

Psychopathy: Towards a more reasoned understanding of the relationship to aggressive behavior.

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Abstract:

(from the chapter) The construct of psychopathy is ubiquitous in the field of forensic psychology/psychiatry. In 1941, Hervey Cleckley's seminal work was published, detailing 16 personality characteristics of a psychopath. Descriptions included, for example, superficial charm, untruthfulness and lack of remorse. Only one of the 16 descriptors was associated with behavioral characteristics ("inadequately motivated antisocial behavior", page 338). Forty years later, Robert Hare developed an instrument—the Hare Psychopathy Checklist (PCL; Hare, 1980) designed to quantify the construct. He combined the interpersonal and affective characteristics described by Cleckley with the presumed behavioral sequelae of such affective deficits. The revised version of the PCL, the PCL-R (Hare, 1991) is comprised of 20 items that are scored based on a semi-structured interview and record review. Each item is rated as either does not apply, possibly applies or definitely applies. A score of 30 and above is generally accepted in North America as indicating a psychopathic personality. Early analyses of this instrument indicated that the PCL-R can be divided reliably into two factors (Hare, 1991; Harpur, Hare, and Hakstian, 1989). Factor 1 represents traits such as callousness, remorselessness and egocentricity; Factor 2 represents a chronically unstable, antisocial, and socially deviant lifestyle. Recently, both a three-factor solution (Cooke and Michie, 2001) and a four-factor solution (termed facets; Hare, 2003) have been argued to provide a better fit for the data. The four facet solution represents the interpersonal, affective, lifestyle and antisocial behavior characteristics of a psychopath. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2010 APA, all rights reserved)