committing offenses against victims of the same gender. For example, Williams and Bierie (2015) analyzed 802,150 incidences of sexual assault from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), specifically comparing incidences perpetrated by men to ones perpetrated by women. Results suggested 45% of the incidences perpetrated by women involved a victim of the same gender while 12% of the incidences perpetrated by men involved a victim of the same gender (Williams &

Bierie, 2015). In another study, McLeod (2015) analyzed 279,440 cases of sexual abuse towards children from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), specifically investigating whether distinct gender patterns existed in offending behavior. Compared to men, overall results suggested women were less selective about victims' gender and age (McLeod, 2015). Women still targeted victims of the opposite gender in 31.8% of cases and victims of the same gender in 68% of cases (McLeod, 2015). Co-offenders are more likely than solo offenders to victimize girls that they have a prior relationship with, with many targeting dependent children and relatives (Cortoni et al., 2017; Miller & Marshall, 2019; Wijkman et al., 2010). Solo offenders are more likely to victimize young boys who are strangers (Budd et al., 2017; Colson et al., 2013; Cortoni, 2018). Additionally, data suggested women who sexually offend tend to target younger victims (Cortoni, 2018; van der Put et al., 2014). For example, the McLeod (2015) study found women tend to target younger children and had a wider distribution in the age range of their victims.

Recidivism of Women who have Sexually Offended

Compared to men who commit sexual offenses, women have lower rates of general and sexual recidivism (Cortoni et al., 2010; Cortoni & Stefanov, 2020). Past research suggests women who sexually offend, compared to men, are less likely to commit violent offenses and pose less of a danger towards the community (Tsopelas et al., 2011). Lack of accurate knowledge to assess women who sexually offend makes it difficult to determine their level of risk as well as assign the proper treatment and rehabilitation programs to meet their needs (Marshall & Miller, 2019b).

Research on recidivism of women who have sexually offended suggests certain factors contribute to their repeated criminal behavior. Static risk factors are factors that cannot be changed or targeted, including history of abuse, age at the time of the offense, and whether the victim is related to their abuser (Cortoni, 2018). Many studies have found history of sexual abuse to be prevalent in women who have sexually offended. For example, when Williams et al. (2019) examined group differences between solo offenders, co-offenders, and men who sexually offend, they found all groups reported early experiences of abuse. However, abuse experienced by women, regardless of whether they offended with a partner, was considered to be more severe and extensive (Williams et al., 2019). Dynamic risk factors, factors that can be changed or targeted, are less known in research (Cortoni, 2018).

Few studies have attempted to review specific predictors of recidivism for women who have sexually offended. Freeman and Sandler (2008) analyzed recidivism patterns and risk factors in a sample of 390 women and 390 men who committed sexual offenses. Initial results suggested that women who committed sexual offenses, compared to men, were significantly less likely to be rearrested for either a nonsexual or sexual offense (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). The number of prior drug arrests, violent felony arrests, times spent incarcerated, and the age of the individual during the initial sex offense were all considered significant predictors for general recidivism (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). The number of prior sexual offenses, sexual offenses with child victims, supervision violations, and the age of the individual during the initial sexual offense were considered significant predictors for sexual recidivism (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). Results from this study suggested women who committed sexual offenses were significantly less likely

than men to be rearrested for both nonsexual and sexual offenses (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). Further analysis suggested the victim's gender and the type of sexual contact did not have the same effect predicting general recidivism in women as it did in men (Freeman & Sandler, 2008).

Sandler and Freeman (2009) conducted another study assessing recidivism, using a sample of 1,466 women convicted of sexual offenses. Findings from this study suggested the number of prior convictions involving a child victim, prior misdemeanor convictions, and increased offender age raised the likelihood of a woman sexually recidivating (Sandler & Freeman, 2009). It should be noted that although individuals who sexually recidivated were older than those that did not, age was not considered a statistically significant predictor (Sandler & Freeman, 2009).

Marshall and Miller (2019b) and Marshall et al. (2021) have attempted to fill the gaps in research by researching how current risk assessment tools apply to women who have sexually offended. Marshall and Miller (2019b) studied gender-specific and gender-neutral risk factors in a sample of 225 women who committed sexual offenses. For this study, gender-neutral risk factors included age, criminal history, and victim characteristics while gender-specific risk factors included symptoms of mental illness, substance abuse, and history of victimization (Marshall & Miller, 2019b). Whether an individual had at least one previous nonsexual arrest was considered a significant predictor for general recidivism (Marshall & Miller, 2019b). Whether an individual offended with a partner, demonstrated symptoms of mental illness, and had a history of victimization was considered a significant predictor for sexual recidivism (Marshall & Miller, 2019b).

A study by Marshall et al. (2021) demonstrated how risk assessment tools originally designed for men can have questionable accuracy when applied to women. None of the items in the Static-99R were considered statistically significant when assessing sexual recidivism (Marshall et al., 2021). In this study, the following factors were associated with nonsexual recidivism for women who have sexually offended: cohabitating with a partner for at least two years, solo-offending against victims of the same gender, and having at least four sentencing dates (Marshall et al., 2021). These associated factors are consistent with previous studies on recidivism among women who sexually offend and general justice-involved women (Marshall et al., 2021; Marshall & Miller, 2019a; Miller & Marshall, 2019). Overall, this study suggested the Static-99R is not valid for measuring the risk of recidivism for women who committed sexual offenses. Findings from this study suggest certain risk factors are gendered and must be addressed to accurately predict recidivism with this population.

These studies demonstrate the importance of considering gendered differences when assessing risk in women who have sexually offended. Since the base rates for women are considered low, current risk assessment tools are more likely to overpredict recidivism risk (Cortoni et al., 2010). Today, the current assessment tools have not been validated to predict or evaluate risk in women who have sexually offended. Having a validated risk assessment tool for women who have sexually offended is important to fully understand the realities of this population as well as provide the public with accurate information regarding potential harm.

Current Study

The current study assessed psychopathy as a potential risk factor for general and violent recidivism in women who have sexually offended. This project analyzed a data set previously collected from 2008-2015, using a sample of incarcerated women from the Texas Department of Justice. This sample of 244 women who have sexually offended completed Dynamic Risk Assessments (DRA) from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice prior to their release from prison. This study examined the use of the PCL-R in a sample of women who have sexually offended. First, PCL-R total scores were used to assess whether a participant recidivated overall and whether the PCL-R could better predict either general or violent recidivism. Then, PCL-R factor scores were used to assess variance in overall recidivism. Finally, specific items of the PCL-R were used to assess variance in either general or violent recidivism. To expand previous knowledge, this study chose to focus on the four-factor model and individual items of the PCL-R in addition to PCL-R total score and the two-factor model. This study hypothesized that certain items, specifically items relating to antisocial characteristics, would better predict recidivism for women who have sexually offended.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Participants

This study's sample consisted of 244 women who were serving a prison sentence for an index sexual offense. When the analyses of the PCL-R items and recidivism were conducted, 46 cases were excluded as missing data on Item 19 (revocation of criminal release). There are two possible explanations for this: researchers did not have access to records regarding criminal histories outside Texas and individuals who were incarcerated for their first offense will not have prior criminal histories, omitting Item 19. Cases were excluded listwise because an imputation would affect other scores. Specifically, the PCL-R total scores had already accounted for missing data and were appropriately prorated. Two women were excluded from analyses because they did not include information in the PCL-R. The final sample was 242 women.

Table 1 presents the descriptive characteristics of the analytic sample. The average age of the sample was 36.6 years old. The youngest age reported was 20 years while the oldest was 63 years. Fifty-five percent of the sample identified as White, 24.8% identified as Hispanic, and 19.8% identified as Black. The average number of total prior arrests was 3.53, with the lowest reported total prior arrests being zero and the highest being 20. The average number of total prior charges was 4.86, with the lowest reported total prior charges being zero and the highest being 25. In the sample, the average number of prior general offenses was 1.81, with the average number of prior violent and sexual offenses being less than one. Very few of the women in the sample had prior sexual offenses.

A majority of the sample (84.7%) had an index sexual offense involving a child victim, with the most common index offenses of sexual assault of a child, indecency with a child by contact, and sexual performance of a child. Aggravated sexual assault, or assault against another adult, was the second most common index sexual offense, committed by 5.4% of the sample. Only seven women comprised the ‘Other’ category that includes offenses such as improper relations between educator and student and prohibited sexual conduct.

The average PCL-R total score was 11.73, with the lowest score being two and the highest being 28. Ten women in the sample received a PCL-R total score 25 or above. About 31% of the sample reoffended overall. When distinguishing the types of recidivism, 24.8% recidivated with a general offense while 6.2% recidivated with a violent offense and 0.4% recidivated with a sexual offense.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Sample of Women who Committed an Index Sexual Offense

(N=242)

	N (Percent)	Mean (SD)	Range
Age	-	36.60 (9.70)	20-63
Race			
White	133 (55.0)	-	-
Hispanic	60 (24.8)	-	-
Black	48 (19.8)	-	-
Other	1 (0.4)	-	-
Total Prior Arrests	-	3.53 (3.14)	1-20
Total Prior Charges	-	4.86 (4.22)	0-25
Prior Offenses			
General Offenses	-	1.81 (2.53)	0-19
Violent Offenses	-	0.33 (0.71)	0-5

(continued)

	N (Percent)	Mean (SD)	Range
Sexual Offenses	-	0.07 (0.33)	0-2
Index Sexual Offenses			
Sexual Offenses with Children ^a	205 (84.7)	-	-
Aggravated Sexual Assault ^b	13 (5.4)	-	-
Sexual Assault	9 (3.7)	-	-
Compelling Prostitution	8 (3.3)	-	-
Other ^c	7 (2.9)	-	-
Psychopathy			
PCL-R Total Score	-	11.73 (5.85)	2-28
PCL-R Total Score Above Cut-Off (25+)	10 (4.13)	-	-
Factor 1 (2-Factor; Personality)	-	3.60 (2.96)	0-13
Factor 2 (2-Factor; Antisocial/Lifestyle)	-	6.25 (3.48)	0-18
Factor 1 (4-Factor; Interpersonal)	-	1.66 (1.53)	0-8
Factor 2 (4-Factor; Affect)	-	1.93 (1.94)	0-8
Factor 3 (4-Factor; Lifestyle)	-	3.77 (2.09)	0-14
Factor 4 (4-Factor; Antisocial)	-	2.69 (2.22)	0-9
Recidivism			
Any Recidivism	75 (31.0)	-	-
General Recidivism	60 (24.8)	-	-
Violent Recidivism	15 (6.2)	-	-
Sexual Recidivism	1 (0.4)	-	-

Note. ^aIncludes sexual performance with a child, indecency with a child by contact, indecency with a child by exposure, sexual assault of a child, possession of child pornography. ^bIncludes aggravated sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault with a weapon. ^cIncludes prohibited sexual conduct, improper relationships between educator/student, and burglary of habitation with intention to commit sexual assault.

Measures

The PCL-R

The PCL-R assesses the extent an individual exhibits psychopathic personality traits (Hare, 1999a; Murphy et al., 2016; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2015). The PCL-R requires that clinicians use case histories, a semi-structured interview, and a 3-point scale (scores will be either 0, 1, or 2) to assess 20 items and assemble a total score (Hare, 2003; Hare & Neumann, 2008). Although the maximum total score possible is 40, most researchers consider an individual to be high in psychopathy when scores are above 25-30 (Hare et al., 2000). Researchers have debated what total score would best represent high levels of psychopathy in women. Even with lower cut-off scores, women, in general, still tend to have lower total PCL-R scores when compared to men (de Vogel & Lancel, 2016). Studies with European samples have opted to use cut-off scores between 25-28 instead (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2010, 2015). Although there is no agreed-upon cut-off score between researchers, past researchers of the PCL-R have advocated for using cut-off scores that are less than the traditional 30 (Banasik et al., 2017; de Vogel & Lancel, 2016; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2010). For example, Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2010) found in their study that the prevalence of psychopathy was higher in women with cut-off scores of 25 (21.6%) than with cut-off scores of 30 (9.3%). Notably, McCoy (2015) considered higher PCL-R scores to be 30 or above but found none of the individuals in the sample met that requirement. For this study, a cut-off score of 25 or above on the PCL-R classified an individual as high in psychopathy. For this study, 10 women were equal to or above the cut-off score of 25 (see Table 1). This suggested that 4.13% of the women in the sample were considered high in psychopathy.

The PCL-R encompasses four dimensions psychopathy construct assessment: interpersonal, such as deception and glibness; affective, such as apathy and remorselessness; lifestyle, such as irresponsibility and proneness to boredom; and antisocial, such as poor social skills and early behavioral problems (Hare & Neumann, 2008). The PCL-R has demonstrated strong predictability for violent recidivism in male populations (Eisenbarth et al., 2012). Factor 1 scores represent interpersonal and affective characteristics while Factor 2 scores represent impulsive, antisocial, and unstable lifestyle characteristics (Blais et al., 2017; Dolan & Völlm, 2009; Hare, 1999b).

The PCL-R uses the 20 items to measure various dimensions of psychopathy: (1) Glibness and superficial charm; (2) Grandiose sense of self-worth; (3) Needs for stimulation; (4) Pathological lying; (5) Cunning and manipulation; (6) Lack of remorse or guilt; (7) Shallow affect; (8) Callousness and lack of empathy; (9) Parasitic lifestyle; (10) Poor behavioral controls; (11) Promiscuous sexual behavior; (12) Early behavioral problems; (13) Lack of realistic goals; (14) Impulsivity; (15) Irresponsibility; (16) Failure to accept responsibility; (17) Short-term marital relationships; (18) Juvenile delinquency; (19) Revocation of conditional release; and (20) Criminal Versatility (Banasik et al., 2017; Hare, 1999b, 2003). Under the two-factor model, Factor 1 scores include items 1-2, 4-8, and 16. Factor 2 scores include items 3, 9-10, 12-15, and 18-19. Under this model, items 11, 17, and 20 do not fit either Factor 1 or Factor 2. In the two-factor model, Factor 1 represents the personality traits while Factor 2 represents the lifestyle and social deviance aspects (Lehmann et al., 2019).

The four-factor model expands on Factor 1 and Factor 2 by separating items into individual constructs. Under the four-factor model, Factor 1 refers to the interpersonal

characteristics (items 1, 2, 4, and 5), Factor 2 refers to the affective characteristics (items 6, 7, 8, and 16), Factor 3 refers to the lifestyle characteristics (items 3, 9, 13, 14, and 15), and Factor 4 refers to the antisocial characteristics (items 10, 12, 18, 19, and 20). In its original conception, the 3-point scale used to evaluate each item indicates what level the assessed item applies to the individual: 0 indicated the item does not apply, 1 indicated the item somewhat applies, and 2 indicated the item definitely applies (Hare et al., 1991).

Of the currently available risk assessment tools, the PCL-R remains the most effective tool to assess risk for recidivism (Hare et al., 2000). Studies have found this assessment tool to be consistently reliable and valid. Compared to studies using justice-involved men, Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) scores in past studies for women are somewhat lower (Dolan & Völlm, 2009). However, ICC scores for women are high enough for the PCL-R to be considered statistically reliable (Dolan & Völlm, 2009). ICC for total and factor scores in institutional settings can range from 0.76 to 0.94 (Blais et al., 2017). Additionally, reliability for individual items has also demonstrated positive results. ICC scores for individual items, based on various studies, can range from moderate to excellent reliability (item values ranging from 0.42 to 0.82; Blais et al., 2017).

Past studies assessed the validity of the PCL-R in general justice-involved women but not specifically in women who have committed sexual offenses. Murrie et al. (2012) found the PCL-R, in a sample of 333 men who committed sexual offenses, had strong predictive validity regarding sexual offenses. The PCL-R demonstrated stronger convergent and discriminant validity for Factor 2, with validity not as strong for Factor 1 (Gendreau et al., 2002; McCoy, 2015). Studies assessing the PCL-R in justice-involved

women have received mixed results, demonstrating either similar or less accuracy than analysis with samples of men (de Vogel & Lancel, 2016). Studies of justice-involved women have demonstrated mixed results on the factor-level, with some finding Factor 1 to be a better predictor for violent offending and others finding Factor 2 to be the better predictor (McKeown, 2010). Additionally, the use of high cut-off scores tends to impact results when assessing women. For example, most studies determine their cut-off score to be a total PCL-R score of 30 or above (Lehmann et al., 2019; McKeown, 2010). However, when Klein Tunte et al. (2014) assessed 221 Dutch women in forensic psychiatric settings, they found less than 3% of their sample scored 30 or above on the PCL-R.

In the current study, PCL-R total and factor scores were measured as continuous variables. An analysis was conducted to test the internal consistency of the psychopathy variables. PCL-R total score variable had a Cronbach's alpha of .737, demonstrating high reliability. In the two-factor model, Factor 1 had a higher Cronbach's alpha (.777) than Factor 2 (.581). In the four-factor model, Factor 2 had the highest Cronbach's alpha (.763), while Factor 3 had the lowest (.463). DeVellis (2016) argued Cronbach's alphas higher than .5 demonstrated high reliability while alphas lower than .5 demonstrated low reliability. Based on these criteria, a majority of the factors demonstrated acceptable to high reliability.

Recidivism

For this study, recidivism was measured as whether the individual was rearrested, based on their criminal histories from the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) website. This recidivism data, collected from the DPS, were defined as a rearrest

occurring after the completion of the Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA). The DPS website includes arrests, prosecutions, court dispositions, and individual personal information. General recidivism was classified as any nonviolent rearrest. The following were classified as general offenses: driving while drunk or on drugs, driving violations, drug offenses, theft offenses, fraud offenses, failure to register, and other. Violent recidivism was classified as any violent rearrest, including aggravated assault, assault, robbery, terroristic threats, DWI, and harassment of public servants. Only one woman reported recidivating with a sexual offense.

Table 1 shows what percentage of the sample recidivated after completing the DRA. Each form of recidivism (overall, general, and violent) was coded dichotomously: individuals were coded as either having reoffended (1=yes) or not (0=no). Any type of recidivism included women who reoffended, regardless of the type of offense. General recidivism coded women who reoffended with a general offense as one. Violent recidivism coded women who reoffended with a violent offense as one. Thirty-one percent of the women recidivated with any type of offense, with most women recidivating with a general offense instead of a violent one. Of the 242 women in the sample, only one woman sexually recidivated. Although this woman had an additional rearrest for a general offense, she was coded for violent recidivism instead of general recidivism.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Listed below are the research questions and hypotheses this study examines.

Hypotheses Related to Recidivism

The first research question involved whether a participant's PCL-R total score could predict overall, general, or violent recidivism.

RQ1: Does psychopathy predict recidivism in women who have sexually offended?

H1: Women with higher PCL-R total scores will be more likely to recidivate, compared to women with lower PCL-R total scores.

H2: The PCL-R will be a significantly better predictor for general recidivism than violent recidivism in this population.

Hypotheses Related to the PCL-R Factors and Items

The research questions and hypotheses below examined how recidivism related to the PCL-R factors and individual items.

RQ2: Which factor would be more predictive of recidivism in women who have committed sexual offenses?

H3: For the two-factor model, PCL-R Factor 2 scores will account for significantly more variance in overall recidivism than Factor 1.

H4: For the four-factor model, PCL-R Factor 4 scores will account for significantly more variance in recidivism than the other three factors.

RQ3: Which items of the PCL-R would be more predictive of risk of recidivism in women who have committed sexual offenses?

H5: At the item-level, Criminal Versatility (Item 20) will account for significantly more variance in general recidivism than the other items on the PCL-R.

H6: At the item-level, Revocation of Conditional Release (Item 19) will account for significantly more variance in violent recidivism than the other items on the PCL-R.

Analytic Strategy

The 242 incarcerated women completed the DRA from 2008 to 2015, prior to their release from prison. Data for recidivism were collected in 2019. The DRA consisted of the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R; Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Bonta, 1996) as well as the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare et al., 1991). This study exclusively focused on scores and responses related to the PCL-R and its items. Original data were collected from prison units in Huntsville and Dayton, Texas and coded using SPSS 22. Statistical analysis for the current study relied on SPSS 27. Use of this data was approved by the Sam Houston State University Institutional Review Board.

For this study, scores related to the PCL-R were chosen as independent variables while forms of recidivism were chosen as dependent variables. Control variables for this study included age, total prior arrests, total prior charges, identifying as Black, identifying as White, and identifying as Hispanic. Race variables were dummy coded dichotomously. For example, women identifying as White were coded as 1 and non-White women of color (Black and Hispanic) were coded as 0. This method of dummy coding was applied to the other race variables as well.

Various regressions were used to test the proposed hypotheses. Except for the second hypothesis, binary logistic regressions were conducted with psychopathy as the

independent variable and recidivism as the dependent variable. PCL-R total scores, factor scores, and individual items were numeric representations of various psychopathic traits, using an interval/ratio level of measurement. Recidivism, regardless of type, used a nominal level of measurement and were dichotomously classified. The second hypothesis used a multinomial logistic regression to compare how PCL-R total scores accounted for variance in general and violent recidivism. For this analysis, participants were classified as either recidivating with a general offense, a violent offense, or not at all.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate correlations were conducted to determine whether there was an association between the control variables, the PCL-R total score, the factors, and all types of recidivism. Results from the first correlation matrix (see Table 2) compared PCL-R total scores and scores from the two-factor model with control variables and all types of recidivism. PCL-R total scores had significant associations with any recidivism, general recidivism, age, total prior arrests, total prior charges, and identifying as Black or non-White. Higher PCL-R total scores were associated with a higher likelihood of recidivating with any offense and general offenses. Any type of recidivism and general recidivism had significant associations with PCL-R total scores, scores from the two-factor model, age, total prior arrests, and total prior charges. Violent recidivism had a significant association with age and Factor 2 (antisocial/lifestyle), but not PCL-R total scores or Factor 1 (psychopathic personality). Age had significant negative associations with variables related to the PCL-R and all types of recidivism. This suggests older women were associated with lower PCL-R scores, lower factor scores, and lower likelihood of any type of recidivism.

Since total prior arrests were positively associated with PCL-R total scores, the two-factor model, and recidivism, results suggest women with increasing number of prior arrests in their criminal history were associated with higher PCL-R scores, higher factor scores, a higher likelihood of recidivating with any type of offense, and higher likelihood of recidivating with a general offense. Total prior charges demonstrated a similar

relationship with PCL-R total scores, the two-factor model, any type of recidivism, and general recidivism. Identifying as a Black woman had a significant, positive association with PCL-R total scores and Factor 1 scores, suggesting Black women are associated with a higher PCL-R total score and higher Factor 1 scores. Identifying as a White woman had a significant, negative association with PCL-R total scores and Factor 1 scores, suggesting White women are associated with a lower PCL-R total score and lower Factor 1 scores compared to women of color. Identifying as a Hispanic woman did not have significant associations with any of the other variables, meaning it could be excluded from further analyses. Hispanic women were not completely excluded from analyses and were included in categories for the other race variables, coded as non-White and non-Black. Results from this correlation established that a significant association exists between PCL-R total scores, scores from the two-factor model, and recidivism. The significant variables will be included in the multivariate analyses, further testing the association between the PCL-R total scores and recidivism.

Table 2*Bivariate Correlations with PCL-R Total Score, 2-Factor Model, and any Recidivism (N=242)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. PCL-R Total Score	-											
2. Factor 1 (Psychopathic Personality)	.795***	-										
3. Factor 2 (Antisocial/Lifestyle)	.845***	.442***	-									
4. Any Recidivism	.306***	.237***	.261***	-								
5. General Recidivism	.274***	.205***	.215***	.857***	-							
6. Violent Recidivism	.097	.088	.115*	.384***	-.148**	-						
7. Age	-.164**	-.057	-.251***	-.245***	-.145**	-.211***	-					
8. Total Prior Arrests	.411***	.225***	.382***	.374***	.345***	.099	.042	-				
9. Total Prior Charges	.304**	.156**	.259***	.277***	.262**	.242*	.087	.877***	-			
10. Race (1=Black)	.157**	.184**	.096	.003	-.046	.087	-.164**	.048	-.003	-		
11. Race (1=White)	-.119*	-.206***	-.036	-.040	-.019	-.043	.113*	-.024	-.040	-.549***	-	
12 Race (1=Hispanic)	-.003	.076	-.044	.050	.069	-.029	.029	-.024	.044	-.286***	-.634***	-

Note. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

A second bivariate correlation was conducted to determine whether scores from the PCL-R four-factor model were significantly associated with recidivism. Results from the second correlation matrix (see Table 3) compared factors against the control variables and all types of recidivism. Each of the four factors had significant associations with any recidivism, general recidivism, and total prior arrests. Factor 2 of the two-factor model and Factors 2 and 3 of the four-factor model demonstrated significant relationships with violent recidivism. Similar to the results in the previous bivariate correlation matrix, total prior arrests, total prior charges, and age were significantly associated with recidivism and PCL-R factors. Identifying as a Black woman had a significant, positive association with Factors 1 and 2 of the four-factor model, suggesting Black women were associated with higher scores on those factors. Identifying as a White woman had a significant, negative association with Factor 1 and 2 of the four-factor model, suggesting White women were associated with lower scores on those factors compared to women of color. Results from this correlation established that a significant association exists between PCL-R factors and recidivism.

Table 3*Bivariate Correlations with the 4-Factor Model and any Recidivism (N=242)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Factor 1 (Interpersonal)	-											
2. Factor 2 (Affective)	.445***	-										
3. Factor 3 (Lifestyle)	.415***	.329***	-									
4. Factor 4 (Antisocial)	.295***	.286***	.431***	-								
5. Any Recidivism	.230***	.180***	.195***	.267***	-							
6. General Recidivism	.234***	.129**	.142**	.244***	.857***	-						
7. Violent Recidivism	.023	.115*	.119*	.075	.384***	-.148**	-					
8. Age	-.013	-.077	-.107*	-.287***	-.245***	-.145**	-.211***	-				
9. Total Prior Arrests	.251***	.146**	.293***	.436***	.374***	.345***	.099	.042	-			
10. Total Prior Charges	.173***	.101	.187***	.340***	.277***	.262***	.061	.087	.877***	-		

(continued)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
11. Race (1=Black)	.171***	.146**	.075	.098	.003	-.046	.087	-.164**	.048	-.003	-	
12. Race (1=White)	-.141**	-.203***	-.057	-.010	-.040	-.019	-.043	.114*	-.024	-.040	-.549***	-

Note. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Results from both correlation matrices suggested significant associations between the PCL-R total score, PCL-R factors, age, total prior charges, total prior arrests, race variables, and all types of recidivism existed.

Multivariate Analysis

PCL-R Total Score and Recidivism

The first research question and first two hypotheses focused on the use of participants' PCL-R total scores to predict recidivism. The first hypothesis predicted that women with higher PCL-R total scores were more likely to recidivate, with any type of offense. When testing for multicollinearity, the PCL-R total score and the control variables had Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranging from 1.07-4.89. VIF values greater than one but less than five are considered moderately correlated, but the variables do not have multicollinearity if VIF values are less than 10 (Shrestha, 2020). When total number of prior charges was removed, VIF values ranged from 1.07-1.47. A binary logistic regression was used to examine whether PCL-R total scores predicted any type of recidivism, with age, total prior arrests, identifying as a Black woman, and identifying as a White woman as control variables. Table 4 shows how the overall model was a good fit for the data.

When predicting any type of recidivism, age, total prior arrests, and the PCL-R total score were considered statistically significant (see Table 4). If PCL-R total scores increase by one unit, then the odds of recidivating with any type of offense are 1.06 times higher. If age increases by one year, then the odds of recidivating with any type of offense decreases by 7%. If total number of prior arrests increase by one, then the odds of recidivating with any type of offense are 1.33 times higher. Based on the results of the

binary logistic regression, the first hypothesis was supported, indicating women with higher PCL-R scores were significantly more likely to recidivate than women with lower scores.

Table 4

Binary Logistic Regression with PCL-R Total Score and any Recidivism (N=242)

Variable	B	SE	Sig.	Exp(B)
PCL-R Total Score	.056	.030	.060	1.06*
Age	-.074	.019	.000	.930**
Total Prior Arrests	.283	.066	.000	1.33**
Race (1=Black)	-.665	.487	.172	.514
Race (1=White)	-.249	.370	.501	.779

$\chi^2 = 59.509***$
-2 Log likelihood = 240.104
Nagelkerke $R^2 = .307$

Note. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .01$. *** Hosmer and Lemeshow Test ($p = .466$).

The second hypothesis suggested PCL-R total scores would better predict general recidivism than violent recidivism. For this model, VIF values ranged from 1.07-4.89. The VIF values indicate there is a moderate correlation but does not indicate multicollinearity (Shrestha, 2020). When total number of prior charges was removed, VIF values ranged from 1.07-1.47. A multinomial logistic regression was used to examine whether PCL-R total scores could predict either general recidivism or violent recidivism. Table 5 shows the overall model's fit for the data.

When predicting general recidivism, the PCL-R total score, age, and total prior arrests are statistically significant (see Table 5). When predicting violent recidivism, only age and total prior arrests were considered statistically significant. If age increases by one

year, the likelihood of generally recidivating decreases by 6% and violently recidivating decreases by 13.5%. If total number of prior arrests increase by one unit, then the odds of generally recidivating are 1.32 times higher and violently recidivating are 1.30 times higher. Based on the results of the multinomial logistic regression, the second hypothesis was supported, indicating PCL-R total scores were a better predictor for general recidivism than violent recidivism.

Table 5

Multinomial Logistic Regression with PCL-R Total Score, General Recidivism, and Violent Recidivism (N=242)

Predictor	Violent Recidivism				General Recidivism			
	B	SE	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	SE	Sig.	Exp(B)
PCL-R Total Score	.029	.052	.578	1.03	.062	.032	.049	1.06*
Age	-.145	.046	.001	.865**	-.062	.020	.002	.940**
Total Prior Arrests	.262	.097	.007	1.30**	.281	.067	.000	1.32**
Race (1=Black)	-.018	.840	.983	.982	-.871	.532	.101	.418
Race (1=White)	-.069	.746	.927	.934	-.290	.387	.455	.749

Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2 = 66.259$

Pseudo $R^2 = .304$

Note. Reference category is no recidivism. * $p < .10$. *** $p < .01$

PCL-R Factor Scores and Recidivism

The second research question, as well as the third and fourth hypotheses focused on determining which factors of the PCL-R were better predictors for any type of recidivism. The third hypothesis proposed that Factor 2 (antisocial/lifestyle) would account for significantly more variance in any type of recidivism, compared to Factor 1 (psychopathic personality). For this model, VIF values ranged from 1.13-4.97. The VIF

values indicate there is a moderate correlation but does not indicate multicollinearity (Shrestha, 2020). When total number of prior charges was removed, VIF values ranged from 1.13-1.52. A binary logistic regression was used to test this hypothesis. Table 6 shows the overall model's fit for the data.

Factor 1, age, and total number of prior arrests were statistically significant predictors for any type of recidivism (see Table 6). When Factor 1 scores increase by one unit, then the odds of recidivating with any type of offense are 1.16 times higher. When age increases by one year, then the odds of recidivating with any type of offense decreases by 7.9%. When total number of prior arrests increase by one unit, then the odds of recidivating are 1.38 times higher.

Table 6

Binary Logistic Regression with PCL-R Two-Factor Model and any Recidivism (N=242)

Variable	B	SE	Sig.	Exp(B)
Factor 1 (Psychopathic Personality)	.149	.062	.017	1.16*
Factor 2 (Antisocial/Lifestyle)	-.023	.056	.686	.978
Age	-.083	.020	.000	.921**
Total Prior Arrests	.319	.070	.000	1.38**
Race (1=Black)	-.700	.492	.155	.497
Race (1=White)	-.145	.375	.699	.865

$\chi^2 = 62.245^{***}$

-2 Log likelihood = 237.368

Nagelkerke $R^2 = .319$

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** Hosmer and Lemeshow Test ($p = .388$).

Based on the results of the binary logistic regression, the third hypothesis was not supported, indicating Factor 2 does not account for significantly more variance than

Factor 1 in any type of recidivism. Factor 1 (psychopathic personality) is the only factor in the model that is significantly related to any type of recidivism.

The fourth hypothesis examined the four-factor model of the PCL-R. According to this hypothesis, Factor 4 (antisocial) would account for significantly more variance in any type of recidivism, compared to the other factors of the model. For this model, VIF values ranged from 1.18-5.04. The VIF values indicate there is a moderate correlation but does not indicate multicollinearity (Shrestha, 2020). When total number of prior charges was removed, VIF values ranged from 1.17-1.63. A binary logistic regression was used to test this hypothesis. Table 7 shows the overall model's fit for the data.

Factor 1 (interpersonal), age, and total number of prior arrests were the only statistically significant predictors of any type of recidivism. The odds of recidivating with any type of offense are 1.25 times higher when Factor 1 scores increase by one unit. When age increases by one year, the odds of recidivating with any type of offense decreases by 8.1%. When total number of prior arrests increase by one unit, the odds of recidivating with any type of offense are 1.38 times higher. Based on the results of the binary logistic regression, the fourth hypothesis was not supported, indicating Factor 4 did not account for significantly more variance in any type of recidivism. Similar to the previous analysis, Factor 1 accounted for significantly more variance and was the only factor in the model that was significantly related to any type of recidivism.

Table 7

Binary Logistic Regression with PCL-R Four-Factor Model and any Recidivism (N=242)

Variable	B	SE	Sig.	Exp(B)
Factor 1 (Interpersonal)	.223	.120	.063	1.25*
Factor 2 (Affect)	.098	.094	.301	1.10

(continued)

Variable	B	SE	Sig.	Exp(B)
Factor 3 (Lifestyle)	-.020	.089	.825	.981
Factor 4 (Antisocial)	-.031	.090	.735	.970
Age	-.084	.021	.000	.919**
Total Prior Arrests	.319	.072	.000	1.38**
Race (1=Black)	-.722	.495	.145	.486
Race (1=White)	-.154	.378	.683	.857

$$x^2 = 62.804***$$

$$-2 \text{ Log likelihood} = 236.808$$

$$\text{Nagelkerke } R^2 = .322$$

Note. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .01$. *** Hosmer and Lemeshow Test ($p = .494$).

PCL-R Items and Recidivism

The third research question, as well as the fifth and sixth hypotheses, focused on which items of the PCL-R was a better predictor for recidivism. The fifth hypothesis examined which items better predicted general recidivism while the sixth hypothesis examined violent recidivism. The fifth hypothesis suggested Item 20 (criminal versatility) would account for significantly more variance in general recidivism. When testing for multicollinearity, the PCL-R items had VIF values ranging from 1.14-2.79. Based on the VIF values, multicollinearity is not an issue. A binary logistic regression was used to determine which variable was a significant predictor. Table 8 demonstrates the overall model's fit for the data.

Results from the binary logistic regression indicated age, total prior arrests, identifying as a Black woman, Item 2 (grandiose sense of self-worth), Item 8 (callousness and lack of empathy), Item 9 (parasitic lifestyle), and Item 18 (juvenile delinquency) were statistically significant predictors (see Table 8). As scores on Items 2, 8, and 9 increase, the odds of generally recidivating are 2.42, 2.24, and 1.84 times higher

respectively. As scores for Item 18 increase by one unit, the odds of generally recidivating decreases by 48.5%. When total number of prior arrests increases by one unit, the odds of generally recidivating are 1.44 times higher. Black women were less likely than non-Black women to generally recidivate, with odds of recidivating decreasing by 73.2% for Black women. Based on the coefficients, Item 2 (grandiose sense of self-worth) was the best predictor for general recidivism. Based on the results of the binary logistic regression, the fifth hypothesis was not supported, and Item 20 (criminal versatility) did not account for significantly more variance in general recidivism. Instead, results suggested Item 2 (grandiose sense of self-worth), Item 8 (callousness and lack of empathy), Item 9 (parasitic lifestyle), and Item 18 (juvenile delinquency) accounted for more variance in general recidivism. This demonstrates how psychopathic traits, as opposed to larger factors, have significant associations with recidivism for this sample as well.

Table 8

Binary Logistic Regression with PCL-R Items and General Recidivism (N=242)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Age	-.057	.025	.022	.945**
Total Prior Arrests	.362	.181	.045	1.44**
Total Prior Charges	-.103	.134	.441	.902
Race (1=Black)	-1.32	.639	.039	.268**
Race (1=White)	-.109	.476	.819	.897
Item 1 (Glibness/Superficial Charm)	.458	.549	.404	1.58
Item 2 (Grandiose Self-Worth)	.885	.525	.092	2.42*
Item 3 (Prone to Boredom)	-.358	.349	.305	.699
Item 4 (Pathological Lying)	-.092	.471	.846	.912
Item 5 (Manipulative)	.242	.360	.501	1.27
Item 6 (Lack of Remorse)	-.364	.453	.421	.695

(continued)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Item 7 (Shallow Affect)	-.345	.416	.407	.708
Item 8 (Callous/Lack Empathy)	.804	.488	.100	2.24*
Item 9 (Parasitic Lifestyle)	.612	.290	.035	1.84**
Item 10 (Poor Behavior Control)	.251	.280	.371	1.29
Item 11 (Promiscuous Sexual Behavior)	.086	.296	.773	1.09
Item 12 (Early Behavior Problems)	.251	.359	.484	1.29
Item 13 (Lack Long-Term Goals)	-.424	.379	.263	.654
Item 14 (Impulsivity)	-.178	.399	.656	.837
Item 15 (Irresponsibility)	-.488	.364	.180	.614
Item 16 (Fail to Accept Responsibility)	.535	.397	.178	1.71
Item 17 (Shot-Term Marital Relationships)	.244	.269	.365	1.28
Item 18 (Juvenile Delinquency)	-.663	.362	.067	.515*
Item 19 (Revocation of Conditional Release)	.174	.254	.493	1.19
Item 20 (Criminal Versatility)	.267	.447	.549	1.31

$$\chi^2 = 56.576***$$

$$-2 \text{ Log likelihood} = 174.180$$

$$\text{Nagelkerke } R^2 = .362$$

Note. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** Hosmer and Lemeshow Test ($p = .176$).

The sixth hypothesis suggested Item 19 (revocation of conditional release) would account for significantly more variance in violent recidivism, compared to the other items of the PCL-R. When testing for multicollinearity, PCL-R items had VIF values ranging from 1.14-2.79. Based on these VIF values, multicollinearity is not an issue. A binary logistic regression was used to determine which variable was a significant predictor. Table 9 demonstrates the overall model's fit for the data, with the Nagelkerke R-square indicating that 49.6% of the variation in the model outcome could be explained by the generated model.

Results from the binary logistic regression indicated age, Item 6 (lack of remorse or guilt), Item 10 (poor behavioral controls), Item 14 (impulsivity), and Item 16 (failure

to accept responsibility) were statistically significant predictors for violent recidivism (see Table 9). When scores for Items 6 and 14 increase by one unit, the odds of violently recidivating were 13.64 and 22.07 times higher respectively. When scores for Items 10 and 16 increase by one unit, the odds of violently recidivating decreases by 73.9% and 89.2% respectively. When age increases by one year, the odds of violently recidivating decreases by 16.6%. Based on the coefficients of the significant variables, Item 14 (impulsivity) was the best predictor for recidivating with a violent offense. Based on the results of the binary logistic regression, the sixth hypothesis was not supported, and Item 19 (revocation of conditional release) did not account for significantly more variance in violent recidivism. Instead, Item 6 (lack of remorse or guilt), Item 10 (poor behavioral controls), Item 14 (impulsivity), and Item 16 (failure to accept responsibility) accounted for more variance in violent recidivism. These results demonstrate how items of the PCL-R were still able to predict violent recidivism in women who sexually offended.

Table 9

Binary Logistic Regression with PCL-R Items and Violent Recidivism (N=242)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Sig.	Exp(B)
Age	-.182	.078	.019	.834**
Total Prior Arrests	.493	.472	.296	1.64
Total Prior Charges	-.243	.378	.520	.784
Race (1=Black)	.140	1.07	.896	1.15
Race (1=White)	-.128	1.13	.910	.880
Item 1 (Glibness/Superficial Charm)	-.684	1.26	.586	.505
Item 2 (Grandiose Self-Worth)	.353	1.36	.795	1.42
Item 3 (Prone to Boredom)	.597	.865	.490	1.82
Item 4 (Pathological Lying)	.825	1.06	.437	2.28
Item 5 (Manipulative)	-1.41	1.10	.202	.245

(continued)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Sig.	Exp(<i>B</i>)
Item 6 (Lack of Remorse)	2.61	1.09	.017	13.64**
Item 7 (Shallow Affect)	.025	.861	.977	1.03
Item 8 (Callous/Lack Empathy)	.815	1.05	.439	2.26
Item 9 (Parasitic Lifestyle)	.989	.768	.198	2.69
Item 10 (Poor Behavior Control)	-1.34	.670	.045	.261**
Item 11 (Promiscuous Sexual Behavior)	-.750	.669	.262	.472
Item 12 (Early Behavior Problems)	-.079	.848	.926	.924
Item 13 (Lack Long-Term Goals)	.104	.787	.895	1.11
Item 14 (Impulsivity)	3.09	1.32	.019	22.07**
Item 15 (Irresponsibility)	-1.41	1.12	.209	.245
Item 16 (Fail to Accept Responsibility)	-2.23	1.16	.055	.108*
Item 17 (Short-Term Marital Relationships)	-1.17	.810	.148	.310
Item 18 (Juvenile Delinquency)	-.767	.738	.299	.464
Item 19 (Revocation of Conditional Release)	-.047	.566	.934	.954
Item 20 (Criminal Versatility)	-.359	1.36	.792	.698

$\chi^2 = 41.635***$

-2 Log likelihood = 54.025

Nagelkerke $R^2 = .496$

Note. * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** Hosmer and Lemeshow Test ($p = .999$).

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Past research has shown individuals who commit sexual offenses are a diverse group. Although women only make up a small percentage of these individuals, research is still needed to understand how these women offend and, potentially, reoffend. This is necessary because women tend to have different histories, motivations, and victims than men. However, current risk assessments have not been standardized to assess women who sexually offend and are more likely to overpredict recidivism (Cortoni et al., 2010). It is problematic to assess recidivism risk of women using criterion or measures specifically devised for men (McCoy, 2015). This study aimed to fill gaps in research regarding risk assessment of women who have committed sexual offenses.

Since the PCL-R is considered one of the best predictors of recidivism with justice-involved individuals, assessing how it applies to women who have sexually offended can more effectively guide treatment and management of this group. Additionally, when legislation and regulation of individuals who sexually offend is reliant on properly assigning levels of risk, having proper tools is necessary to make assessments of these individuals (Cain et al., 2015; Laws, 2016; Marshall et al., 2021; Tewksbury, 2002). Current risk assessment tools were developed and validated with men only, and these tools overestimate risk in women (Cortoni & Gannon, 2013). Inaccurate assessments will produce false assumptions about these women's level of dangerousness. Proper assessments are necessary to include accurate risk levels on the registry, implement tailored treatments, and potentially reduce future risk.

Demographic Findings

According to the bivariate correlations age, total prior arrests, total prior charges, identifying as Black, and identifying as White were considered significant control variables. These control variables had moderate associations with recidivism and psychopathy. Total number of prior charges was highly correlated with total prior arrests. When tests for multicollinearity were conducted, the inclusion of total prior charges affected VIF values. Therefore, total prior charges were not included in all multivariate analyses.

Age was a significant predictor of overall, general, and violent recidivism in all analyses. Total prior arrests were only considered a significant predictor when assessing general recidivism. Age demonstrated a negative relationship with all forms of recidivism, indicating younger women were more likely to recidivate than older ones. Total prior arrests demonstrated a positive relationship with any type of recidivism and general recidivism, suggesting women with more previous arrests were more likely to recidivate either at all or with a general offense. These variables being considered significant supports past literature: research has found age and offense histories to be significant predictors of recidivism in general justice-involved women (McCoy & Miller, 2013).

Results from the bivariate analyses suggested race, specifically identifying as either a Black woman or a White woman, were significantly correlated with PCL-R total scores and factors but not recidivism. In the multivariate analyses, identifying as a Black woman was statistically significant when testing which PCL-R items predicts general recidivism. Results from binary logistic regression showed Black women were less likely

than non-Black women to generally recidivate. Previous studies on psychopathy have predominantly focused on White participants from the United States or other European countries while sporadically including non-White groups (Sohn et al., 2019). Previous studies found, in general, little to no evidence of differences in psychopathic traits between Black and White men (Baskin-Sommers et al., 2013; Skeem et al., 2004). Vitale et al. (2002) also found little to no evidence of differences when looking at women. Results from the current study suggest there are racial differences, between Black and non-Black women, when using PCL-R items to predict general recidivism.

Findings Related to Recidivism

Previous research on women who had committed a sexual offense has found sexual recidivism rates ranging from 1-3% (Cortoni et al., 2010; Cortoni & Gannon, 2013). In this sample, only one woman reoffended with a sexual offense, making the sexual recidivism rate 0.4%. This rate is substantially lower than what was reported in previous literature. For this study, the PCL-R could not be used to predict sexual recidivism. A significantly larger sample of women who have sexually offended would be required to complete any substantial analysis for sexual recidivism prediction. In fact, it may not be possible to find any variables or set of variables that would significantly predict sexual recidivism for this group over always predicting that a female will not sexually re-offend. These findings are consistent with prior reports of low sexual recidivism rates for females and question the need of placing females on the sexual offender registry.

Results from the current study, consistent with prior recidivism research, suggested women who sexually offend are less likely than men to pose a danger to the

community when they are rereleased (Freeman & Sandler, 2008). Legislation regarding individuals who sexually offend typically arises as to mollify society's fear of this deviant behavior, assuming the most extreme cases apply to all members of the group (Pedneault, 2019). The sex offender registry publicizes personal information about these individuals as well as the potential risk they may pose to the community. The registry has also been used by law enforcement to monitor individuals who sexually offend, with the intention of preventing their recidivism (Vandiver et al., 2008). Past research indicated those on the registry can be subjected to severe scrutiny and may face harassment, harming their ability to successfully reintegrate back into the community (Vandiver et al., 2008). Placing these women on the registry becomes unnecessary, and potentially harmful, if they are not a risk to the public. In addition, carelessly placing women on the registry can harm their social relationships and economic opportunities (e.g., job-seeking, housing; Vandiver et al., 2008).

A majority of the women in the sample recidivated with a general offense, with only 15 women (6.2%) recidivating with a violent offense. Results from the bivariate analyses suggested PCL-R total scores and factors were positively associated with general recidivism. This supports past literature indicating women who sexually offend are more likely to reoffend with a general offense than a violent one (Tsopelas et al., 2011). However, it is necessary to note that the psychopathy's association with general recidivism was weak, despite its statistical significance. Findings support the previous research, which suggests the PCL-R would be a stronger predictor for recidivism with men, regardless of offense, than for women (Cale & Lilienfeld, 2002). This weak association suggests psychopathy characteristics measured in the PCL-R are expressed

differently in women who sexually offend than in men. Results from both bivariate and multivariate analyses suggested total prior arrests had a stronger association with recidivism. Based on these results, assessing total prior arrests would better predict general recidivism in women who have sexually offended.

Past research suggests justice-involved women are less likely than justice-involved men to recidivate (Olson et al., 2016). Results from this study indicate this pattern is prevalent when comparing men who sexually offend to women who sexually offend. Criminologists focusing on feminist theory argue current measures of recidivism do not factor the gendered nature of causal factors and sanctions (Huebner et al., 2010; Olson et al., 2016). For example, past research suggests violent criminal histories can predict violent recidivism in men but has demonstrated mixed results in women (Olson et al., 2016). Analyses from this study found total prior arrests, indicative of participant's criminal history, was predictive of overall recidivism and general recidivism but not violent recidivism. This finding supports the implications of the mixed literature.

Additionally, criminologists have debated the inclusion of trauma and abuse when predicting recidivism. Prior research has not found conclusive evidence that prior victimization history can predict recidivism for general justice-involved men or women (Olson et al., 2016). However, feminist theorists argue prior victimization has contributed to serious mental illness and substance abuse in general justice-involved women at high rates, compared to men (Olson et al., 2016). As previously noted, women who sexually offend typically reported experiencing traumatic childhoods and instances of abuse (regardless of type; van der Put et al., 2014; Wijkman et al., 2010, 2011). Although the PCL-R items do account for early behavioral problems (Item 12) and juvenile

delinquency (Item 18), the PCL-R does not account for history of victimization.

Accounting for history of victimization would help tailor risk assessment tools to meet the specific needs of both justice-involved women and women who sexually offend.

Utility of the PCL-R For Predicting Recidivism

PCL-R Total Scores

The first hypothesis argued participants with higher PCL-R total scores would be more likely to recidivate, compared to those with lower scores. Past research suggests individuals with psychopathic traits were more likely to engage in a criminal lifestyle and had higher rates of offending (Burt et al., 2016; Hare, 1999a; Hare & Neumann, 2005).

The second hypothesis argued PCL-R total scores would be a better predictor for general recidivism than violent recidivism, aligning with past literature. The PCL-R total score demonstrated a positive relationship with any type of recidivism and general recidivism, suggesting higher scores are associated with higher recidivism. The PCL-R total score was not significantly associated with violent recidivism in either bivariate or multivariate analyses. These results align with Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2015), who suggested the PCL-R would better predict general recidivism than violent recidivism. Results from this analysis supports past literature, with PCL-R total scores being more predictive of general recidivism than violent recidivism. However, results from both bivariate and multivariate analyses suggested participant's PCL-R total scores was not the strongest predictor, compared to other significant variables, for women who sexually offended. For example, results from the bivariate analyses suggested the relationship between PCL-R total score, any recidivism, and general recidivism demonstrated a weak, but significant, correlation. Future studies must replicate the findings and demonstrate a stronger

relationship between the variables in order to confidently report that PCL-R total scores are predictive of overall recidivism.

PCL-R Factor Scores

This study analyzed the effectiveness of the two-factor model and the four-factor model in predicting recidivism. The two-factor model assessed the psychopathic personality traits in Factor 1 and the lifestyle/antisocial aspects in Factor 2. The four-factor model expands on the two-factor model by separating psychopathic personality into interpersonal and affective traits, as well as separating lifestyle and antisocial aspects of psychopathy. Some researchers have found the four-factor model better accounts for gender differences in individuals with psychopathy (Kennealy et al., 2007).

The third hypothesis argued Factor 2 (antisocial/lifestyle) of the two-factor model would account for more variance in any type of recidivism, instead of the Factor 1 (psychopathic personality). Past studies have found Factor 2 tended to overlap with traits of antisocial personality disorder, and women who sexually offended were more likely to be diagnosed with this or a related mental disorder (Mager et al., 2014; Murphy et al., 2016). Results from the current study did not demonstrate support for this hypothesis. This study found Factor 1 (psychopathic personality) significantly accounted for more variance in overall recidivism, instead of Factor 2 (antisocial/lifestyle). Results from the current study align with previous literature testing the PCL-R factors with general justice-involved women. For example, Salekin et al. (1998) found Factor 1 accounted for more variance and was a significant predictor for recidivism in a group of general justice-involved women at a Texas jail. In another study, de Vogel et al. (2019) found Factor 1 was more predictive of recidivism after a three-year follow-up with women who were

forensic psychiatric patients in the Netherlands. Results from the current study suggests women who sexually offend share similar personality characteristics with general justice-involved women, more so than men who sexually offend.

The fourth hypothesis argued Factor 4 (antisocial) of the four-factor model would account for more variance in any type of recidivism, compared to the other three factors.

In the four-factor model, antisocial characteristics are separated from lifestyle characteristics (combined in the two-factor model). Given the overlaps with antisocial aspects of behavior, it was presumed that Factor 4 would be the better predictor.

Additionally, Factor 4 was associated with impulsivity and lack of responsibility, characteristics necessary to predict recidivism in women (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2015). Results from the current study did not demonstrate support for this hypothesis.

The current study found Factor 1 (interpersonal) accounted for significantly more variance in overall recidivism, instead of Factor 4. However, Kennealy et al. (2007) found Factor 1 of the four-factor model was moderately related to antisocial and criminal behaviors in a sample of 226 justice-involved women incarcerated in Florida. Results from this analysis supports results from the two-factor model, suggesting women who sexually offend share antisocial characteristics with general justice-involved women.

Results from the current study showed psychopathic personality, or interpersonal characteristics, accounted for more variance in any type of recidivism. Factor 1 was the best predictor for recidivism for each model. This factor represents an individual's manipulative characteristics, specifically glibness, grandiose sense of self-worth, pathological lying, and manipulation/conning (Hare, 2016; Hawes et al., 2013; Yoon et al., 2021). These items in Factor 1 have been previously shown to predict general

recidivism. The results suggest manipulation traits were significant predictors for recidivism in these women. For individuals who sexually offend, manipulation traits can be synonymous with grooming behaviors (Hawes et al., 2013; Yoon et al., 2021). Past literature that suggested women who sexually offend demonstrated higher levels of emotional and intellectual manipulation when they offend (McLeod et al., 2020; Tsopelas et al., 2011; Roe-Supowitz & Krysik, 2008). However, Factor 1, and the associated items, has not been shown to predict sexual recidivism in the previous literature. Therefore, the significance of Factor 1 suggests these same characteristics that are predictive of general recidivism may influence these women's lifestyle characteristics and behaviors to act in a sexual manner. Overall, Factor 1 displayed a significant relationship with recidivism; however, the association is still considered weak. A stronger association between Factor 1 and recidivism is necessary to confidently assert this relationship.

PCL-R Item Scores

Analyses with individual PCL-R items were conducted to determine which individual aspects of psychopathy accounted for variance in recidivism. The fifth hypothesis argued Item 20 (criminal versatility) would better account for variance in general recidivism. Criminal versatility represents the diverse history of arrests and charges an individual has. Past research suggested diverse criminal histories are associated with increased recidivism (McCoy & Miller, 2013; Smallbone et al., 2003). Instead, Item 2 (grandiose sense of self-worth), Item 8 (callousness and lack of empathy), Item 9 (parasitic lifestyle), and Item 18 (juvenile delinquency) were statistically significant predictors for general recidivism (see Table 8). Items 2 and 8 were related to Factor 1 (psychopathic personality) of the two-factor model while Items 9 and 18 were

related to Factor 2 (antisocial/lifestyle). In the four-factor model, Item 2 aligned with Factor 1 (interpersonal), Item 8 aligned with Factor 2 (affective), Item 9 aligned with Factor 3 (lifestyle) and Item 18 aligned with Factor 4 (antisocial). For general recidivism, it appears there is an equal representation of the factors.

The sixth hypothesis argued Item 19 (revocation of conditional release) would better account for variance in violent recidivism. Freeman and Sandler (2008) found supervision violations were a significant predictor for sexual recidivism in a sample of 780 individuals who sexually offended. This study was testing for violent recidivism, with the woman who sexually recidivated included. The hypothesis was not supported by the analysis. Instead, Item 6 (lack of remorse or guilt), Item 10 (poor behavioral controls), Item 14 (impulsivity), and Item 16 (failure to accept responsibility) were statistically significant predictors for violent recidivism. Items 6 and 16 were related to Factor 1 (psychopathic personality) of the two-factor model while Items 10 and 14 were related to Factor 2 (antisocial/lifestyle). In the four-factor model, Item 6 and 16 aligned with Factor 2 (affective), Item 14 aligned with Factor 3 (lifestyle) and Item 10 aligned with Factor 4 (antisocial). Notably, items in Factor 1 (interpersonal) of the four-factor model were not statistically significant predictors. Factor 1 from both models did not have a significant correlation with violent recidivism in the bivariate analyses. Previous studies with men who sexually offended as the sample did not find Factor 1 from both models to be predictive of violent recidivism (Krstic et al., 2021; Sohn et al., 2019). This finding represents the first instance, in the current study, where women who sexually offend share characteristics of recidivism with men. However, conclusions about violent

recidivism should be considered with caution because only 15 women of the sample had violently recidivated.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. Firstly, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the results. Two women from the original sample were excluded because they did not provide items in the PCL-R, reducing the sample to 242 women incarcerated in Texas. Additionally, when the analyses of the PCL-R items and recidivism were conducted, 46 cases were further excluded as missing data, reducing the sample further to 196 women for some of the analyses. This already small sample coming from a singular location suggests the results are not reflective of the population. However, past studies researching women who sexually offend tend to rely on small clinical samples. For example, Wijkman et al. (2011) used a sample of 135 women who sexually offend to study their typologies and criminal careers. In another study Marshall and Miller (2019b) relied on a sample of 225 women who sexually offended to assess gendered risk factors. In comparison, the sample size for this study can be considered representative for women who sexually offend. Additionally, this sample solely relied on incarcerated women who sexually offended, which does not account for women outside of correctional institutions.

Secondly, only three races were identified in the data set. Other women of color (e.g., Asians, Native Americans) were not identified as only one woman was coded as “Other”. Although identifying as a Hispanic woman did not have significant associations with either PCL-R or any form of recidivism, the 60 Hispanic women were still included in the reference categories for White women (1=White women, 0=Black and Hispanic

women) and Black women (1=Black women, 0=White and Hispanic women). It should be noted that race and ethnicity were not separated. Specifically, women identified as Hispanic did not include coding for multiracial identities (e.g., Hispanic-White, Hispanic-Black). This limit on race challenges the generalizability of the findings.

A final limitation of this study is the small sample of violent recidivists. In the sample, only 15 of the 242 women recidivated with a violent offense. This supports the idea that it is rare for women who sexually offend to violently recidivate; however, it is difficult to draw conclusions about violent recidivism and this group of women if only 6.2% of the sample is used in the analyses. Future research can address this limitation by including more women who recidivated with a violent offense.

Future Research

The findings from this study support the notion that women who sexually offend do not recidivate the same way men do but calls to question what constructs would better predict recidivism. Results from this study can inspire further investigations of recidivism in this group of women. Future studies should expand the sample beyond Texas, potentially including multiple states. Additionally, studies should consider replicating analyses with international populations, considering Hare et al. (2000) found predictive validity in the PCL-R with various European countries.

Given that only a small number of women in the sample recidivated with a violent offense, it is difficult to confidently draw conclusions about violent recidivism and the PCL-R. Future studies should investigate how PCL-R factors and items predict violent recidivism. The current study did not test which factors would account for more variance in violent recidivism. Results from the binary logistic regression (see Table 9) indicated a

few items were significant predictors for violent recidivism. Expanding the sample to include more women who recidivated with a violent offense would improve the testing of assumptions about violent recidivism. Additionally, future studies should test which factors accounted for more variance in violent recidivism, to further support the items associated with violent recidivism.

Future studies should also investigate the role of race as a predictor for recidivism. Including women of various races, beyond Black, White, and Hispanic, would increase generalizability. Additionally, future studies should make the distinction between race and ethnicity, as past research has supported the separation of identities. Expanding research to other women of color diversifies research as well as examine the potential effects race and ethnicity have on individuals who sexually offend.

Conclusion

The findings from this study support the notion that women who have sexually offended do not recidivate the same way men do and calls to question what constructs would better predict recidivism for this group. Although the PCL-R was able to predict recidivism in men, its ability to predict recidivism in women is mixed and does not seem to predict with the same predictive power. This study suggests the PCL-R is predictive of recidivism, but future studies must replicate the results, with a stronger association between the variables, to support the PCL-R's ability to predict recidivism in women who have sexually offended. The ability to accurately predict whether a woman who has sexually offended will recidivate is important for tailoring treatments and reducing potential risk if they are rereleased into the community.

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APPENDIX

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Date: Feb 7, 2022 1:46:05 PM CST

TO: Nhi Le Holly Miller

FROM: SHSU IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Assess Risk in Women SO (PCL-R Scores)

PROTOCOL #: IRB-2022-6

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial

ACTION: Approved

DECISION DATE: February 7, 2022

ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK-IN DATE: February 7, 2025

EXPEDITED REVIEW CATEGORY: 5. Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).

OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK: To access the survey, click **here**. It only takes 10 minutes of your time and is voluntary. The results will be used internally to make improvements to the IRB application and/or process. Thank you for your time.

Greetings,

The above-referenced submission has been reviewed by the IRB and it has been Approved. This study received expedited review, and the IRB determined that a renewal submission is needed, but only in the form of an administrative check-in submission. You will receive an email notification on the anniversary of this study approval, which will be on February 7, 2025. This study approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Since Cayuse IRB does not currently possess the ability to provide a "stamp of approval" on any recruitment or consent documentation, it is the strong recommendation of this office to please include the following approval language in the footer of those recruitment and consent documents: IRB-2022-6/February 7, 2022/February 7, 2025.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Modifications: Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please submit a Modification Submission through Cayuse [IRB](#) for this procedure.

Incidents: All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please submit an Incident Submission through Cayuse [IRB](#) for this procedure. All Department of Health and Human Services and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Study Administrative Check-In: Based on the risks, this project does require a renewal in the form of an Administrative Check-In procedure. This means you are required to administratively check in with the IRB on an annual basis. February 7, 2025 is the anniversary of the review of your protocol. **To get started with your next Administrative Check-In procedure, you will submit a Renewal Submission through Cayuse [IRB](#). A reminder email will be sent to you on the anniversary of your most recent approval of *Assess Risk in Women SO (PCL-R Scores)*.**

Please note that all research records should be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project. If you have any questions, please contact the Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,
SHSU Institutional Review Board

VITA

NHI N. H. LE

EDUCATION

-
- 2020 - Present **Sam Houston State University (SHSU)**
Master of Arts, Criminal Justice
Thesis: “Assessing Risk in Women Who Have Sexually Offended: The Role of Psychopathy”
Committee: Holly A. Miller, Ph.D. (Chair); Chelsey S. Narvey, Ph.D.; Elisa L. Toman, Ph.D.; Ethan A. Marshall, Ph.D.
- 2016 – 2019 **Washington State University (WSU)**
Bachelor of Science, Psychology
 3.60/4.00 GPA

PUBLICATIONS

PRESENTATIONS

- Le, N. N. H., & Narvey, C. S. (2022, March 15-19). *Psychopathy, Domestic Violence, and Juveniles: Understanding Domestic Violence Perpetration and/or Victimization* [Conference presentation]. ACJS 2022 Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, NV, United States.

WORK EXPERIENCE

RESEARCH

Undergraduate Assistantships

- 2019 **Law Enforcement & Legalization of Marijuana Laboratory**
Undergraduate Researcher, WSU
- 2019 **Police/Community Interactions Laboratory**
Undergraduate Researcher, WSU
- 2017 - 2018 **Social Cognition Laboratory**
Undergraduate Researcher, WSU

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Sexual Crimes (Victims and Perpetrators) Media and Crime
 Psychopathy/Psychopathology Corrections/Correctional Institutions

TEACHING

Graduate Assistantships

2020 - 2022 **CRIJ 2365: Correctional Systems & Practices** (SHSU)
CRIJ 4383: Family Violence (SHSU)
CRIJ 4398: Problem Analysis in Victim Studies (SHSU)

Undergraduate Assistantships

2018 - 2019 **PSYCH 210: Psychology as a Science** (WSU)
PSYCH 312: Research Methods (WSU)

Guest Lectures

2022 Spring *Individuals Who Commit Sexual Offenses & PREA*, CRIJ 2365:
Correctional Systems & Practices, SHSU
Using APA 7 Citations, CRIJ 2362: Criminology, SHSU

2021 Fall *Individuals Who Commit Sexual Offenses & PREA*, CRIJ 2365:
Correctional Systems & Practices, SHSU
Management and Treatment Functions, CRIJ 2365: Correctional
Systems & Practices, SHSU
Prisons (1800-Present), CRIJ 2365: Correctional Systems &
Practices, SHSU
Using APA Citations, CRIJ 2365: Correctional Systems &
Practices, SHSU

2021 Spring *Private-Sector Systems*, CRIJ 2365: Correctional Systems &
Practices, SHSU
Women in Prisons & PREA, CRIJ 2365: Correctional Systems &
Practices, SHSU

2020 Fall *Women in Prisons & PREA*, CRIJ 2365: Correctional Systems &
Practices, SHSU
Using APA Citations, CRIJ 2365: Correctional Systems &
Practices, SHSU

VOLUNTEERING

2019 - 2020 **Fort Bend Women's Center**
Fort Bend County, TX

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

AWARDS/HONORS

2022 *Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition*, Finalist (SHSU)

MEMBERSHIPS

Joined 2022	<i>American Society of Criminology (ASC)</i>
Joined 2021	<i>Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS)</i>
Joined 2019	<i>Alpha-Phi-Sigma (WSU Chapter)</i>
Joined 2018	<i>Psi-Chi (WSU Chapter)</i>

SCHOLARSHIPS

Awarded 2021	<i>In-Kind Textbook Scholarship (SHSU)</i> <i>Rolando V. del Carmen Student Endowed Criminal Justice Scholarship (SHSU)</i> <i>Texas Public Education Grant Resident (SHSU)</i>
Awarded 2016	<i>Cougar Award (WSU)</i>

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Workshops

2020 - 2022	<i>Graduate Student Organization: Brown Bags (SHSU)</i> Online Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating and Mentorship • Mental Health/Burnout • Navigating Academia • Thesis, Portfolio, and Dissertation workshop • Time Management
2021	<i>Summer 2021 Virtual Thesis Boot Camp (SHSU)</i> Online Session

Certificates

2021	<i>Mixing it Up: Exploration of Various Victimization Virtual Webinar</i> The Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) at Sam Houston State University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Participation
2019	<i>Sexual Assault Advocate in the State of Texas</i> Certified Sexual Assault Training Program