

BOOK REVIEW

Handbook of Psychopathy. C. J. Patrick (Ed.). New York: Guilford Press, 2005. 651 pp. ISBN 1-59385-212-6

This volume is a scholarly, exhaustive examination of psychopathy, a construct that rears its head ever more frequently in our journals, our posters, our assessment practices, and our courts. It is not intended for the intellectually faint of heart. The authors explicitly eschew any pretense of fulfilling the needs of those who might rely on popular media or breezier venues, such as *Without Conscience* (Hare, 1999). Patrick has convened an academic faculty that has spent years splicing together data-driven conclusions defining the edges of our understanding of psychopathy from numerous perspectives. It exposes technical and substantive differences of view with research support.

The first section introduces several theoretical and empirical foundations of psychopathy, including an introductory chapter by David Lykken that lays the groundwork for several recurrent themes in the book, including curiosity about the noncriminal psychopath. The notion that there is a population of uncaught individuals who have faithlessly conned, cheated, and manipulated their ways to the top of their respective professions, or who have otherwise eluded apprehension, engages our macabre interest in the human dark side, not to mention ensuring advertising revenues for television producers. This section concludes with chapter 4 by Hare and Neumann, misleadingly named "PCL-R Assessment of Psychopathy," detailing the results of item response theory analysis and evidence in support of the four-factor model of psychopathy. This chapter has little to do with clinical assessment. It is a substantive description of current research supporting the interpersonal, affective, lifestyle, and antisocial facets underlying the second edition of the PCL-R and the PCL:YV.

Controversies and issues relevant to the measurement of psychopathy are introduced by Cooke, Michie, and Hart (ch. 5), who caution that monomeasure bias (overreliance on the PCL-R) may lead us into a conceptual cul-de-sac. They challenge the reader to consider an alternative three-factor structure: impulsive/irresponsible behavioral style, deficient affective experience, and deceitful interpersonal style. They argue that antisocial behavior is a consequence, rather than a symptom, of psychopathy. Lilienfeld and Fowler (ch. 6) provide an engaging argument in favor of self-report methods of assessing psychopathy, including descriptions of three published self-report measures and discussion of the assessment of psychopathy with noncriminal populations. Chapters 7 and 8 are devoted to specific analysis of psychopathy's relation to personality functions. Lynam and Derefinco argue in favor of understanding psychopathy as a set of personality traits, while Widiger advocates dismantling the construct into specific components, particularly those that contribute to its predictive validity. This section ends (ch. 9) with Poythress and Skeem's examination of a variety of subtyping strategies to expand traditional distinctions of primary and secondary psychopathy.

The *Handbook of Psychopathy* devotes 180 pages and nine chapters to the etiological mechanisms of psychopathy. This section may be roughly divided into two groupings: the neurological/physiological research findings and the cognitive, developmental, genetic, and family influences. These chapters are filled with an array of important findings and current science, contributing to a broad understanding of the etiology of psychopathy. Of particular interest is Raine and Yang's (ch. 14) mixed findings associated with various brain deficits and their relation to psychopathic behavior. Their discussion of neurosurgery and stem cell transplant to mediate psychopaths' brain deficits is particularly provocative, if speculative. Waldman and Rhee (ch. 11) raise important questions about the heritability of psychopathic traits, including issues related to identifying genes that contribute to

the etiology of psychopathy. Farrington (ch. 12) provides a good review of family-crime research and intervention strategies, challenging our (over)reliance on accepted measurements of psychopathy (including "reification" of the PCL) and the need for prospective longitudinal surveys with at-risk community samples to identify relations between the development of psychopathy and parental influence. The section concludes with Frick and Marsee's (ch. 18) discussion of developmental pathways, focusing on childhood conduct disorders, aggressive behaviors, and the importance of the development of callous and unemotional traits in antisocial youths.

The next section addresses psychopathy within specific populations. Salekin (ch. 20) examines issues related to conceptualizing and assessing psychopathy in children and adolescents. The development and assessment of psychopathy in women are described by Verona and Vitale (ch. 21), noting both similarities and differences with men. With a welcome nonideological approach to the topic, they note that the PCL-R shows adequate reliability and validity, but recommend modifications to reflect "uniquely female expressions of antisocial externalizing tendencies, such as prostitution, intimate partner violence, abuse and neglect of children, comorbid psychopathology, and relational forms of aggression" (p. 431). One of my favorite chapters was Hall and Benning's discussion of the "successful" psychopath (ch. 20). Their handling of this fascinating topic raises numerous questions of what we do not know about those men and women who avoid detection through guile, restraint of impulsivity, and good fortune. It reminds us that a vastly disproportionate degree of our aggregate knowledge of psychopathy is based on those who've been caught, while those who escape apprehension remain largely unexamined. This is especially relevant in an era of white-collar executives imprisoned for malfeasance and politicians' salacious and corrupt behavior unmasked.

The final section of this book deals with clinical and applied issues. Porter and Woodworth (ch. 24) gather evidence to support the view that violent psychopaths are far more likely to employ instrumental, goal-directed aggression than violent nonpsychopaths. Both groups use reactive aggression, but psychopaths may inhibit such behavior when the stakes are higher via "selective impulsivity." In their examination of the role of psychopathy in sexual coercion, Knight and Guay (ch. 26) note that psychopaths constitute a distinct subset of rapists, and they offer complex structural modeling in support of a three-path model. Addressing the belief that psychopaths are at highest risk for criminal recidivism, Douglas, Vincent, and Edens (ch. 27) warn us against acceptance of conventional wisdom, particularly overextension of the PCL-R for purposes of risk assessment. They reiterate the call for more research among noninmate groups and "caution against considering psychopathy a harbinger of ineluctable danger" (p. 549). Harris and Rice (ch. 28) assume an agnostic stance on the topic of treatment for psychopaths, finding little support in the extant literature for optimism. They also offer substantive suggestions to guide the informed application of behavior modification techniques and evidence-based interventions that might yield positive, albeit modest, results. Finally, Edens and Petrila (ch. 29) describe the thicket of legal and ethical issues surrounding psychopathy and its assessment in forensic contexts, including capital cases.

It is difficult not to admire the enormous effort expended unraveling the mysteries of the psychopath and his ways in *Handbook of Psychopathy*. Of course, this is hardly a new pursuit. As Cooke et al. remind us in their biblical allusion, inquiring minds have recognized their unique and predatory danger for millennia. As witnessed by several authors in this masterful work, we seem to know less than we ought and nagging questions persist. Nonetheless, much has been learned about psychopathy in the laboratories and clinics of the assembled authors, and this work provides instructive views of the Western world's leading experts. Today the *Handbook* stands as an authoritative reference, as we try to fathom "he [who] sitteth in the lurking places". (p. 91 in the King James VI version of the *Holy Bible*; Psalm 10:2-8).

This book may prove more pleasing to scientists and academics than to clinicians. The degree of detail and complexity will probably exceed the absorption rate of many readers. As a practical matter, the chapters in the final two sections on specific populations and applications will receive more attention from clinicians. However, it would be unfortunate if readers failed to appreciate the

extraordinary breath and comprehensive examination found in other parts of this volume. There are valuable insights for all who research, study, evaluate, and manage these men and women so reviled by society.

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REFERENCE

Hare, R. D. (1999). *Without conscience: The disturbing world of the psychopaths among us*. New York: Guilford Press.