Abnormal Psychology

Psychopathy
Psychology 3303
Professor June Gruber
ROADMAP

Course Logistics
What is Psychopathy?
Psychopathy vs. Antisocial Personality Disorder
Emotions & Psychopathy
Take-Away Questions
ROADMAP

Course Logistics

What is Psychopathy?

Psychopathy vs. Antisocial Personality Disorder

Emotions & Psychopathy

Take-Away Questions
What is Psychopathy?

Emotional/Interpersonal

• Glib and Superficial
• Egocentric and Grandiose
• Lacks Remorse, Guilt
• Lacks Empathy
• Deceitful and Manipulative
• Shallow Emotions
What is Psychopathy?

Antisocial Lifestyle

• Impulsive
• Poor Behavioral Controls
• Need for Excitement
• Lack Responsibility
• Early Behavioral Problems
• Adult Antisocial Behavior
What is Psychopathy?

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Emotional/Interpersonal Deficits + Antisocial Behavior
Diagnosis

Hervey Cleckley and the Mask of Sanity
Diagnosis

Cleckley (1941): A psychopath is a person who is intelligent and superficially charming but is also chronically deceitful, unreliable, and incapable or learning from experience.
The PCL-R (PSYCHOPATHY CHECKLIST-REVISED)

20 items scored 0-2

Range: 0-40

Diagnostic cutoff = ~30

Mean in offenders = 22
Mean in general population = 6
Heritability estimates for antisocial behavior

Heritability of Psychopathy

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Heritability estimates for antisocial behavior

- Number of studies

- Heritability estimates
Why Do We Care?
Why Do We Care?

~2,000,000

People Currently Incarcerated
Why Do We Care?

~20% of them meet criteria for psychopathy
Why Do We Care?

~400,000

People diagnosed with psychopathy waiting to be released
Why Do We Care?

~80%

Violent Recidivism rate among those diagnosed with psychopathy
EXCLUSIVE: CONFESSED SERIAL KILLER
Psychopathy

Course Logistics
What is Psychopathy?
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Take-Away Questions
## Psychopathy vs. Antisocial PD

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<th>APD</th>
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<td>Lacks remorse</td>
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<td>Lacks Empathy</td>
<td>Lack Responsibility</td>
<td>Reckless/Irresponsible</td>
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<td>Deceitful and Manipulative</td>
<td>Early Behavioral Problems</td>
<td>Lies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shallow Emotions</td>
<td>Adult Antisocial Behavior</td>
<td>Commits crimes</td>
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Many diagnosed with psychopathy meet criteria for APD, but NOT the other way around.

All Criminal Offenders (100%) → APD 80-85% → Psychopathy 20-30%
Psychopathy

Course Logistics

What is Psychopathy?

Psychopathy versus Antisocial Personality Disorder

Emotions & Psychopathy

Take-Away Questions
Emotions and Psychopathy

**Emotional**

- **Bottom-Up**
  - Emotional Response System is Broken

**Attentional**

- **Top-Down**
  - Attentional Dysfunction Interferes with Emotion Processing
Emotions and Psychopathy

Bottom-Up
Emotional Response System is Broken

Top-Down
Attentional Dysfunction Interferes with Emotion Processing
Emotions and Psychopathy

Emotional/Bottom-Up: Low Fear Hypothesis
Non-reactivity during threat anticipation

Emotional/Bottom-Up: Low Fear Hypothesis

- Skin Conductance
- Heart Rate
- EMG - Orbitalis

Controls vs Psychopathy
Emotional/Bottom-Up: Low Fear Hypothesis

Poor Fear Conditioning and Insensitivity to punishment
Emotional/Bottom-Up: Violence Inhibition Mechanism

What is this guy feeling?

Psychopathy unresponsive to facial emotions
Emotional/Bottom-Up: Violence Inhibition Mechanism

Psychopathy unresponsive to emotion faces and sounds
Corticolimbic Circuitry

Group Differences in Right Amygdala Connectivity

Amygala and mPFC are deformed and uncoupled in Psychopathy

Image Courtesy of Julian Motzkin
Emotions and Psychopathy

**Bottom-Up**
Emotional Response System is Broken

**Top-Down**
Attentional Dysfunction Interferes with Emotion Processing
Top-Down Mechanisms

Attentional
Dysregulation
Top-Down Mechanisms

Attentional Dysregulation: Hyper-selective Attention

- t1 onset (0ms)
- t2 onset at Lag-3 (240ms)

Graph showing % Correct in T2 Identification over Lag Time for Psychopathy and Control groups.

Time (80 ms/stimulus)
Top-Down Mechanisms

Fear-potentiated startle

Condition

Threat-focus

Alternative-focus

High Psychopathy

Low Psychopathy