



# PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIME

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PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT  
PSY 264 PSYCHOLOGY OF  
CRIME  
WEEK 4



# CRIME AND PSYCHOPATHY



# CRIMINAL PSYCHOPATH

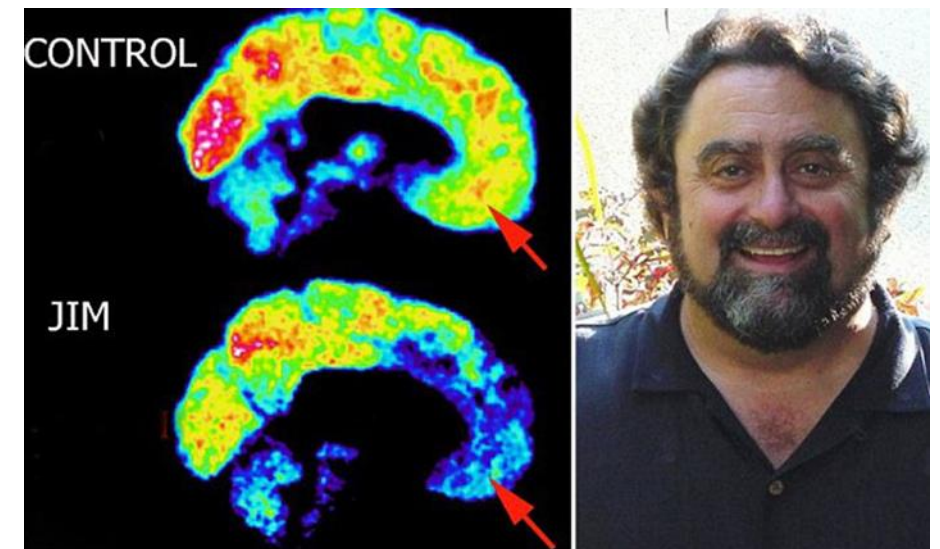
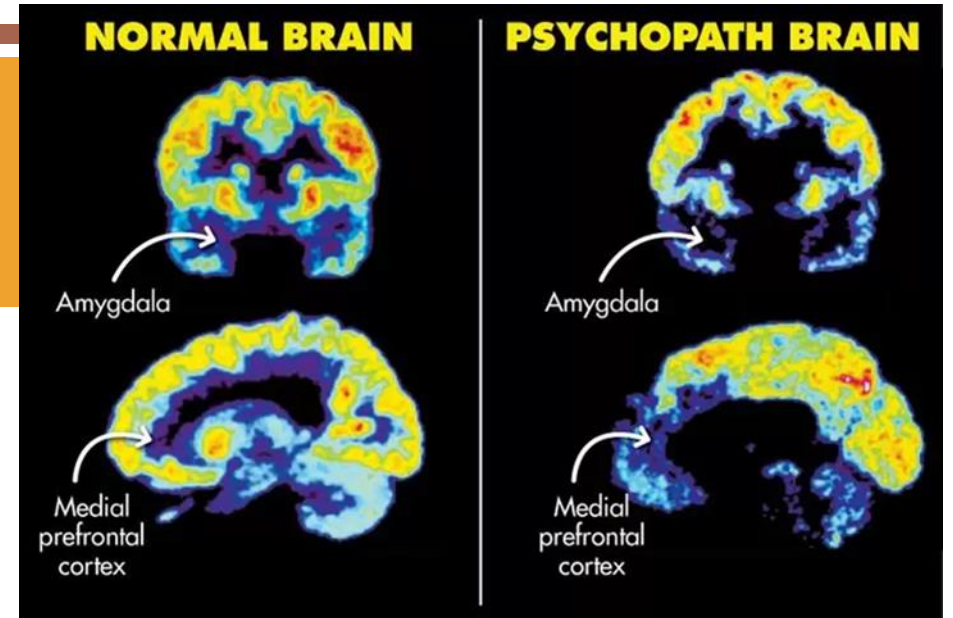
- Psychopaths are often described in criminal sources as a small group of people who are **incurable and resistant** to any form of treatment.
- Many appear to be prone to **lawbreaking and violence**.
- Researchers estimate that about **1% of the general population** meet the criteria for psychopathy, and the rate is **higher among incarcerated** offenders.

# RECIDIVISM

- Psychopaths, who make up about **20% of the prison population**, reoffend at much higher rates and faster rates than the other 80%.
- The average convicted psychopath commits **four violent crimes** before the age of 40.
- The typical psychopath returns to a life of crime, **often violent and sexual** – impulsively, selfishly, and without regard for the rights of others, rights that he or she may **not even recognize**.

# PSYCHOPATHY AND THE BRAIN

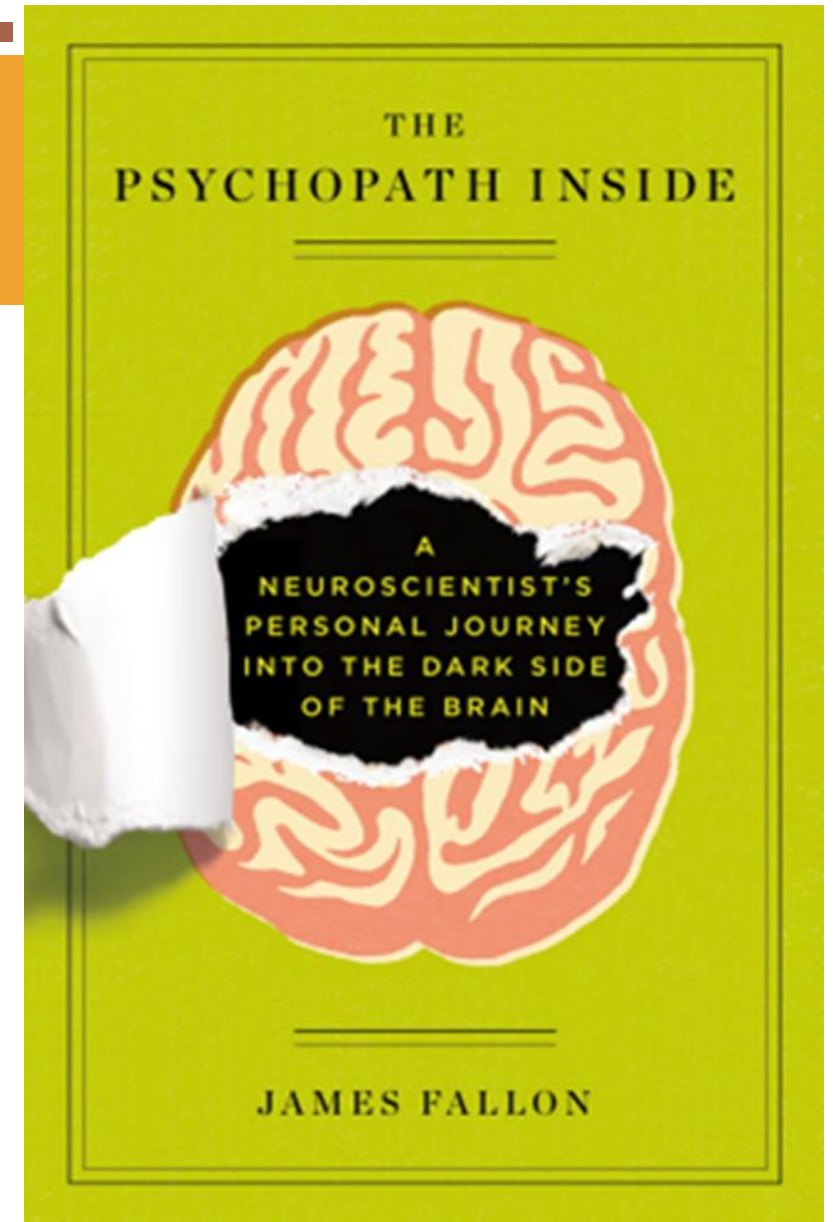
- October 2005
- The brains of these killers share a rare pattern of **low brain function** in certain parts of the **frontal and temporal lobes**, commonly associated with **self-control and empathy**.
- This makes sense for those with a history of inhumane violence, because **reduced activity** in these regions suggests a **lack of normal moral judgment and the ability to restrain impulses**.



## GENES OR ENVIRONMENT?

- «For decades I have believed that we have very little control over what we do and who we are. **Nature** (genetics) determines about **80 percent of our personality and behavior**, in my opinion, and **nurture alone determines 20 percent** (how and in what environment we grow up)...
- ...Humans are inherently **complex creatures**. We are not simply good or bad, right or wrong, kind or cruel, benign or dangerous. We are **not simply the product of biology**, and science can only tell us part of the story.»

FALLON, J. (2013). THE PSYCHOPATH INSIDE: A NEUROSCIENTIST'S PERSONAL JOURNEY INTO THE DARK SIDE OF THE BRAIN. PENGUIN GROUP.



# GENETIC BASIS OF PSYCHOPATHIA

- Karpman (1941) suggested that **basic personality** traits may be **hereditary**.
- Recent studies have supported this idea with several studies showing that **callous and irresponsible traits** may be **heritable**.
- The results of a study examining **psychopathic traits in 353 male twins** revealed that when **genetic and environmental contributions** are considered, **genetics has a general effect** on the following factors:
  1. **interpersonal** relationships,
  2. **affective** traits,
  3. **behavioral/lifestyle** traits.

# WHO IS A PSYCHOPATH?

- **The DSM** classifies a wide range of disorders, from anorexia to schizophrenia, but psychopathy is **not one of them**.
- The definition of **antisocial personality disorder**, as Macciardi points out, is **similar**.
- Despite advances in our understanding of how **the brain** works, this organ is **still largely a mystery** to us.
- We are trying to define psychopathy with just a **checklist of traits**.



# SOCIOPATH? PSYCHOPATH? ANTISOCIAL?

- Robert Hare stated that **sociologists** prefer the term **sociopathy**, while **psychologists and psychiatrists** prefer the term **psychopathy**.
- Since 1994, **antisocial personality disorder** has been used **synonymously** with sociopathy and psychopathy by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).



# PSYCHOPATHS

- Psychopaths need almost **constant stimulation**. As one might expect, such a trait does not fit the boredom of prison.
- If something is not happening around them, psychopaths will often make it happen.
- Their **need for stimulation and impulsivity** drives many of the other **Factor 2 criteria**, including **promiscuity, excessive marriages**, and even **criminal tendencies**.
- They **quickly get bored** with their lover, spouse, and types of crime; **commitment is meaningless**, and they **impulsively move** on to the next level.
- Rage is **never far** from the psychopath. A common response to something so **trivial** is, "I don't know, he just got on my nerves."

# EVALUATION OF PSYCHOPATHIA

- There are a variety of tools available to assess psychopathic traits in individuals.
  1. Psychopathy Checklist - Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 1991, 2003)
  2. semi-structured interviews and
  3. information records kept

# HARE CHECKLIST PCL-R (PSYCHOPATHY CHECKLIST)

- The most famous and widely used test is the Hare Checklist PCL-R (Psychopathy Checklist, Revised), developed by Canadian psychiatrist Robert Hare.
- The PCL-R consists of **20 items**, each scored 0, 1, or 2, indicating whether psychopathic traits are absent (0 points), partially present (1 point), or definitely present (2 points).
- A person who scores **40 is a full categorical psychopath** on this scale.
- The normal **cut-off** for diagnosis is **30**, although **25 is sometimes** used.
- The test is usually **scored by a trained person** during a session where the **clinician interviews** the subject, sometimes **supported by legal and medical records** and third-party references.

# HARE CHECKLIST PCL-R (PSYCHOPATHY CHECKLIST)

- The items are grouped into **two broad factors**:
- **Factor 1** assesses the **interpersonal/emotional** aspects of psychopathy,
- **Factor 2** measures the **lifestyle/antisocial features** of the disorder.
- Later research suggests the existence of **three** (Cooke & Michie, 2001) or even **four** (Hare, 2003) separate factors or facets.

# HARE CHECKLIST PCL-R (PSYCHOPATHY CHECKLIST)

## Factor 1 – interpersonal/affective features

Glibness/superficial charm (Interpersonal)

Grandiose sense of self-worth (Interpersonal)

Pathological lying (Interpersonal)

Conning/manipulative (Interpersonal)

Lack of remorse or guilt (Affective)

Shallow affect (Affective)

Callous/lack of empathy (Affective)

Failure to accept responsibility for own actions (Affective)

## Factor 2 – lifestyle/antisocial features

Need for stimulation/proneness to boredom (Lifestyle)

Parasitic lifestyle (Lifestyle)

Poor behavioural controls (Antisocial)

Early behaviour problems (Antisocial)

Impulsivity (Lifestyle)

Irresponsibility (Lifestyle)

Juvenile delinquency (Antisocial)

Revocation of conditional release (Antisocial)

Criminal versatility (Antisocial)

# HARE CHECKLIST PCL-R (PSYCHOPATHY CHECKLIST)

- Variants of the PCL-R have also been developed.
  - PCL-Youth Version
  - the PCL Screening Version
  - the Psychopathic Personality Inventory
  - the Levenson Self Report Psychopathy scales

**Additional items (not loading on Factors 1 or 2, sometimes referred to as orphan items)**

Promiscuous sexual behaviour

Many short-term marital relationships

## PCL-R (CRITICISM)

- There is **skepticism** about the **clinical reliability of diagnosing and scoring** emotional factors.
- Some critics have raised the issue of **whether psychopathy is a mental condition**.
- There is also concern that the criminal justice system **may label people**, especially **young people**, as psychopaths because of the PCL-R's predictive ability in youth.
- Nevertheless, Hare's tools are **reliable enough** to be used to **identify the most severe psychopaths** in the system, **manage** them appropriately, and direct them to the **best possible practices for treatment**.



# DISSOCIATING PSYCHOPATHY FROM ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

- The clinical condition of psychopathy bears a **strong overlap with** the construct of **antisocial personality disorder (ASPD)**, though the two disorders are **dissociable**.
- ASPD is a **diagnostic category of the DSM-5**; which is based predominantly on the **behavioural profile** of an individual.

# DISSOCIATING PSYCHOPATHY FROM ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

- ASPD is characterised by a **disregard for societal norms and rules** that can take the form of a **persistent pattern** of antisocial behaviour, **impulsivity** and **irresponsibility**.
- ASPD is highly **prevalent in offenders**, with 60–70% of all **male offenders** receiving a diagnosis.
- Unlike psychopaths, individuals with **ASPD do not necessarily show callous and unemotional traits**.

# DISSOCIATING PSYCHOPATHY FROM ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

- Although many offenders with a diagnosis of **psychopathy** would also be labelled as suffering from ASPD, only **a third of those with a diagnosis of ASPD** would meet the diagnostic criteria for **psychopathy**.
- Offenders **with a diagnosis of ASPD** and without psychopathy are also **distinguishable in terms of brain structure** with psychopaths, but not those with ASPD in the absence of psychopathy, showing **structural abnormalities in areas associated with empathy and morality**.

# DISSOCIATING PSYCHOPATHY FROM ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

- One of the still-to-be-resolved debates whether **antisocial behaviour** represents:
  1. a core trait of **psychopathic personality**, or
  2. a **behavioural consequence** that is expressed as a product of having a **specific collection of personality traits**.

I SAY GOODBYE AND  
GOODNIGHT.  
POLICE- LET ME  
HAUNT YOU WITH THESE  
WORDS;  
I'LL BE BACK!  
I'LL BE BACK!  
TO BE INTERPRETED  
AS- BANG BANG, BANG,  
BANG, BANG - UGH!!  
YOURS IN  
MURDER  
MR. MONSTER

## PSYCHOPATHIC SUBTYPES

- Karpman described variants of the condition as **primary and secondary**.
- **Primary psychopaths**, in keeping with the original formulation of the disorder, show a **lack of nervousness** and **an inability to experience fear and anxiety**.
- **Secondary psychopaths** appear **neurotic and anxious**.

# PSYCHOPATHY AND AGGRESSION

- Psychopathy is associated with **high levels of violent behaviour**.
- However, the relationship of psychopathy and violence is **not straightforward**.
- Acts of aggression can be classified as either **reactive or proactive/instrumental**.
- **High levels of instrumental aggression distinguish psychopaths** from sufferers of other disorders that are similarly linked with elevated levels of aggression or violence.

# PSYCHOPATHY AND AGGRESSION

- **Reactive aggression** refers to an **unplanned or impulsive** act of violence in response to some form of provocation, threat or danger.
- By contrast, **instrumental aggression** is characterised by **goaldirected** acts of violence (for example, to gain money or drugs) that are typically executed in a **predetermined and calculated** manner.

# CORRELATES OF PSYCHOPATHY IN ADOLESCENTS AND CHILDREN

- There has been much debate over **whether adolescents** can be diagnosed as psychopaths.
- There have been concerns that any **apparent callous and unemotional personality** features seen in adolescence may in fact be **transient and not enduring** traits.
- The term “**conduct disorder**” (CD) is applied to adolescents and children who show persistent **antisocial behaviour** and whose actions appear **impulsive and irresponsible**.



# FAMILIAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOPATHY

- **Early traumatic experience**, whether it is via **neglect or abuse**, is often considered to be a **predictor of antisocial behaviour** in later life.
- The **relationship** of early adverse experiences and psychopathy, however, is **complex**.
- The **affective deficits** that are **fundamental to psychopathy** are assumed to be **inherited** and therefore should be relatively immune to the influence of **societal and environmental factors**.

# FAMILIAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOPATHY

- The lifestyle and antisocial features of the disorder, that are related to **Factor 2** on the PCL-R, are assumed to be acquired and may constitute **an emotional response to a harsh environment.**
- These environmental factors would include
  1. **parental conflict,**
  2. **rejection,**
  3. **neglect and**
  4. **harsh or inconsistent punishment.**

# ATTACHMENT, PSYCHOPATHY AND OFFENDING

- Children who had experienced **early physical abuse** tended to show an **avoidant attachment** style whereas **neglect** was associated with **ambivalent attachment**.
- **Physically abused** children showed **greater levels of aggression** and **antisocial behaviour** than neglected and control children.
- **Attachment** difficulties are **associated with criminality and drug abuse** and a **dismissive style of attachment** has been associated with **antisocial personality** traits.

# FACIAL EXPRESSION RECOGNITION

- Psychopaths have the **inability of to detect facial expressions** communicating distress, **notably fear and sadness**.
- **The amygdala** has been assumed for some time as being the neural structure that is most critically involved in the **processing of emotional facial expressions**, and expressions of **fear in particular**.
- Patients with **bilateral amygdala** damage show **impaired recognition of fear** face affect.
- Patients with **unilateral amygdala** damage, typically show **intact recognition of fearful faces**.

# A NEUROBIOLOGICAL MODEL OF FEARFUL FACE RECOGNITION DEFICITS IN PSYCHOPATHY

- The **abnormal amygdala functioning in CU children** when processing fearful facial expressions appears to be linked to CU traits rather than ADHD or generally antisocial behaviour. (Callous-Unemotional=CU)
- Children with CU traits show a tendency to **look at the mouth region** of faces rather than the eyes.
- This deficit correlates with a **failure to be able to detect facial expressions of fear**, potentially because the eyes represent the major source of facial information relating to this emotion.
- A **similar lack of attention to the eye region** has also been noted in relation to the interpersonal/affective, but not the lifestyle/antisocial features of psychopathy **among adult male non-offenders**.

# PSYCHOPATHY AND AVERSIVE CONDITIONING

- Neuroimaging-based experiments have likewise demonstrated that the **amygdala** is central to the formation of **conditioned emotional responses** in humans.
- These **deficits**, which are thought to be present **in childhood**, **limit the ability to learn** that one's actions are **causing distress to another**, and thus compromise **early moral socialisation**.

# NEUROCHEMISTRY OF PSYCHOPATHY

- One noticeable exception has been a study on **oxytocin levels in offenders**.
- Oxytocin seems to **enhance both prosocial and antisocial emotions**, depending on the specific situation and context in which the participant is placed.
- The levels of intracerebral **oxytocin can be raised** by taking the neuropeptide **intranasally**.
- In **convicted serious offenders**, the **oxytocin levels were highly correlated** with **Factor 2 scores on the PCL-R**, indicative of **raised oxytocin levels** in relation to the **lifestyle and antisocial features** of the disorder.

# PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS

- appear outwardly normal,
- nonetheless extremely callous,
- unable to express remorse or guilt,
- seem to be devoid of human emotion,
- typically of above average intelligence
- seemingly charming,
- lack the capacity for love,
- social behaviour is distinctly antisocial,
- show a notable lack of anxiety or neuroses





Ted Bundy-36



Milwaukee Cannibal-  
Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer-17



Monster-Aileen Wuornos-7



Son of Sam-David Richard  
Berkowitz-8



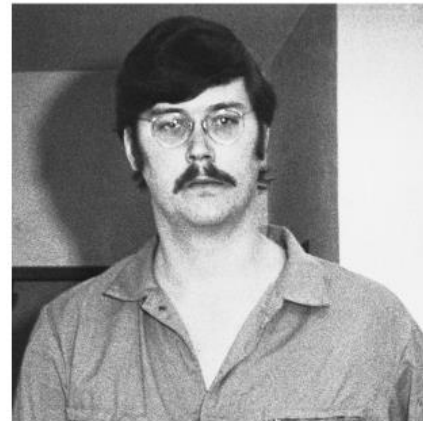
Killer Clown-John Wayne  
Gacy-34



Green River Killer-Gary  
Leon Ridgway- 48



Old Lady Killer-  
Juana Barraza-16+



Co-ed Killer-Edmund  
Kemper-10

25

# PSYCHOPATHY AND THERAPY

- Psychotherapy normally requires patients to be actively involved in their own treatment. But psychopaths typically **do not feel that they are suffering from any particular problem.** They see themselves as **superior beings in a world of inferiors.**
- Not only does treatment not seem to work, there is evidence that some types of treatment make the condition worse.
- As one psychopath put it, "These programs are like finishing school. They teach you how to squeeze people."
- They may even use **group therapy** to tactical advantage, particularly to **manipulate mental health professionals.**



Dr Hannibal Lecter



Whitechapel Katili-  
Karindeşen Jack-5



Joe Goldberg



## THE CURIOUS APPEAL OF SERIAL KILLERS

- Why are so many **people fascinated by serial killers** and spend their money on books, movies, and other forms of entertainment to be horrified by tales of horrific atrocities?
- "I discovered that serial killers are frightening and fascinating to the public because some, like Ted Bundy, are highly educated, attractive, successful and could **easily be your next-door neighbor.**"

