

# Psychopathy Chapter 11

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## Psychopathy

**Psychopathy:** A Personality disorder defined by a collection of interpersonal, affective, and behavioural characteristics, including manipulation, lack of remorse or empathy, impulsivity, and antisocial behaviours.

### **Assessment of Psychopathy**

The most popular assessment of psychopathy is the Hare Psychopathy Checklist Revised. The **PCL-R** is a 20 item rating scale that uses a semi-structured interview and a review of file informations to asses interpersonal(manipulativeness), affective (Lack of remorse, shallow emotions), and behavioural (Impulsivity, antisocial acts) features of a psychopath. Each item is scored on a 3 point scale, 2 indicates the item definitely applies to the individual, 0 indicates the item definitely does not apply. The items are summed up and totalled out of 40. Developed by Robert hare.

Another form of assessment is a self report measure these include;

**Psychopathic Personality Inventory Revised:** The PPI-R is a 154 item inventory designed to measure psychopathic traits in offender and community samples. It consists of eight content scales and two validity scales (to check for carelessness or positive/negative response style. It measures 2 factors (fearless dominance and self centred impulsivity).

**Self Report Psychopathy Scale:** The SRP is a 64 item personality scale. Measures 4 traits, erratic lifestyle, callous effect, interpersonal manipulation, criminal tendencies.

### **Psychopathy and Antisocial Personality Disorder**

- Antisocial Personality disorder refers to a personality disorder in which there is a pervasive pattern of disregard for the rights of others that begin in childhood or early adolescence and continue into adulthood. Symptoms include: Failure to obey laws, deceitfulness, impulsivity or failure to plan ahead.

- Antisocial personality disorder and psychopathy are related but very distinct.

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- Psychopaths are genetically predisposed to a temperament that makes them difficult to socialize.
- Antisocial Personality disorder places more emphasis on antisocial behaviour than the PCL-R does. 80% of adult prisoners have been diagnosed with this disorder.
- Using a cut-off of 30 on the PCL-R, 10-25% of adult offenders are classified as psychopaths.
- Nearly all offenders diagnosed with psychopathy meet the diagnostic of APD, but most offenders diagnosed with APD are not Psychopaths.

### **Forensic Use of Psychopathy**

In Canada, Psychopathy and associated constructs were used in making sentencing decisions:

- To support a case's transmission from youth to adult court,
- To contribute to dangerous offender hearings,
- To help to determine parole eligibility and
- To assess mental state at the time of the offence

**Adversarial Allegiance:** The tendency for forensic experts to be biased towards those who hire them. Ex: if the assessment of a PCLR is conducted by the crown, the scores tend to be subjectively higher.

### **Psychopathy and Violence**

- Characteristics that ordinarily help to inhibit aggression and violence, such as empathy, close emotional bonds, and internal inhibitions are lacking or effectively ineffective in psychopaths.
- Several Studies have found that offenders who engage in instrumental violence (Premeditated violence to obtain some goal) score significantly higher on measures of psychopathy than do offenders engaging in reactive violence (Impulsivity, unplanned violence, that occurs in response to a provocation).
- When non-psychopaths commit violence they are likely to target people they know and their violent behaviour is likely to occur in the context of a strong emotional arousal.

- When psychopaths engage in violence they are more likely to target strangers and be motivated by revenge or material gain. The percentage of Individuals who scored 30 or greater and committed a homicide corresponded to 93%.

- Psychopathic offenders were given early release from prison more often than non psychopathic offenders. When followed up on psychopathic offenders were less successful than non psychopathic offenders.

-Criminals are not the only psychopaths in society. There are individuals in the corporate world who rank very high on the PCL-R Checklist. These professionals are less likely to be team players, had poorer management skills, and had poorer performance appraisals than professionals with few psychopathic traits.

- Globally males scored higher than females with lifestyle traits (Impulsivity, risk taking) being more prevalent and antisocial traits (arrest history, violence) being least prevalent.

- Eight characteristics of male psychopaths in heterosexual relationships were extracted from the interviews: 1) talking victim into victimization, 2) lying, 3) economic abuse, 4) emotional abuse / psychological torture, 5) multiple infidelities, 6) isolation and coercion, 7) assault, 8) mistreatment of children.

-In general Offenders who commit sexual homicide (homicides that have a sexual component) are the most psychopathic. Followed by mixed sexual offenders (Those who sexually assault both children and adults), followed by rapists with the lowest psychopathy scores found among child molesters.

- Levels of Sadistic overkill in a sample of 38 sexual homicide investigations were related to PCL-R total scores and with the interpersonal and affective features of psychopathy.

- **Sexual Sadism:** People who are sexually aroused by fantasies, urges or acts of inflicting pain, suffering or humiliation to another person.

## **Psychopathy and Treatment**

-Treatment was associated with a reduction in violent recidivism among non-psychopaths but an increase in violent recidivism among psychopaths. I.e: treatment makes psychopathy worse.

- Reasons why a treatment may not work include the use of inappropriate treatment and problems in implementing the treatment, such as inadequate training of those administering the treatment or lack of support from management.

## **Psychopathy in Youth**

**The Antisocial Screening Device:** is designed for assessing the precursors of psychopathic traits in children. The child is assigned a rating on various questions by parents or teachers. A self report version of this scale has also been developed for use with adolescents. The APSD has a three dimensional structure consisting of callous un-emotional factor, impulsivity factor, and narcissism factor.

**Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Youth version:** Is a rating scaled designed to measure psychopathic traits and behaviours in male and female adolescents between the ages of 12-18.

- Youths diagnosed with psychopathy may be more responsive to intervention.

## **Psychopathy: Nature vs Nurture**

-Growing evidence suggests a strong genetic contribution to psychopathy

-Research concerning nature vs nurture studies typically involve individuals who have similar genes but are raised in different environments. Identical twin studies can be conducted when raised apart from each other.

- Identical twins were much more similar in their PPI scores than were fraternal twins who share half their genes.

-These studies point to the importance of genetic factors but also factors such as adverse family backgrounds.

### **Effects of Family**

-The best predictor of adult psychopathy were having a criminal father or mother, being a son whose father was uninvolved with him, having a low family income, coming from a disrupted family, experiencing physical neglect. Children who had been abused had slightly higher modified PCL-R scored as compared with control samples.

- There are multiple developmental pathways to the development of psychopathy, some of which involve family background and others in which psychopathy emerges irrespective of family background.

### **Psychopathy and Law Enforcement**

- Appealing to the psychopaths sense of morality is unlikely to work when conducting an interrogation, rather when dealing with psychopaths, appealing the to psychopaths sense of grandiosity and need for status might be more productive.

- Interrogators need to be able to control the interview

-Show liking or admiration (Psychopaths respond to thinking that the interrogators want to learn from them.

-Avoid criticisms

-Avoid Conveying emotion

### **Cognitive and Affective models of Psychopathy**

**Response Modulation Deficit theory:** a theory suggesting that psychopaths fail to use cues that are peripheral to a dominant response set to modulate their behaviour.

- Psychopaths have a response modulation deficit, in other words, if psychopaths are engaging in specific rewarded behaviour they will not pay attention to other information that might inhibit behaviour.

-Another theory proposes psychopaths have a deficit in the experience of certain critical emotions that guide prosocial behaviour and inhibit deviance.

### **Brain Damage, structural Anomalies**

- Frontal Lobe dysfunction
- The belief is that people who have an anomaly in their frontal lobe from birth may develop psychopathy.
- When parts of the frontal lobe are removed, symptoms of psychopathy arise

### **Cognitive Processing Deficits**

- Response Modulation deficits
- There are parts of the brain that control our impulsivity, psychopaths lack these (Limbic System).

### **Cognitive-Emotional Integration**

This theory proposes that there is an irregularity when the individual response to emotions or thoughts.

Most killers are not Psychopaths\*

But 90% of serial killers do have Psychopathy

10-25% of incarcerated individuals do have psychopathy

In adults a study was conducted measuring startle blink reflexes of psychopathic and non-psychopathic sexual offenders in response to slides of positive, neutral and negative images. The startle blinks elicited of non-psychopathic offenders were smaller when seeing positive imagery, moderate when seeing neutral imagery, and enhance when seeing negative imagery. In contrast psychopathic offenders startle blink did not differ in magnitude across different types of slides.