

Understanding the Violent Personality Factors, Antisocial Personality Disorder, Psychopathy, & Sociopathy

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The Violent Personality

In summary, the factors making-up the Violent Personality include:

1. Childhood victimization
2. Attachment deficits
3. Reduced capacity for empathy (emotional callousness)
4. Witnessing parental violence
5. Personality characteristics
6. Narcissism
7. Antisocial traits
8. Disregard for social norms
9. Tendency for aggression
10. History of animal abuse.
11. Early sexual experiences
12. Promiscuity
13. Hostility towards women
14. Traditional views about gender roles
15. Impulsivity
16. Beliefs supporting abuse and rape
17. Support from others to abuse or rape
18. Use/abuse of substances to justify abuse and/or rape
19. Raised with permissive style of parenting (indulgent or neglectful)

Barbaree, & Marshall, 1991; Barbaree, Marshall, & McCormick, 1998; Dean, & Malamuth, 1997; Kosson, Kelly, & White, 1997; Lalumiere, Chalmers, Quinsey, & Seto, 1996; Lisak, & Roth, 1988; Malamuth, Heavey, & Linz, 1993; Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991; Prentky, & Knight, 1991; Senn, Desmarais, Verberg, & Wood, 2000; Seto & Barbaree, 1997; Ward, Keenan, & Hudson, 2000).

There is a direct association between *men's attitudes about women* (e.g., misogyny, use of coercion, misinterpretation of women's behavior) and sexual assault and rape in general (Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991).

Support from others to rape is also a factor. Perpetrators often have family and friends who condone violence towards others, women or children, and support for rape (Johnson, 2017a; Strang & Peterson, 2013).

Raised with a Permissive Indulgent or Permissive Neglectful parenting style is also a factor. See Johnson (2016) for more information.

Children's exposure to domestic abuse is also correlated with negative outcomes, including psychosocial impact, which increases the chance for the children to engage in intimate partner violence later in life (Kimber, Adham, Gill, McTavisha, & MacMillan, 2018). Domestic abusers frequently rape their partners, again, along the continuum of violent personality, if you abuse your partner physically, you are far more likely to abuse your partner sexually.

Engaging in pet abuse is also a risk factor for engaging in violence towards humans. In one study, 65% of those arrested for animal cruelty engaged in assault against another person (Degenhardt, 2005). This is consistent with other researchers (e.g., Ascione & Akow, 1999; Beirne, 2004; Favor & Strand, 2003; Henry, 2004; Lockwood & Ascione, 1998). Those who engage in animal cruelty were 3 times more likely to commit other crimes, including murder, rape, robbery, assault, harassment, threats, and drug/substance abuse (Arluke, Levin, Luke, & Ascione, 1999). In addition, of all 7 school shootings that occurred in the U.S. between 1998 and 2012, 43% of the boys had a history of engaging in animal abuse and of those 90% engaged in close-up and personal manner which is of more significance in relating to those who also became aggressive to humans (Arluke & Madfis, 2014). Approximately 21-46% of serial killers appear to abuse animals when young (Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1988; Wright & Hensley, 2003) and 90% of sadistic serial killers appear to engage in animal cruelty for both hands-on and hands-off abuse (Levin & Arluke, 2009). For more of a review on the connections between pet abuse and violence towards people, see Johnson, (in press).

Alcohol and drug use are also correlated with violent and sexual offenses. (see Johnson 2014 & 2017b). ***A Disinhibition Model*** links alcohol and sexual aggression (Seto & Barbaree, 1997; Taylor & Chemack, 1993). In that model it is proposed that three factors are present to merge alcohol and rape: 1). Preexisting beliefs that alcohol serves to disinhibit, relax, etc. The strength of the disinhibition is related to amount of alcohol consumed, degree of social and personal inhibition (e.g., personality, predisposition for aggression and rape); 2). Consuming alcohol allows for the perpetrator and others to hold the perpetrator less accountable for his actions due to the alcohol intoxication; 3). The larger amounts of alcohol results in pharmacological effects including the inability to process ***inhibitory cues*** such as the victim's resistance, victim crying, yelling etc. When inhibitory cues are processed, a non-sex offender would cease the sexual behavior. Therefore, it is not the alcohol that causes a man to sexually assault or rape but rather a confluence of factors and a decision to sexually assault or rape. For a thorough literature review of the role of alcohol in sexual assault and rape see Johnson (2014; 2017a, 2017b).

Understanding Psychopathy

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It is important to understand the difference between Antisocial Personality Disorder, Psychopathy, and Sociopathy. Though all share similar characteristics and personality traits, they are different. Psychopaths and Sociopaths are not always physically or sexually violent. They take advantage of others but may do so without violence.

Psychopathy and Sociopathy take into account factors that are not assessed in Antisocial Personality Disorder. With Psychopathy and Sociopathy, not only are behaviors taken into account, but also factors including callousness, unemotional mindset, and remorselessness, that is, affective factors. Also, Psychopathy and Sociopathy involves patterns of affective, interpersonal and behavioral characteristics more extreme than with ASPD.

The **Dark Triad** of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) have been associated with negative interaction styles and negative behavior, though not always criminal in nature. The Dark Triad involve callous and manipulative behaviors. Those who present with higher levels of the three traits in the Dark Triad demonstrated more negative attitudes towards animals and reported engaging in more acts of animal cruelty (Kavanagh, Signal, & Taylor, 2013). Callousness has been found to be at the core of the Dark Triad (Jones & Figueredo, 2012; Kavanagh, Signal, & Taylor, 2013). The younger the age and having higher levels of the Dark Triad traits correlate with more negative views of animals and is predictive of an anti-social or violent trajectory. Early onset of animal cruelty is predictive of engaging in multiple acts of animal cruelty among men incarcerated for murder or attempted murder (O'Grady, Kinlock, & Hanlon, 2007; Tallichet, Hensley, O'Bryan, & Hassel, 2005).

Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD)

Approximately 3% of males and 1% of females present with Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) (APA, 2013; Martens, 2000). It is likely that females with this disorder are underreported. Approximately 3-30% of those with Antisocial Personality Disorder make up the clinical population.

The **DSM-5** defines **Antisocial Personality Disorder** as a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others since age 15 as evidenced by at least 3 of the following:

- 1) failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behaviors as indicated by repeatedly performing acts that are grounds for arrest.
- 2) deceitfulness, as indicated by repeated lying, use of aliases, or conning others for personal profit or pleasure.
- 3) impulsivity or failure to plan ahead.
- 4) irritability and aggressiveness, as indicated by repeated fights or assaults;
- 5) reckless disregard for safety of self or others.
- 6) consistent irresponsibility, as indicated by repeated failure to sustain consistent work behavior or honor financial obligations. and
- 7) lack of remorse, as indicated by being indifferent to or rationalizing having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Conduct Disorder traits should be present by age 15. Because many youth offenders may not be diagnosed with Conduct Disorder, the percentage of Antisocial Personality Disorder may be higher than reported because adult offenders lacked the Conduct Disorder diagnosis or records that they may have in fact met the diagnostic criteria for Conduct Disorder (Shibley & Arrigo, 2001).

Psychopathy

- Psychopathy was conceptualized by Cleckley and refined by Hare. It is often referred to Antisocial Personality Disorder, however, it is not. Approximately 3-15% of those with Antisocial Personality Disorder have Psychopathy (Martens, 2000; Ogloff, 2006). Overall approximately 1-3% of individuals have Psychopathy (Neumann, 2008; Pitchford, 2001). Approximately 20% of the prison population are psychopaths (Weibe, 2004).
- Psychopathy is measured by the Hare Psychopathy Checklist and appears to predict violent recidivism with approximately 80% or higher accuracy (Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 1991). Some psychopaths “burn-out” around age 40, but this does not appear true for violent behaviors (Farrington, 1986; Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 1991).

Hare’s Psychopathy Checklist (Hare, R. D. (1991; 2003).

- Consists of twenty items that are strongly supported empirically
- The Hare Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R) correlates very high with violent and sexual recidivism
- Most significant draw-back: requires specialized training to use accurately
- ***Psychopathy can be manifested in childhood as impulsivity, insensitivity, and problem externalization*** (Lynam, 1998; Frick, O’Brien, Wooten, & McBurnett, 1994).
- Persistent, frequent and varied asocial and antisocial behavior starting at an early age (Hecht, 2011). Also shallow affect, cunning, and lack of guilt and empathy and extremely impulsive and poor emotional control (Viding, 2004).
- Sexual predators need a score of 25 or higher. In general, a cut-off score of 30 is required for nonsexual psychopaths.

Factor 1:

Affective/interpersonal Features

1. Glibness/Superficial charm
2. Grandiose sense of worth
3. Pathological lying
4. Conning/Manipulative
5. Lack of remorse or guilt
6. Shallow affect
7. Callous/Lack of empathy
8. Failure to accept responsibility for own actions

Summary: callous & remorseless use of others

Factor 2:

Socially Deviant Behavior

1. Need for stimulation/Prone to boredom
2. Parasitic lifestyle
3. Poor behavioral controls
4. Early Behavioral Problems
5. Lack of realistic, long-term goals
6. Impulsivity
7. Irresponsibility
8. Juvenile delinquency
9. Revocation of conditional release

Summary: chronically unstable & antisocial lifestyle

Additional Factors

1. Promiscuous sexual behavior
2. Many short-term marital relationships
3. Criminal versatility

Some have described psychopathy as disinhibition, meanness and boldness (Patrick, Fowles, & Krueger, 2009) (see Skeem et al. 2011 for a review, pp. 105+). **Disinhibition** refers to general proneness toward impulse control problems, including deficient behavioral monitoring and restraint, impatient urgency, a failure to plan for the future, low frustration tolerance, angry/reactive aggression, poor regulation of affect and susceptibility to substance use problems. **Meanness** encompasses tendencies toward callousness and lack of empathy for others, shallow emotional attachment, exploitativeness, instrumental or predatory forms of aggression, destructiveness and deliberate cruelty. **Boldness** entails social dominance and efficacy, self-assurance, resilience to stressful life events, enjoyment of activities involving uncertainty or risk, and the ability to remain calm and poised in the face of threat or pressure.

Both psychopaths and sociopaths meet the criteria for Antisocial Personality Disorder, but their symptoms are much more serious. People with Antisocial Personality Disorder, Sociopathy, and Psychopathy, are not always violent. They may hurt people through embezzlement, theft, and other nonviolent means.

Psychopaths tend to experience minimal if any sense of guilt or remorse, which can make them more dangerous, especially when considering they present with less impulsivity than sociopaths. Psychopaths are thought to be born with abnormal brain development. Abuse and neglect may help to desensitize the individual to emotional responsiveness as well as to the development of aggressive dispositions (Weiler & Widom, 1996).

Psychopathy has a genetic component and the failure to bond could be because the parent himself or herself is a psychopath as well. On the other hand, a non-psychopathic parent may not be able to bond normally with a psychopathic child (DeVita, Forth, & Hare, 1990).

Psychopaths tend to dissociate from responsibility for their behavior and experience significantly less guilt for their behavior, which can make them more dangerous than sociopaths (Grohol, 2018). Psychopaths have the ability to act well, fooling others with ease. They come off as charming and caring and can con and manipulate others with ease. When they commit crimes, they tend to carefully plan every detail and calmly engage in the crime (cool, calm, meticulous).

There is also evidence that even if young psychopaths cannot be cured, the environment in which they grow up is highly correlated to whether they will become criminal psychopaths or the kind of psychopaths who avoid crime and manage to function among us (also referred to as *functional psychopaths*, who tend to be less violent) (DeVita, Forth, & Hare, 1990).

As a result of environmental factors (low socioeconomic factors), it is likely that those diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder are more likely to be sociopaths than psychopaths (Pitchford, 2001). Negative environment could also include abuse, permissive parenting styles, and parental psychopathy and/or criminality.

Early childhood experiences are also strongly linked, especially attachment deficits (e.g., Lang, Kliteberg, & Alm, 2002; Arrigo & Griffin, 2004; Bowlby, 1969). Psychopaths also demonstrate high impulsivity, risk taking, and fearlessness (Hare, 2003). Psychopaths do not experience remorse. Key characteristic according to Lykken (1995) include strong need for stimulation, complete lack of remorse or guilt, conning and manipulateness, and a parasitic lifestyle. The psychopath has a need to hurt others and to stalk. Also, an abnormal lack of conscience and compassion and they take what they want in a cold-blooded manner (Hare, 1996).

Psychopathic traits of *criminal versatility* and *pathological lying* may make other psychopathic symptoms and traits worse (Walsh & Kosson, 2008).

Treatment not only seems not to work, there is evidence that some kinds of treatment make matters worse (Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 1991).

Corporate professionals tend to have a higher percentage of psychopaths than in other community samples. Approximately 4.5% of corporate professionals had a score on the PCL-R (Hare Psychopathy Checklist- Revised) indicating psychopathy (Babiak, Neumann, & Hare, 2010). The psychopath's ability to demonstrate good impression management, to con and manipulate, often led to corporate success, despite their failure to demonstrate good job performance or good relationships with others and being a poor team player (Babiak, Neumann, & Hare, 2010). They succeed in part because of their perceived charisma and ability to manipulate, con, and persuade others.

The Neurophysiology of Psychopathy

Frontal lobe dysfunction and the resulting executive dysfunction occur (Blair et al., 2006). Specifically, significant impairment on the orbital frontal cortex. This area is involved in cognitive processes including decision-making. Symptoms of damage to this area include impulsivity, impaired behavioral inhibition, loss of guilt and shame, sexual promiscuity, and antisocial tendencies (Roussy & Toupin, 2000). The frontal lobe is also responsible for abstract reasoning, attentional control, working memory, integration across space and time, anticipation, and planning (Luria, 1973). The amygdala stimulates instinctual behaviors (e.g., hunger, sex, aggression, and other strong emotions) the orbital cortex inhibits these behaviors. Neurophysiological studies have shown tendencies for dysfunctions in ***the amygdala and prefrontal cortex*** (Blair, 2008; Blair et al., 2006; Hecht, 2011) as well as other dysfunctions in the brain including maldevelopment of the limbic system and septal structures (Raine, Lee, Yahng, & Colletti, 2010), and an imbalance of serotonin (Glenn, 2011). Reduced size and functioning of the Amygdala result in poor fear conditioning and impaired emotion recognition (Yang, Raine, Narr, Colletti, & Toga, 2009).

Hyperactivity of the left hemisphere and hypoactivity in the right hemisphere. The right hemisphere regulates pro-social tendencies (e.g., fear, guilt) and the left hemisphere regulates impulsivity, aggression, sensation-seeking, and risk-taking- behaviors that are then uncontrolled when the right hemisphere is not working properly. In addition, the corpus callosum in psychopaths has been shown to be slower in the communication and interaction of the left and right hemisphere. (Hecht, 2011). In short, the left hemisphere deals with impulsivity and the right hemisphere tempers urges and impulse behaviors. In short, the left hemisphere executes approach behaviors while the right hemisphere mediates with avoidance behaviors.

Low cortisol levels were also found with psychopaths, which is primarily controlled by the right hemisphere (e.g., Cima, Smeets, & Jelicic, 2008). High cortisol levels are associated with fear and causes the fight-or-flight response. Testosterone are correlated with psychopathy and antisocial behavior, risk taking, aggression, and impulsiveness (in Hecht, 2011). High testosterone levels are related to aggression and lead to fight behavior (Terburg, Morgan, and van Honk, 2009).

Sociopaths

Sociopaths likely make-up approximately 30% of those with ASPD though it is difficult to find research to support that claim. Sociopaths make-up approximately 4% of the population (Psychologia, 2018).

Sociopaths are nearly similar to psychopaths. One major difference is that sociopaths are thought to be born with relatively normal brain development. They develop sociopathy as a result of environmental factors, such as early adverse events (e.g., abuse, neglect), parenting styles (e.g., permissive indulgent or permissive neglectful), absence of a prosocial father figure or absence of any father figure, and lack of socialization (Lykken, 1995). Sociopathy is an extreme form of under-socialization. Abuse and neglect may help to desensitize the individual to emotional

responsiveness as well as to the development of aggressive dispositions (Weiler & Widom, 1996).

Sociopaths tend to be more impulsive and erratic than psychopaths and are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system as a result. They are also more likely to act on impulse and may become easily agitated and angered, displaying violent outbursts. Unlike psychopaths, sociopaths may develop relationships with people who share their way of thinking. However, their relationships with others tend to be openly problematic. Sociopaths may experience some degree of remorse and guilt within the context of some group (e.g., gang, family) but display little empathy or guilt involving others outside their selected group. This presents with difficulty maintaining stable employment (Grohol, 2018). Sociopaths have some degree of conscience.

Sociopathic traits include conscience defect, egocentricity, callousness, impulsivity, excessive boasting, risk-taking, antagonism and aggressive acting-out, inability to resist temptation, deprecating attitude towards the opposite sex, and lack of interest in enduring, long-lasting relationships or bonding with a mate (O'Connor, 2006). They have a difficult time getting along with others outside of their primary accepted person or group. They likely will express their negative and aggressive and callous unemotional views without much care of what others think. They tend to act impulsively without regard for the consequences or harm caused.

General Issues in Dealing with Psychopathic & Sociopathic Offenders

- ❖ Smooth approach, often cold & emotionless
- ❖ Has explanation that may appear plausible
- ❖ Either:
 - Totally abrasive, resistant, provocative, angry (Sociopath)
 - Cooperative, calm, cooperative, agreeing (Psychopath)

Psychopaths & Sociopaths Are Clever & Resistant.....

- If in treatment, either fails several times due to resistance (s) or completely cooperative (psychopath)
- Learns to superficially comply yet internally maintains & strengthens own distorted beliefs
- Perfects deviant behavior through practice and experience: M.O. ever changing (psychopath)
- May have convinced victim that it is they (victim) that is at fault (psychopath)
- Often has many allies and supporters
- Often above average IQ's, middle class or higher (psychopath)
- May maintain professional job (psychopath) or often menial, unstable employment history (sociopath)
- May have stable marital history (psychopath) or unstable, turbulent relationship history (sociopath)
- Often has many children with many different women, but fails to support them

- Often has extensive, promiscuous sexual relationship history, also unable to remain sexually faithful
- Often has unstable residence history, residing with others much of the time
- Often has parasitic lifestyle, living off others

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