The Faculty of Psychology
Elective Module in the training program for researchers

Psychopathy and Violence Risk: Theoretical and Practical Issues

Contents
Violence risk assessment is a central problem for those dealing with offenders in both criminal-justice and forensic-clinical settings. The ability to assess and manage violence risk has improved greatly over the last decade; research and practice has evolved. Personality Disorder, in particular, psychopathic personality disorder is a key risk factor for violence; for some it remains a controversial diagnosis but one that needs to be considered in any adequate risk assessment. Examination of recent research will be used to illustrate that psychopathic personality is best conceptualised as a disorder with three components; a grandiose and deceptive interpersonal style, deficient affective experiences and an impulsive and reckless behavioural style. At the group level psychopathy is a good predictor of future violent offending, however, at the individual level it is not possible to give a confident prediction of whether an individual will be violent. Statistical models and the application of logic will be used to demonstrate the range of uncertainty that must be associated within any prediction about the future. It will be argued that psychopathy subsumes many processes that increase the chances that an individual will choose to behave violently. At a clinical level it is necessary to understand the processes that operate for the individual patient being considered. Clinical formulation provides a mechanism whereby theory about processes that lead to violence can be used to provide a framework for effective intervention. This process will be described in detail and case examples will be provided. The general approach to risk formulation, as illustrated in relation to psychopathic personality disorder, can be used when developing a detailed and comprehensive risk assessment for individual clients.

Objectives
The objectives of this course are to improve participants’ understanding of the theoretical, methodological, empirical and practical issues influencing the evaluation of the construct of psychopathic personality disorder; to improve their ability to critically evaluate relevant research and to provide some practical skills relevant to evaluating this disorder and formulating the link between symptoms of psychopathy and violence risk.

Learning Requirements
By the end of the module participants should be able to evaluate the theoretical, methodological, empirical and practical issues involved in assessing this disorder and its link to violence. Participants should also be able to outline a design for a new study that could contribute to the development of the field.

Required Prerequisites
Knowledge of English, understanding of basic statistical concepts including means, standard deviations, percentages, correlations, regression analysis.
Recommended Prerequisites
Completion of Norwegian degrees as a psychologist (or equivalent education), entry into the Ph.D. program.

Description of Learning Materials and Media
The lecture portion of the seminar will employ Power Point presentations and there will be associated handouts. Video taped interviews with offenders and others will be used to facilitate discussion and in practical exercises.

Teaching Semester
November 25th and 26th

Language of Instruction
English – both in terms of verbal discussion in the classroom and teaching.

Teaching Methods
Lectures, workshop and classroom discussion.

Tutorial Registration
The candidates need to sign up for the course 30 days in advance

Compulsory activities (separate requirements)
During the course participants are expected to actively participate in discussion of the issues presented, to develop research ideas, and to comment constructively on research ideas presented by others. The participants also have to write a paper (10-15 pages included references, tables and figures).

Reading list


**Evaluation**

Evaluation of presence during all seminar meeting times as well as level and quality of seminar participation.

**Assessment / examination format**

Seminar participation, amount and quality of comments

**Course lecturer and course coordinator**

Lecturer: Professor David J Cooke PHD, FBPsS, FRSE.
Course coordinator: Anita Lill Hansen

**Contact person**

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