Pop-Culture Psychopathy:

How Media and Literature Exposure Relate to Lay Psychopathy Understanding

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Michael E. Keesler, M.S., J.D.

Department of Psychology

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Abstract

Psychologists' conceptualization of psychopathy has gradually evolved over time, with interest peaking in recent decades. Concurrently, the lay public's relationship with psychology has changed from guarded skepticism to acceptance and even demand. The tie that binds psychology and the public has always been mass communication, both in news and popular media format. Reflecting changing trends, mass media has altered the way it objectively describes and popularly portrays psychopathy. Whereas psychopaths were consistently portrayed as villains in the mid-20th Century, today they comprise a growing cast of protagonists. It is currently unclear what effect, if any, these co-occurring changes have had on public understanding or perception of psychopathy. This research sought to explore that dynamic, and found a variety of interesting descriptive and statistically significant findings. Included among those is the finding that great misunderstanding of psychopathy, as a construct, exists in the minds of many lay individuals. Additionally, that misunderstanding might be positively slanted among individuals with high exposure to protagonist portrayals of psychopathy. Said another way, fans of television and movie protagonist psychopaths may conceptualize a kind of romanticized psychopathy. This signals important legal, practical, and ethical implications, including the potential for biased jurors, confounded research about psychopathy's effect as a label, and questions about how psychologists should respond to this information. Many of this project's limitations are attributable to its largely exploratory nature, but are discussed at greater length. As for future directions for research, this exploratory investigation offers a foundation toward a psychopathy bias scale – a tool that could be utilized in research on the labeling effects of psychopathy.

Introduction

Today psychology is a well-established and generally accepted area of scientific inquiry. However, like many of the social sciences, psychology remains a comparatively young field when juxtaposed against the traditional sciences. The early growth of any field is marked by much change, and so too is the case with psychology since Wilhelm Wundt's establishing the first formal research laboratory in 1879.

Although modern psychology carries the burden of investigating and researching psychopathy, the construct predates this modern era. Known by many names and described by many historical figures, psychopathy has been a consistent area of interest for centuries. As 19th and 20th Century psychologists began describing psychopathy, it was perhaps inevitable that scientific conceptualization of the construct would change and evolve over time to better capture the phenomenon.

As psychology grew and changed as a field, refining its conceptualization of psychopathy, so too did the public's relationship with psychology change. Casual indifference gave way to guarded skepticism, touched at times even by hostility, but eventually giving way to widespread acceptance. At present, acceptance has shifted to calls for assistance, information, and guidance on topics about which psychologists hold expertise.

In the latter 20th Century and early 21st Century, psychologists have answered public demand with therapy, education, lectures, articles, interviews, and books – to name a few. Notably, the mass media has been the powerful mediator of psychology and the lay public's relationship. News media helped bridge the gap between psychologists and the lay public, and eventually popular book publishers provided a second venue to facilitate communication. At the same time, though, popular media began to satisfy increasing demand by incorporating psychology into its popular fiction.

Given the public's longstanding fascination with psychopathy and its correlates, it is perhaps unsurprising that psychopathy came to become regularly portrayed in popular fiction. Initially, the portrayals were fairly straightforward, albeit somewhat dramatized. The villainous serial killers, cult leaders, batterers, and rapists of popular fiction often borrowed heavily from the characteristics psychologists attribute to psychopaths. Over time, though, psychopathy portrayal became more complex. Specifically, within the last decade, numerous fictional psychopaths have been filling the protagonist role in popular fiction.

Little research about how the lay public perceives psychopathy currently exists, with some preliminary research suggesting confusion and misunderstanding. The project described herein sought to expand on that research, while also exploring how portrayal of psychopathy in the media is related to understanding – or misunderstanding – of psychopathy. This research presents a number of implications for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

Background and Literature Summary

Psychopathy's Evolution Over Time

Scholars have traced psychopathy back to Aristotle's student Theophastus' discussions about the Unscrupulous Man (Millon, Simonsen, Birket-Smith, & Davis, 1998). In circa 300 B.C., Theophrastus identified the "Unscrupulous Man" as one who:

> …will go and borrow money from a creditor he has never paid…When marketing he reminds the butcher of some service he has rendered him and, standing near the scales, throw in some meat, if he can, and a soup-bone. If he succeeds, so much the better; if not, he will snatch a piece of tripe and go off laughing. (Translated in Widiger, Corbitt, & Millon, 1991, p.63)

Skipping forward in time to the 19th Century, Phillipe Pinel is credited as the first clinician to formally identify psychopathy in 1801 (Millon et al., 1998). In *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale; ou la manie,* Pinel identified certain patients as having *manie sans délire* ["insanity without delirium"]. Pinel described these patients as otherwise unimpaired, able to

reason and rationalize, but engaged in self-destructive and impulsive behavior (Pinel, 1801/1962).

Over the next 150 years, professionals across numerous disciplines and theoretical orientations made note of psychopaths. Physician Benjamin Rush (1812) spoke of patients lucid in thought but engaged in socially deviant behavior, blaming an original defect in the moral faculties of the mind. In 1827, phrenologist Carl Otto wrote about convicts lacking impulse regulation, and inclined to "shamming, intrigues, cunning politics," and deception (Millon et al., 1998, p. 6). British alienist J. C. Pritchard (1835) explained that psychopaths lacked "natural feelings" – morality, goodness, responsibility – and that they were incapable of "decency and propriety in the business of life" (p. 85). Gouster (1878) later described a symptom cluster of moral perversion from early life, including being headstrong, malicious, disobedient, irascible, lying, neglectful, and violent – delighting in mischief, intrigue, excitement, and passion (Millon et al., 1998).

Nearing the turn of the century, Emil Kraeplin's second edition of *Psychiatrie: Ein Lehrbuch* (1887) identified the "morally insane" as unable to restrain their reckless gratification of immediate egotistical desires (Millon et al., 1998). But, at the turn of the 20th Century, Koch (1891) proposed that "moral insanity" be replaced by "psychopathic inferiority," believing that a physical basis existed for the disorder (Millon et al., 1998). By the early 20th Century, Karl Birnbaum (1909) proposed that "sociopathic" might be the more appropriate label for the psychopathic personality. Based on his writings, scholars credit Birnbaum with being the first to emphasize a socialization or nurture component to psychopathy (Millon et al., 1998). By contrast, Kurt Schneider (1923) emphasized character permanence, arguing that many criminals were born delinquent youths and thus unable to be rehabilitated. However, along the lines of contemporary psychopathy, Schneider also stressed that many psychopaths could be found

properly functioning in society (Millon et al., 1998; see also Babiak & Hare, 2007). Although

many other notable individuals opined on psychopathy over the years, Hervey Cleckley's 1941

Mask of Sanity would be the first attempt to establish identifiable criteria.

Contemporary Psychopathy

In *Mask of Sanity*, Hervey Cleckley, a psychiatrist from Georgia, identified what he

perceived as the 16 characteristics of psychopathy (Cleckley, 1988; see also Appendix A).

Although some characteristics were negatively framed and would fade from later

conceptualizations (e.g., absence of delusions or signs of irrational thinking), many were

consistent with earlier characterizations and would recur across different psychopathy

formulations (e.g., superficial charm, remorselessness, untruthfulness). Despite Cleckley's

general opining, his criteria formalization set the stage for the American Psychiatric Association

(APA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to formalize psychopathy into a diagnosable

disorder.

In the first *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*), the APA

established "Antisocial Reaction" and "Dyssocial Reaction" as subtypes under the umbrella term

"Sociopathic Emotional Disturbance" (Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics of the

American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1952; see also Appendix B). Therein, the APA used a

"goodness-of-fit" approach toward diagnosis. In other words, a general description of the each

disorder was provided in the *DSM*, and practitioners used their judgment to determine for which

disorder a given patient met the description. Within the *DSM's* general description of

Sociopathic Emotional Disturbance, certain recurring themes (e.g., disloyalty, irresponsibility,

ignoring of social norms, and unreliability) would reappear in later *DSM* editions, though others

would be abandoned (e.g., always in trouble, hedonistic).

In the second edition of the *DSM (DSM-II)*, Antisocial Reaction was renamed "Antisocial

Personality," and Dyssocial Reaction was renamed "Dyssocial Behavior" (Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics of the American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1968; see also Appendix C). Reading the description, one can see that Antisocial Personality briefly became more closely aligned with modern-day psychopathy, with Dyssocial Behavior being somewhat a pathologized diagnosis for repeat offenders (see Appendix C). Still utilizing the original *DSM's* goodness-of-fit model, the *DSM-II* included recurring psychopathy traits (e.g., remorselessness, low frustration tolerance, impulsivity, irresponsibility, and selfishness/disloyalty,) though also incorporated others that would be abandoned (e.g., basically unsocialized).

In 1977, the World Health Organization (WHO) mirrored APA's approach in its *Ninth International Classification of Diseases* (*ICD-9*). This was the first *ICD* to include a psychopathy-type construct amongst its diagnoses, called "Personality Disorder with Predominantly Sociopathic or Asocial Manifestation" (WHO, 1977). Following APA's lead, the WHO used both a goodness-of-fit model and highly comparable characteristics (e.g., callousness, irresponsibility, and low frustration tolerance; see also Appendix D).

The next year, the APA's *DSM-III* became the first practitioner manual to utilize a set of formal diagnostic criteria. These criteria required a certain number of articulated symptoms, in a number of demarcated categories, to be present for diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1980). This pick-a-few-from-many approach, still utilized at the time of this writing, contrasts strongly with its predecessor's goodness-of-fit approaches. Also in the *DSM-III*, the APA collapsed Antisocial Personality and Dyssocial Behavior into the single "Antisocial Personality Disorder" (APD). In the *DSM-III*'s index, readers looking for "psychopathy" or "sociopathy" find only "Sociopathic Personality", and are directed to Antisocial Personality Disorder (APA, 1980) – suggesting a possible equating of APD, sociopathy, and psychopathy. Also noteworthy, the *DSM-III* qualitative criteria for APD were divided into two categories:

delinquent/criminal behavior and psychopathic personality traits (APA, 1980; see also Appendix E). Under this model, individuals meeting diagnostic criteria for APD had to exhibit a blend of criminal acts and temperamental characteristics. Unfortunately, this made the criteria list for APD incredibly lengthy and complex (see, e.g., Appendix E).

During the same time period, Robert Hare was working on his Psychopathy Checklist (PCL), originally published in 1980. Based on Hare's work with criminals in Canadian prisons, and building off the foundation laid by Hervey Cleckley in 1941, the current Psychopathy Checklist-Revised utilizes a two-factor model of psychopathy similar to that employed in the *DSM-III* (Hare, 2003). Hare identifies Factor 1 as "Aggressive Narcissism," Factor 2 as "Socially Deviant Lifestyle," and retains three traits (of the twenty) that do not load on either Factor (see Appendix G). The PCL-R also enabled a new type of terminology for Psychopaths (e.g., a non-criminal psychopath is a "Factor 1 Psychopath"). Hare's PCL-R utilizes a blended goodness-of-fit and pick-a-few-from-many format in the scoring of the PCL-R. Specifically, each item is scored as a 0, 1, or 2, with higher aggregate scores indicating greater psychopathy (Hare, 2003). Hare initially indicated a cutoff score of 30 for psychopathy (Hare, 1991), but modern convention tends to view psychopathy as more continuous than dichotomous (Edens, Marcus, Lilienfeld, & Poythress, 2006; Edens, Marcus, & Vaughn, 2011), as well as having more heterogeneous representation (Skeem et al., 2003).

Little changed between the *DSM-III* and the *DSM-III Revised* (DSM-III-R) with regard to APD (APA, 1987). The same dual-structure criteria for APD was used, and the book's index still seemed to imply (by reference) that sociopathy and psychopathy were enveloped by APD (see also Appendix F). In the WHO's (1992) *ICD-10*, though, the WHO abandoned its previous goodness-of-fit model in favor of APA's new pick-a-few-from-many format (WHO, 1992). However, a striking difference can be found contrasting the complexity of the *DSM-III-R* and the

ICD-10 criteria (see Appendix H; see also Appendix F). Whereas the *DSM-III-R* required a combined total of 7 criteria among 29 options and sub-options, the *ICD-10* condensed criteria for "Personality Disorder with Predominantly Sociopathic or Asocial Manifestation" to a mere 7 criteria, of which at least 3 were required for diagnosis (APA, 1987; WHO, 1992).

In 1994, roles reversed somewhat, with the APA following the WHO's approach to psychopathy. In the *DSM-IV*, the APA opted for simplified diagnostic criteria much like the *ICD-10* (APA, 1994). Like with the *ICD-10*, the *DSM-IV* required three of seven criteria, blending criminal-spectrum behavior with traditional psychopathic personality traits (APA, 1994; see also Appendix I). This simplification came with a cost, though. By making the *DSM-IV* criteria for an APD diagnosis less stringent, the diagnosis rate and reported prevalence of APD spiked. Scholars have identified that change as the catalyst that made APD into what some now criticize as a "diagnosis" of criminality (Millon et al., 1998).

The APA made no alterations to the diagnostic criteria for APD in its *DSM-IV-TR* and, despite considering major overhaul for the *DSM-V* (APA, 2012), no alterations were made to *APD* in the *DSM-V* (APA, 2013; see also Appendix J). At present, the *DSM-V* lists only APD, with the description under "Diagnostic Features" noting: "This pattern has also been referred to a *psychopathy, sociopathy,* or *dyssocial personality disorder.*" (APA, 2013, p. 659).

With the seemingly constant changes to the way mental health professionals view psychopathy, it may come as little surprise were one to learn that the public is confused about psychopathy. However, that presupposes the public's regular versing in psychology's thinking about psychopathy, which is almost certainly not the case. Rather, while understanding about psychopathy was changing, so too was the public's relationship with the field of psychology, with new developments receiving more attention with each passing year. However, the dynamic is likely more complicated.

The Public's Evolving Relationship with Psychology

Around the time Cleckley published *Mask of Sanity*, psychologists elsewhere began talking about how psychology was viewed as a profession. For one thing, writers expressed concern about how they thought the public was misperceiving psychology (Gaddes, 1960; McNeil, 1959; Mills, 1953). What's more, any complained that the attitude toward psychology was one of indifference or even hostility, be it in the United States (McNeil, 1959), Canada (Gaddes, 1960; Steer & Cox, 1957), or even Germany (Bondy, 1964). Even still, psychologists expressed concern that the misperceptions spread from ideas about what psychologists did (Mills, 1953; Steer & Cox, 1957) to how much training it took to become a psychologist (Mills, 1953). In one particularly alarming study, participant ideas about psychologists' dealings included "studying rocks and water," "getting somebody to do something they don't want to," and "hoodwinking young people and stealing them away from the church"! (Steer & Cox, 1957, p. 22).

McNeil (1959) partly blamed a "neglect of public relations" for psychology's standing in the public eye (p. 520). As the latter half of the 20th Century got underway, though, psychologists undertook many endeavors to increase public awareness and acceptance of psychology. In the 1980s, the American Psychological Association petitioned Congress to print a postal stamp in recognition of psychology's scientific contributions (Benjamin, 2003). In 1985, the Welsh Branch of the British Psychological Society held an exhibition to promote the psychology's image and increase awareness (Foot, 1985). Although some of the efforts met with limited success, many instead credit psychology's gradual acceptance to increased exposure through mass media.

Because more individuals get information from the news than any other source, and view that information as factual, increased media presence can do much for psychology's standing in

the public eye (Carll, 2001). In the 1980s, psychologists were already a regular presence in

newspaper advice columns and radio call-in shows (Bouhoutsos, Goodchilds, & Huddy, 1986).

By the 1990s, psychologists also began increasingly appearing in the news media (Carll, 2001).

At first, reporters interviewed psychologists on general topics just enough to get a snippet,

opinion, or sound byte, but by the turn of the millennium, it was not unusual to see psychologists

giving several-minute interviews (Carll, 2001). Today, the trend continues, with Kanaris (2006)

and others even encouraging fellow psychologists to seek out media opportunities as a way of

educating the public about psychology.

Despite the growing acceptance of psychology and growing visibility of psychologists,

much confusion still abounds. For example, research suggests that individuals are still unclear

about the breadth and depth of the profession, and refuse to view it as hard science (Mills, 2009).

In contrast to how news media assisted psychology's widespread acceptance, polls suggest that

many individuals have trouble overcoming popular media's often uni-dimensional portrayal of

psychology through psychotherapists (Mills, 2009). Some academics have even expressed

concern that confusion permeates the psychology classroom, with research suggesting a wide

discrepancy among college psychology majors' perception of the profession (Rosenthal,

McKnight, & Price, 2001).

Fortunately, contemporary research suggests that most Americans have a positive view of

psychology and believe psychologists can help solve real-world problems (Mills, 2009). One

place this may be particularly evident is in bookstores, many of which dedicate an entire section

to professionally authored psychology literature. Although books belonging to the "self-help"

category may dominate the section, they do not comprise it entirely. Numerous psychologist-

authored "popular" books are now available to be read by a lay audience, including best-sellers

like the recently published *Thinking Fast and Slow* (Kahneman, 2011) . But this non-fiction

psychology literature for the lay reader has not always been available. Rather, like psychology's evolving conception of psychopathy, and the community's evolving relationship with psychology, so too has the large-scale conversation between psychologists and the lay community changed.

Increase in Psychopathy Professional Literature for Lay Consumer

As the lay public has grown more comfortable and accepting of psychology as a discipline, so too has its interest grown. In the early years, widely distributed newspaper articles satisfied this growing interest. Perhaps victim to the sensationalism of a young mass media, psychology may have often appeared within the context of a disturbing murder or court case. Over time, though, psychology has moved from the footnotes to the article topic itself.

Old news stories mentioning psychopathy were often about murders, serial killers, or con artists, and typically referenced the individuals as psychopaths. For example, searching the *New York Times* for its oldest articles including the key term "psychopath" yields headlines like "Drug Six Young Girls; Two Men Found with Unconscious Victims – Threat of Lynching" (New York Times, 1907). A similar search for the *Kansas City Star* provides the article "A New Malady for Murderers," quoting a doctor describing one psychopath as "totally devoid" of "all moral notions" (Kansas City Star, 1885). In Alabama, *The Montgomery Advertiser* (1921) described one murder defendant as a "constitutional psychopath," and the *Dallas Morning News* (1922) reported the closing of Mary Garden's recent "perversion" of the opera *Salome,*[1] lest "pure psychopath of the kind seep in institutions" *(sic).* The *Duluth News-Tribune* (1907) described a psychopath on trial for savagely abusing his wife, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (1916) warned that one of every nine servicemen would return from World War I psychopaths.

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[1] Salome is a one-act opera by Richard Strauss, held famous (or infamous) for its shocking final scene where Salome declares her love for John the Baptist and kisses his decapitated head (Boosey & Hawkes, 2008).

Lastly, an unusual article from the *Macon Telegraph* was likely one of the first to focus on psychopathy – rather than a psychopath – informing readers that "when a fully-fledged psychopath is discovered he should be immediately hanged!" (Macon Telegraph, 1885).

Whereas we still see articles about killers or abusers mentioning psychopathy, today we also see a new type of article. In this new article, psychopathy is the article's focus, and the article's content may reference a living or fictional psychopath. An Internet search reveals that, in the last decade, we have seen a surge in such news articles. In 2004, CNN London published an article warning office workers that psychopaths are ubiquitous in the corporate world (Desai, 2004). The article explained to readers that psychopaths are not necessarily violent – contrasting fictional characters Hannibal Lecter and Patrick Bateman – but rather explains that psychopaths may thrive in the corporate world (Desai, 2004). In 2005, ABC produced a similarly-themed documentary on the increased prevalence of corporate psychopaths (Newby, 2005). Therein, Dr. John Clarke outlined multiple characteristics of the psychopath, all of which appear on the PCL-R, and described some research indicating the inability to rehabilitate psychopaths (Newby, 2005).

Particularly within recent years, psychopathy seems to be catching on as a public interest issue. In September 2011, *Forbes Magazine* published an article about a University of St. Gallen study showing marked similarities between stock traders and psychopaths (Barth, 2011). The article reported that stockbrokers may actually exhibit greater psychopathic features than serial killers, and – like CNN London in 2004 – referenced *American Psycho's* Patrick Bateman (Barth, 2011). In November 2011, the BBC tried to distill cutting edge research on the neurological basis of psychopathy. The article, structured around the case study of a serial killer, addressed the legal-ethical issues of characterizing psychopathy as a disorder (Taylor, 2011). More recently, CNN published an article citing psychological research and discussing corporate

psychopaths in senior-level management (Voight, 2012). The CNN article included a user-friendly animated test for identifying whether the reader's boss is a psychopath, also referencing the popular media portrayals of psychopaths in *Dexter*, *American Psycho,* and *Malice* (Voight, 2012).

In that brief review, it seems evident that multiple major news sources (e.g., CNN, ABC, the BBC) and even *Forbes Magazine* now provide psychopathy literature for the lay consumer. However, the news media is not the only group to have caught this wave; documentary film now seems to be following suit. In *The Corporation* (2003), Bob Hare likens the American Corporation to a "prototypic psychopath," and Noam Chomsky discusses psychological ideas about morality in light of the American Corporation (Achbar & Abbott, 2003). In a free Internet documentary, *I, Psychopath* (2009), self-proclaimed psychopath Sam Vaknin goes in search of a formal diagnosis while distressed documentary director Ian Walker records (Walker, 2009).

Perhaps even more noteworthy than psychopathy articles by the news media and films referencing the construct, each year we have seen more professionally authored publications written for the lay consumer. Mass publication and online retailers have made it possible to disseminate this information via "popular books" – less expensive than a professional textbook or collection of research, and written to be understood by anyone regardless of formal psychology education. Numerous psychologists have authored such books (e.g., Boddy, 2011; Babiak & Hare, 2007; Hare, 1999; Rieber, 1997), available in paperback or electronic form for under $30 from a variety of booksellers. Alongside those books are also some non-professionally authored literature, but still presented as non-fiction accounts of dealings with psychopaths (e.g., Bentley, 2008). Perhaps the bestselling example is John Ronson's (2011) *The Psychopath Test*. Named one of the Best Books of 2011 by Amazon.com, *The Psychopath Test* straddles the professional-lay-boundary, chronicling an investigative journalist's foray into

psychopathy. Ronson (2011) describes interviews with exemplary psychopaths, and recalls his experiences in Bob Hare's PCL-R training program provided by Darkstone Research Group. Despite some variations, all these publications provide purportedly factual information about psychopathy for the lay consumer.

As the public's interest for professional information on psychopathy has increased, popular media has also found psychology to be a topic with entertainment value. With the wide variety of entertainment media available today, we now see a greater diversity of characters, themes, and pathologies appearing in popular movies and television shows. Psychopathy is among these, but how its presentation has changed over the last two decades is truly remarkable.

Increase in Psychopathy Popular Media Delivered to Lay Consumer

People seem to have a longstanding fascination with the macabre, well predating the presence of mass media (Hare, 1993; Penfold-Mounce, 2010). As mass media became widely available, interest shifted from the abstract to the concrete, exemplified by sensational true crime stories that co-occurred with early mass media (Horall, 2001). But fascination with death and violence had always been, and apparently would continue to remain, a constant. The quintessential early example of fascination with violence and crime is Jack the Ripper, an unidentified serial killer from late 19th-Century London who lives on today in legend as much as fact (Keppel et al., 2005). Perhaps it was inevitable that the first movie would incorporate these themes in the form of violence and murder; the first "talkie" released in 1903, *The Great Train Robbery*, climaxed with a violent massacre (Schmid, 2005). As violence, killing, murderers, and the media became increasingly intertwined in the 20th Century, Schmid (2005) remarks only half-jokingly that serial killers were natural born celebrities. As he explains, serial killers marry two major elements of American interest: stardom and violence (Scmmid, 2005).

The Great Train Robbery began what would become a long and profitable relationship

between the mass media and violence. Although modern conceptualizations of psychopathy do

not presume violence, that was not the case during the time of filming and fiction writing for

much of psychopathy's popular media history (Hare, 1993). Middle-to-late 20th Century

depictions of psychopaths fell largely into one of two categories: serial killers and cult leaders,

with the former heavily favored. An Internet search conducted for this writing compared

searches for "popular psychopath movies" and "popular serial killer movies," with the searches

producing markedly similar results. Thus, although it has not been empirically measured to date,

psychopathy and serial killing may have been used interchangeably by mid-20th Century popular

media.

Of relevance to this proposed study, equating psychopaths and serial killers imputes a

number of negative characteristics to psychopaths. Imputing these negative characteristics is not

only undeserved and unsupported, but also paints an unfairly demonized picture of psychopaths.

Serial killer psychopaths have been portrayed as savagely violent (e.g., Patrick Bateman from

American Psycho, John Doe from *Se7en,* Mr. Blonde from *Reservoir Dogs,* Anton Chigurth from

No Country for Old Men, and Vernon Schillinger from *Oz),* torturing their victims (e.g.,

Hannibal Lecter from *Silence of the Lambs,* John Doe, Mr. Blonde), remorseless rapists (e.g.,

Vernon Schillinger from *Oz)*, and – perhaps most startlingly – as engaging in cannibalism (e.g.,

Hannibal Lecter). Although some psychopathy research has tangentially addressed these

portrayals (e.g., DeLisi et al., 2009), none has pointedly examined how these portrayals affect the

viewer. More specifically for this proposal, no research has examined whether exposure to these

portrayals etches the "demonized psychopath" in viewers' minds as the normal or classic

psychopath.

Wilson (1999) posits that psychopaths in film epitomize evil, providing a villain to be

conquered by the hero. Although this may have held true in the 20th Century, a new breed of

pop-culture psychopaths have emerged since the turn of the millennium. Today, the popular

media consumer is presented with increasing numbers of protagonists who are potentially

psychopaths, or at least display an array of psychopathic characteristics (e.g., Matt Damon's

character in *The Talented Mr. Ripley)*. The psychopath connection may not be made for all such

characters, but some are identified by commentators or analysts as specifically being

psychopaths (e.g., television's Tony Soprano, as discussed by Gilbert (2002)). Even more

powerfully, a second group are explicitly identified as psychopaths or sociopaths during the

course or the show or movie (e.g., television's Greg House is called a "pill-popping sociopath" in

season 8's *Love is Blind*; Shore, Kelley, & Southam, 2012), and at least one protagonist even

goes so far as to self-identify to viewers as a psychopath (television's Dexter Morgan).

This growing cast of characters are all protagonist psychopaths (or psychopathic

protagonists), but they also share certain character traits. Many of these characters have higher-

than-average intelligence. Perhaps as a function of being on television, they are all

comparatively attractive. Although they reject social norms and rebel against convention, they

are humanized protagonists, and thus their psychopathic behavior masks ultimately good

intentions. In that fashion, these protagonists may pursue their goals despite conflict with

convention, not unlike Cervantes' Don Quixote. Borrowing from that tradition, one may wonder

what effect portrayal of these "romanticized psychopaths" has on viewers. Said another way,

what effect does viewing these shows and rooting for protagonist psychopaths have on viewers?

Are traditional notions of psychopathy displaced among these shows' viewers, and do some

members of the lay community find psychopaths endearing? Why does one now encounter

Internet advertisements for "Dragon Tattoo Jeans, for the Psychopath in You!" (Stewart, 2012)?

Have lay perceptions about psychopathy changed, and are they skewed as a function of exposure

to media portrayal? These are empirical questions, though they have not been specifically

examined by psychological research. Some related research, though, helped inform the investigation.

What Effect Do Mixed Messages About Psychopathy Have on the Consumer?

Academics have expressed concern that inaccurate portrayal of psychopathology in popular media creates erroneous public opinion (Walker et al., 2010). This concern is not new – even Elton McNeil writing in 1959 blamed public confusion about psychology on the "Sunday-supplement popularity of the mysteries of the mind" (p. 520). The effects of mass media on the population are well-documented, including the well-known import of risk through media portrayals of violence (Ferguson & Kilburn, 2009). However, psychologists have yet to empirically measure if – and to what extent – popular media distorts understanding of psychopathy.

Some academics believe that psychopathy is consistently portrayed negatively in the media, saying that psychopaths are portrayed as the bogeyman of today's society (Blair, Mitchell, & Blair, 2005) or the "human monster" (Hesse, 2009, p. 208). Hesse (2009) reports that psychopaths are typically portrayed as callous, manipulative, and aggressive – characteristics that overlap with contemporary notions of psychopathy (see also Hare, 1993). However, little empirical research has examined how psychopathy portrayal affects viewers. Coyne et al. (2010) examined how exposure to media violence mediated the relationship between psychopathy and aggression, but that research is tangential to this investigation. Slightly more on-point, Hanlon (2009) looked at the portrayal of gay psychopaths or "killer queens" in film, explaining that media supports the "vestural code of the gay psychopath as a dapper young man," citing Matt Damon's character from *The Talented Mr. Ripley (*Hanlon, 2009, p.271).

Few studies closely relate to the present research. Meyer, Berman, and Platania (2012) examined layperson perceptions of psychopathy, but without incorporating media exposure as a

research component. They administered a 50-question survey to 200 jury-eligible participants

using Amazon's Mechanical Turk, with two or three questions for each PCL-R item designed to

assess whether a participant could recognize a psychopathic trait (Meyer et al., 2012). For

example, a participant reading question 4 – "May con or leach resources off others" – can mark

"true," "false," or "not sure," and participants marking "true" are considered knowledgeable that

psychopaths exhibit a "parasitic lifestyle" (Meyer et al., 2012; see Hare, 1991). Meyer et al.

(2012) found that male participants were more knowledgeable that psychopaths tend to have a

grandiose sense of self-worth, lack remorse, and have shallow affect. However, it remains

unknown how exposure to pop-culture psychopathy may mediate these findings.

Rationale for the Present Study

The impetus for this study was to explore what effect widely varying portrayals of

psychopaths might have had on the lay consumer. At the time of this writing, minimal research

has examined and measured the lay public's perception of psychopathy, and no published

research had investigated how media exposure affects that perception. Closely related, it was

unknown whether any changes had occurred across time or exposure. Although there may be

increased prevalence of psychopathy portrayal in the news and popular media, as well as books

written for the psychologist and layperson alike, the potential unintended effects of this pattern

were unknown.

Having data on public perception of psychopathy and how it may be affected by media

portrayals of psychopaths could achieve several ends. First, the public perception of

psychopathy could be identified, quantified, and qualitatively described. Second, whether that

perception has changed over time could be evaluated. Third, whether media has directly or

indirectly effected that change could be analyzed and interpreted. Lastly, practical implications

could be derived from those analyses, including possible effects on psychopathy labeling

research, as well as ethical implications for psychologists working in legal contexts or with the media .

Hypotheses

Based on a synthesis of the extant literature, theory, and anecdotal evidence, the hypotheses for the present study were:

(1) individuals with greater exposure to psychopathy popular media would significantly differ from those with less exposure, as measured by their endorsement of distractor traits on a blended checklist of traditional psychopathic traits and distractors;

(2) individuals who had read more professionally authored literature on psychopathy would be significantly better at correctly identifying psychopathic traits on a blended checklist of traditional psychopathic traits and distractors;

(3) individuals with greater exposure to psychopathy, in both popular media and professional literature, would rate themselves as significantly more knowledgeable about psychopathy;

(4) individuals with greater exposure to protagonist psychopaths would endorse significantly more positive distractor traits; and

(5) individuals with greater exposure to psychopaths as antagonists through popular media would endorse significantly more negative distractor traits.

Method

Participants

Inclusion criteria for participation in the study were United States residents, over age 18, who functionally spoke and read English. Limiting participation to U.S. residents was hoped to increase the rate of participant exposure to the relevant media mentioned earlier and assessed in the survey. Similarly, because this was an online study, limiting participation to U.S. residents

better ensured effective oversight by the Drexel IRB. Limiting participation to individuals over 18 also simplified ethical concerns, increased the likelihood of participants' exposure to psychopathy media (i.e., older participants have had longer to be exposed to psychopathy media), and improved generalizeability to the population of interest (jury-eligible Americans). Lastly, limiting participation to literate English-speakers was a necessity given the online survey design of the study.

No exclusion criteria for participation were utilized in this study. The only anticipated – and actualized – confound was the presence of non-lay participants (i.e., individuals with formalized training or work experience in psychology or mass media.) As such participants are not members of the "lay community" studied, their survey data were not included in the main analyses. These included individuals who reported majoring in psychology at the undergraduate level, having a master's degree in psychology, having a doctoral degree in psychology, or having worked in the mass media. Rather than prospectively excluding these participants, though, their survey data were collected for exploratory purposes.

Because the proposed analyses looked at both age effects and exposure to a wide variety of media sources, a large sample was needed. Although an *a priori* power analysis indicated that 80 participants would be sufficient, a sample size of 200 was collected to ensure sufficient statistical power for any ad-hoc analyses and to maximize the chance of exposure to some of the more esoteric media on psychopathy (i.e., professionally authored literature). Additionally, prior related research with fewer analyses nonetheless collected data from 200 participants (Meyer et al., 2012). By virtue of the survey method, participants were individuals who had Internet access. Similarly, the study title and description was specifically made face-valid, with the hope that the majority of participants would have some interest in psychopaths, which in turn would hopefully maximize reported exposure to psychopathy.

Materials

Participants were given a 10-20 minute battery of anonymous surveys, including questionnaires assessing:

(1) demographic information and general knowledge (see Appendix K);

(2) television and movie-watching behavior, and exposure to specific movies and shows (see Appendix L);

(3) exposure to psychopathy literature presented as nonfiction (see Appendix M);

(4) which fictional characters they thought were psychopaths (see Appendix N); and

(5) ability to correctly identify the conventionally agreed-upon traits that define psychopathy, while rejecting traits often comingled with psychopathy in popular media (see Appendix O; see also Appendix P).

Demographic Information and General Knowledge Questionnaire

The demographics and general knowledge questionnaire included standard demographic items including, *inter alia,* age, gender, race, education, political affiliation, with participants also indicating whether they had any specific training in psychology and to what extent (see Appendix K). Embedded therein were also questions to confirm juror eligibility, a factor which helped expand the implications of the study's findings. Related to possible confounds, participants indicated whether they were employed or had worked in the media industry, such as for a news network, television show, or movie studio. Lastly, the questionnaire asked for self-perceived expertise on psychopaths, experience with psychopaths in real-life, and beliefs about psychopaths generally (see Appendix K).

Television and Movie-Watching Questionnaire

The television and movie-watching behavior questionnaire collected information regarding participants' exposure to specifically targeted television shows and movies (see

Appendix L). Half of these television shows and movies featured protagonists (e.g., television's

Greg House) who exhibit psychopathic traits ("protagonist psychopaths"); the other half featured

antagonists (e.g., *American Psycho's* Patrick Bateman) with psychopathic traits ("antagonist

psychopaths") (Burkley, 2010; Dayton, 2008; DeLisi et al., 2009; Gilbert, 2002; James, 2007;

Madison, 2008; Virulet, 2010). For each television show and movie, participants indicated their

exposure along a categorical spectrum (see, e.g., Appendix L). The target movies and television

shows were selected by conducting Internet research to find fictional characters perceived by the

public as psychopathic (e.g., Dayton, 2008; Madison, 2008; Wikipedia, 2012). To confirm,

discourse examining given characters of interest and their exhibition of psychopathic behavior

was also sought (e.g., Burkley, 2010; DeLisi et al., 2009; Desai, 2004; Gilbert, 2002; Hanlon,

2009; Hare, 1993; James, 2007; Virulet, 2010; Voight, 2012), though could not be found for all

characters employed in the study.[2] Films with characters blending the natural and supernatural

were not included on the survey (e.g., Heath Ledger's portrayal of The Joker from *The Dark*

Knight). Furthermore, lest the questionnaire reveal the target psychopaths, all target

psychopathic characters were counterbalanced by matched non-psychopathic characters

("matched character(s)") from comparable shows or movies. For comparability, each target

work had a counterbalanced work matched by (1) medium (tv vs. movie); (2) decade (within 10

years of each other); and (3) theme; e.g., "medical drama" (see also Appendix L). The

counterbalancing shows and movies were found by searching on Amazon.com, Google, the

International Movie Database (IMDB), and Netflix.com. To select the shows, search terms

reflecting common themes were used (e.g., searching "movie, wall street, murders" to

counterbalance *American Psycho* with *A Perfect Murder*), then results were sorted by popularity,

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[2] However, the Psychopath Identification Questionnaire (see infra) would help further inform the soundness of the characters selected.

with the most popular result selected as the counterbalance.

Professional Literature Questionnaire

The professional literature questionnaire assessed whether participants had read books presented as nonfiction information on psychopathy (see Appendix M). The books were collected using Amazon.com, a large, comprehensive, and well-known online retailer for books. Books were sought under the topic headings "psychopathy," "psychopath," and "sociopath." From the books listed, works about a specific psychopath [i.e., serial killer] or books about criminals generally were excluded. Book descriptions and customer reviews were also examined to confirm each work's accessibility to a lay audience. For example, Amazon.com describes *Puzzling People* as "…well researched as a scholarly work, yet with the immediacy and accessibility of a layman…"; *but* describes *Handbook of Psychopathy* as an "…authoritative handbook provid[ing] a state-of-the-science review…" On the questionnaire, the former is included, the latter is not. Finally, participants reported whether they knew of a given book and how much of it they had read, if any.

Psychopath Identification Questionnaire

The psychopath identification questionnaire asked participants to identify characters whom they believe met criteria for being a psychopath (see Appendix N). This questionnaire was created by amassing the relevant characters from each show listed on the television and movie-watching questionnaire (see supra; see also Appendix L). From the shows and movies featuring a psychopathic protagonist or antagonist, the relevant protagonist or antagonist was included on the questionnaire. From the matched counterbalanced shows and movies, the matched characters (i.e., non-psychopathic antagonists and protagonists) were included. . In other words, each psychopath was counterbalanced by his non-psychopathic matched character from the counterbalanced work of the same genre, era, and medium.

Psychopathy Traits Questionnaire

The psychopathy traits questionnaire assessed what qualities participants believed define a psychopath (see Appendix O; see also Appendix P). To create this questionnaire, the target items included were the 20 traits from Hare's (1991) Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, as convention tends to hold these as the most often relied-upon psychopathy traits (DeMatteo, 2002; DeMatteo & Edens, 2006; Edens, 2006; Edens & Campbell, 2007; Edens, Skeem, & Kennealy, 2009). Although the PCL-R and its items are proprietary, the measure has become sufficiently ubiquitous that its content is now publicly available on the Internet. Additionally, because many of the PCL-R items are unclear without the aid of the PCL-R administration and scoring manual, the factors were reworded to try and maximize descriptiveness and lay comprehensibility.

In complement to those 20 reworded PCL-R target traits, the psychopathy traits questionnaire also included 20 distractor items. As the hypotheses predicted differing conceptualization of psychopathy related to protagonist versus antagonist exposure, 10 of the distractor items were positive traits or personality descriptors ("positive distractors"), and 10 were negative or disparaging ("negative distractors"). Some of these distractor traits were artifacts from earlier conceptualizations of psychopathy, both positive (e.g., intelligence; Cleckley, 1988) and negative (e.g., physically violent; APA, 1980). However, there were insufficient such artifacts to fully counterbalance the 20 items from the PCL-R. And because this investigation was novel, there was unfortunately no extant literature to offer guidance in further populating the list. Thus, the remaining positive and negative traits were chosen based on behavior commonly comingled with psychopathy in popular media, as exhibited by the target protagonists and antagonists, respectively (see Increase in Psychopathy Popular Media Delivered to Lay Consumer *supra*). Admittedly, possible correlation between certain distractor traits and actual psychopathy was foreseen. However, the important distinction remains that none of the

distractor traits were pathognomonic; although they may *accompany* psychopathy, their presence

is not *indicative* of psychopathy. Moreover, as this particular investigation was largely

exploratory, the plan was always to interpret any statistically significant findings cautiously (see

Appendix O for the complete list of traits, broken down by type; see also Appendix P for the

randomized traits as participants will saw them).

Procedure

This was an Internet-based survey, approved by the Drexel IRB. Participants were

surveyed using Amazon's Mechanical Turk, which has been shown effective in past related

research and methodologically accepted by the psycho-legal community (Meyer et al., 2012).

Individuals interested in earning credit to spend on Amazon.com were able to select and take the

survey. As they saw it, the survey was named "Psychopath Identification Test," which was

hoped to attract individuals with interest and self-perceived knowledge of psychopathy.

Although this may have elicited a somewhat nonrandom sample (i.e., individuals with interest in

psychopathy) that methodological limitation was outweighed by the need to survey lay

participants with greater psychopathy exposure and self-perceived savvy. No personally

identifying information was collected from participants other than general demographic

information (see Appendix K; see also Appendix Q). Pilot testing suggested that the battery

would take between 10 and 20 minutes to complete, depending on an individual's reading speed,

with the survey taking longer for participants who endorsed greater exposure to psychopathy.

Each participant was compensated for his or her time by receiving a small amount of

money. In related research, 200 participants were secured on Amazon's Mechanical Turk to

answer 50 true/false questions on psychopathy for a compensation of $0.50 (Meyer et al., 2012).

Commensurate with the length of this survey and the expected amount of time it will take to

complete, participants in this study were compensated $1.00. The study was privately funded.

Results

Demographic Statistics

As described earlier, participants were administered a survey battery including five questionnaires. The battery was administered to 200 participants, and of those 200 participants, 198 satisfactorily completed the survey, with the remaining 2 submitting a largely incomplete survey. The first component of the battery was a questionnaire measuring participants' demographic characteristics (see Appendix K*; see also Appendix Q*).

Of the 198 participants included in the final analyses, 119 were female (79 male), 158 Caucasian (14 Asian, 14 African American, 11 mixed ethnicity, and 1 American Indian or Alaska Native), and participant age ranged from 18 to 75 ($M=32.5$, $SD=11.5$). Among the participants, 197 were United States Citizens (1 missing data), 58 from the Southern United States (54 Northeast, 38 Western, 38 Midwest, 5 Central, 4 outside mainland, 1 missing), and 194 of them denied history of felony conviction (4 endorsed conviction). Results revealed that 92 were democrats (56 unaffiliated, 22 republican, 15 non-political, 10 other third-party, 2 green party, and 1 progressive party), 83 were Christian (51 Atheist, 49 Agnostic, 2 Buddhist, 2 Jewish, 1 Hindu, 8 other, and 2 with missing data). Regarding their education and vocation, 68 had some college education (65 bachelor's degree, 23 high school diploma, 17 associate's degree, 16 with some post-graduate education, 6 doctoral/medical/legal degree, and 3 some high school), 112 had some undergraduate psychology education (62 some high school, 16 undergraduate majors, 2 psychology master's degrees, 2 doctoral degrees, and 4 missing data), and 195 confirmed that they did not work in the media industry (1 publishing, 1 magazine columnist, 1 radio).

Participants were also asked about psychopaths and psychopathy. Regarding their personal exposure to psychopaths, 148 denied (49 confirmed, 1 missing data) ever having dealt

with a psychopath, and 162 denied (36 confirmed) being victimized by a psychopath. When

asked about their ability to "spot a psychopath," 150 denied (48 endorsed) being able to spot a

psychopath, though 51 reported how to identify a psychopath, with 35 saying it was personal

characteristics that gave them away (12 said a gut/instinctual feeling, 3 after learning about the

psychopath having victimized someone, 1 other.) Participants self-reported expertise was also

assessed on a scale of 1 (none) to 100 (expert), with self-reported expertise ranging from 1 to 100

(M=35.15, SD=23.85). Of the participants, 125 said that most psychopaths are men (71 equal

men and women, 2 mostly women), 194 denying (3 endorsing, 1 missing data) that all

psychopaths are serial killers, and 124 denying (73 endorsing, 1 missing data) that all serial

killers are psychopaths.

For the following analyses, some utilized all 198 participants whereas others utilized only

175 participants. The difference is that while 198 participants satisfactorily completed the

survey, only 175 were deemed to be members of the lay public. The 23-participant difference

included those who reported working in the mass media or had formal training in psychology.

Specifically, 3 were excluded for mass media work, reporting their professions as "radio dj and

program director", "magazine columnist", and "books," respectively, and another 20 were

excluded for having formal training in psychology, defined as a bachelor's degree or more (see

above). Many participants reported some coursework in psychology, but those were

conceptualized as lay public with some psychology education, though not formal psychology

training. Thus, although some of the descriptive statistics reported herein describe all 198

participants, analyses assessing lay participants only describe 175 participants.

Descriptive Statistics

In addition to the demographic questionnaire, participants completed four more

questionnaires as part of the survey battery. Taking up the first of these remaining four,

participants reported their television and movie watching behavior (see Appendix L). A

complete summary of all 198 participants' endorsement is available in Table Q2 (see Appendix

Q), but a few observations are worth highlighting here. First, a good extent of exposure was

observed across all target television shows and movies. This supported the likelihood of

succeeding analyses to detect statistically significant correlations if such relationships exist.

Second, every target movie – watched in its entirety – was liked by more participants than

disliked. This is consistent with aforementioned research describing viewers' interest in drama

and violence.

The next questionnaire assessed participants for their exposure to professionally authored

literature on psychopathy (see Appendix M). A complete summary of all 198 participants'

endorsement is available in Table Q3 (see Appendix Q), but an accompanying warning is in

order. Despite attempts through advertisement to elicit participants who were hoped to have

exposure to one or more of these sources, participants' reported exposure to all 14 books was

minor. At most, six participants read one of the books (Jon Ronson's *The Psychopath Test*), but

in the case of four books no participants had read any of them (e.g., *Snakes in Suits*, *The

Psychopath: Emotion and the Brain*). To put it in even greater context, if all 198 participants

had read all 14 target books, that would have been a total of 2,772 books read. In actuality, there

were only 23 books read among the participants. Although this potentially limited drawn

inferences based on professional literature exposure, the reported exposure perhaps reflects these

works' modest readership among the general public.

On the next questionnaire, participants identified whether they believed that the target

(and control) protagonists and antagonists were psychopaths (see Appendix N). Taking up the

protagonists first, the 198 participants' responses are viewable in Figure Q1 (see Appendix Q).

It is noteworthy that on the whole, participants did not seem to agree that the target protagonists

were indeed psychopaths. The one notable exception to this was Dexter Morgan from Showtime's *Dexter*, the only character for whom psychopathy is *the* defining character feature, overtly highlighted for audiences.

Taking up the antagonists next, the 198 participants' responses are available in Figure Q2 (see Appendix Q). In contrast to their treatment of the target protagonists, in the case of antagonists participants largely endorsed all of the target characters as psychopathic. Verily, the ratio of psychopath to non-psychopath endorsements ranged from 2 to 1 at the low end to over 100 to 1 at the high end. These findings, though not dispositive, offer some vindication for the surprising findings observed with the low endorsement or target protagonists as psychopaths.

Lastly, taking up the distractors, the 198 participants' endorsement of the matched distractor characters is displayed in Figure Q3 (see Appendix Q).   It was expected that participants would endorse the distractors overwhelmingly as "non-psychopathic" or unknown due to unfamiliarity. Whereas the majority of the distractors were endorsed by more participants as non-psychopathic rather than psychopathic, the difference was often not overwhelming. However, the greater prevalence of "don't know" endorsements, as compared to for the protagonists and antagonists, suggests that participants may have – on the whole – erred on the side of psychopathy in unclear cases. Part of this effect could also be explained by priming effects created by the name of the online survey.

The final questionnaire participants completed assessed their ability to correctly identify the conventionally agreed upon traits of psychopathy, as taken from Hare's (1991) PCL-R (see Appendix O; see also Appendix P). The 175 lay participant responses are presented in Figure Q4, Figure Q5, and Figure Q6 (see Appendix Q). As seen in Figure Q4, the number of participants correctly endorsing each trait from the PCL-R varied widely. For example, the vast majority of participants correctly recognized several traits (e.g., remorselessness,

manipulativeness, shallow affect), but only a minority of the sample recognized several other

traits (e.g., juvenile delinquency, violated conditional release, irresponsibility). As seen in

Figure Q5, all of the positive distractor traits were endorsed by at least 15% of participants, with

some endorsed by as much as 63%. The positive distractor endorsed by over half of participants

included secretive (*n*=110), intelligent (*n*=107), and good at people-reading (*n*=101). As seen in

Figure Q6, all of the negative distractor traits were also endorsed by some participants, with

endorsement ranging from 19% at the low end to 72% at the high end. The negative distractor

traits endorsed by well over half of participants included proneness to torture (*n*=126), proneness

to murder (*n*=105), and violent (*n*=101).

Although the descriptive findings described above are of standalone interest, additional

and potentially greater implications may be drawn from relationships between measured

variables. These relationships are described below, followed by a discussion of the possible

implications of both descriptive and correlations analyses.

Correlational Analyses

Exposure to Popular Media Psychopathy and Psychopathy Understanding

The first analysis examined hypothesis (1): individuals with greater exposure to

psychopathy popular media would significantly differ from those with less exposure, as

measured by their endorsement of distractor traits on a blended checklist of traditional

psychopathic traits and distractors.

This analysis was conducted using Pearson's *r*, a measure of bivariate correlation

commonly used in psychological research (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007). Peason's *r*, while of

limited utility in determining causality, is nonetheless appropriate for use in exploratory research

such as this (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005). The two variables used in the bivariate

correlation were a participant's "Psychopathy Understanding Score" (PUS) and his or her

"Media Exposure Score" (MES).

The Psychopathy Understanding Score (PUS) was calculated using a participant's responses to the Psychopathy Trait Identification Questionnaire (see Appendix P). For the calculation, participants received one point for each item derived from the PCL-R that they endorsed. Then, they lost one point for each distractor trait they endorsed as identifying psychopathy. Participants' PUS scores thus had the potential to range from -20 to 20, and ended up ranging from -7 to 13 ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 4.04$).

The Media Exposure Score (MES) was calculated by scoring the Television/Movie Watching Questionnaire. For the questionnaire, participants were – for each *target* television show – given 1 point if they had seen "1-3 episodes", 2 points if they had seen "more than 3 episodes but less than a full season," 3 points if they had seen "at least a full season but not the whole show," and 4 points if they had seen "pretty much the whole show" (see also Appendix L). For each target movie, participants received 1 point if they had "heard of the movie or saw trailers, but didn't see it," 2 points if they had "watched part of the movie, but did not finish it," and 3 points if they saw the entire movie, regardless of whether they liked or disliked it. Media exposure has been assessed historically with similar versions of Likert-type ratings and points, recent studies doing so to examine childhood aggression (Martins & Wilson, 2011), attention (Ferguson, 2011), and the "CSI Effect" in the courtroom (Hayes-Smith & Levett, 2011). Although chosen somewhat arbitrarily, the point values were used to distinguish viewers from non-viewers, and heavy viewers from light viewers. When summed, these points provided a participant's MES, which had the potential to range from 0 to 62, and ended up ranging from 0 to 59 ($M = 26.23$, $SD = 12.02$).

A two-tailed correlational analysis did not support Hypothesis (1). Specifically, participants' popular psychopathy media exposure was not significantly related to their accurate

understanding of psychopathy as a construct ($r = .04$, $p = .618$).

Exposure to Professional Psychopathy Literature and Psychopathy Understanding

The second analysis examined Hypothesis (2): individuals who had read more professionally authored literature on psychopathy would be significantly better at correctly identifying psychopathic traits on a blended checklist of traditional psychopathic traits and distractors. Like Hypothesis (1), this correlational analysis was conducted using Pearson's *r*. The two variables used in this analysis were the Psychopathy Understanding Score see above) and each participant's "Literature Exposure Score" (LES).

The Literature Exposure Score (LES) was created by scoring the Psychopathy Literature Questionnaire. Having already measured and assigned scores for popular media exposure (MES), it seemed obvious that LES should be created in a way that permits comparison between the two. Unfortunately, no guiding research could be found which directly measures television/movie exposure and literature exposure, scoring them in such a way that they can be directly compared or later aggregated. The closest approximation was research measuring specific amounts of time devoted to each medium in minutes (see, e.g., Jordan, 2004). However, that was in the context of exposure to the medium (i.e., television versus books), rather than exposure to a given subject matter (i.e., psychopathy.) Moreover, though calculating minute exposure to television and movies for each participant is theoretically feasible, conducting the same calculation for literature is untenable – requiring information about each publication's page numbers, average words per page, and each participant's average reading speed.

Because a methodologically rigorous point assignment appeared untenable, a heuristic was necessarily employed, assigning more points for professional literature than popular media. The rationale for this was because (1) professional literature is pointedly about psychopathy; (2) literature requires more time and cognitive demand to digest; and (3) literature ostensibly confers

more information than popular media. That said, in calculating a participant's LES, each

participant was given 8 points for each book read in its entirety, 4 points for reading some of the

book, and 1 point if they had not read the book but have heard of it – roughly twice the point

value of a single television show or movie (see also Appendix M). Summed, these yielded a

participant's LES, which had the potential to range from 0 to 112, in the end ranging from 0 to

37 ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 5.48$).

Correlational analysis did not support Hypothesis (2). Specifically, participants'

professional psychopathy literature exposure was not significantly related to their accurate

understanding of psychopathy as a construct, though the relationship did approach significance (r

$= 0.11$, $p = .08$).

Exposure to Psychopathy and Self-Reported Expertise

The third analysis examined Hypothesis (3): individuals with greater exposure to

psychopathy, in both popular media and professional literature, would rate themselves as

significantly more knowledgeable about psychopathy. Like Hypotheses (1) and (2), this

correlational analysis was conducted using Pearson's r.

For the correlation, the first variable was participants' self-reported expertise, collected

on the General Questionnaire (see Appendix K) and scored on a scale of 1 to 100 (see

Demographic Statistics above; see also Appendix Q, Table Q1). The second variable was

calculated from aggregate exposure to psychopathy, the Aggregate Psychopathy Exposure Score

(APES). Each participant's APES was created by combining the participant's Media Exposure

Score (MES) and Literature Exposure Score (LES). It is particularly relevant for this analysis

that different point values for popular media and professional literature exposure were previously

assigned, as discussed in the previous section.

Correlational analysis supported Hypothesis (3). Specifically, participants' combined

exposure to popular media and professional literature on psychopathy was positively correlated with their self-reported expertise on psychopathy ($r = 0.19$, $p < .01$). This suggests that, as exposure to psychopathy increases across multiple mediums, so too does self-perceived expertise on psychopathy.

Exposure to Protagonist Psychopaths and Romanticized Psychopathy

The fourth analysis examined Hypothesis (4): individuals with greater exposure to protagonist psychopaths would endorse significantly more positive distractor traits. Like prior hypotheses, this correlational analysis was conducted using Pearson's *r*.

The first variable for the correlation was derived from participant familiarity with the protagonist psychopaths on the Television/Movie Watching Questionnaire (see Appendix M). If a participant had seen at least one episode of a target television show, he or she received one point for that show. If a participant had seen at least part of a target movie, he or she got one point for that movie. Summed, these points gave participants a score ranging from 0 to 9 (*M*=4.92, *SD*=2.13) based on how many protagonists with whom they were familiar.

The second variable for the correlation, participants' "Psychopathy Bias Score" (PBS), was created from the Psychopathy Characteristics Questionnaire (*see* Appendix O). This PBS was used as a measure of whether participants viewed psychopaths in distortedly positive or negative terms. For the calculation, traits belonging to the PCL-R were worth (0) points, positive distractors were worth (+1) point, and negative distractors were worth (-1) point. Summing the point values of all endorsed traits yielded a score of 0, a positive score, or a negative score. A score of 0 would have suggested that a participant does not view psychopaths in biased terms, though not necessarily that he or she is wholly accurate in the characterization (for that, see the PUS *supra*). A positive score would suggest that a participant views psychopaths in distortedly positive terms, with higher values indicating greater bias. A negative score would suggest that a

participant views psychopaths in distortedly negative terms, with decreasing scores indicating stronger bias. Taking the 175 participants as a group, their PBS ranged from -6 to 5 (M = -0.39, SD = 2.61).

Correlational analysis supported Hypothesis (4). Specifically, participants' exposure to protagonist psychopaths was positively correlated with endorsement of positive psychopathy distractor traits (r = 0.23, p < .01). This suggests that as exposure to protagonist psychopaths increases, so too does a participants' tendency to view psychopaths in increasingly romanticized terms.

Exposure to Antagonist Psychopaths and Demonized Psychopathy

The fifth analysis examined Hypothesis (5): individuals with greater exposure to psychopaths as antagonists through popular media would endorse significantly more negative distractor traits. Once again, like prior hypotheses, this correlational analysis was conducted using Pearson's r.

This analysis proceeded very much the same as the analysis to Hypothesis (4) described above. This time, though, the first variable for the correlation was familiarity with antagonist psychopaths on the Television/Movie Watching Questionnaire (see Appendix M). Again, participants were assigned points for familiarity with each antagonist in the manner described above. And again, participants each received a score ranging from 0 to 9 (M = 6.83, SD = 2.00) based on how many antagonists with whom they were familiar. The second variable for this analysis was, like in the previous analysis, participants' Psychopathy Bias Score (PBS).

Correlational analysis did not support Hypothesis (5). Specifically, participants' increased exposure to antagonist psychopaths was not significantly correlated with a pattern of endorsement for negative psychopathy distractor traits (r = 0.08, p = .14). Whether increased exposure to antagonist fictional psychopaths is related to a tendency to view psychopathy in

distortedly demonized terms is unclear from this analysis.

Ad-Hoc Correlational Analyses

With such a wealth of data available, and recognizing that the nature of this undertaking was largely exploratory, a number of ad-hoc analyses were also run. Having not been originally or officially designated as prior hypotheses, though, the significance of these findings and assumed replicability in future research should be interpreted cautiously (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005). Nonetheless, ad-hoc analyses examining the 175 lay participants revealed a number of statistically significant relationships.

Although not formally hypothesized, participant age was speculated to potentially relate to a variety of measures. As described in the background and literature summary, the information about psychopaths and psychopathy has varied across *time* more than any other variable. Sure enough, age was negatively correlated with exposure to protagonist fictional psychopaths in non-directional testing ($r = -0.29$, $p < .01$). Put in non-statistical terms, older participants reported less familiarity with protagonist psychopaths. This supports the earlier proposition that protagonist psychopaths are a fairly recent phenomenon. After all, though target psychopaths were counterbalanced by same-decade controls, and there was an equal number of protagonist and antagonist psychopaths, the protagonists and antagonists were not matched with *one another* by decade. As further support, age was not correlated with exposure to psychopaths generally ($r = -0.12$, $p = .11$), nor with accurate psychopathy understanding ($r = -0.05$, $p = .54$) or tendency to view psychopathy in biased terms ($r = -0.06$, $p = .43$). Thus, the only tentative conclusion supported by age analyses could be that – whereas individuals of many ages are familiar with historic depictions of fictional psychopaths (e.g., Hannibal Lecter) – younger individuals alone may be better acquainted with the newer breed of protagonist psychopaths. Furthermore, exposure to protagonist psychopaths generally was positively correlated with

exposure to antagonist psychopaths ($r = 0.49$, $p < .01$).

Directional testing revealed a positive correlation between participants' exposure to professionally authored psychopathy literature and their exposure to psychopathy popular media ($r = 0.13$, $p < .05$). This suggests that, despite low endorsement of exposure to professional literature, the few participants who did read professionally authored psychopathy books also had greater exposure to fictional psychopaths. Although no causality or directionality of the relationship can be concluded, one interpretation could be that fictional psychopaths indeed spark viewers' interest in psychopathy, which then leads them to self-educate about the construct.

However, ad-hoc analyses failed to support the ability of professionally authored psychopathy literature to educate lay consumers. Although the relationship between exposure to literature and self-perceived expertise was one of the stronger correlations observed ($r = 0.21$, $p < .01$), no significant positive relationship was observed between exposure to literature and psychopathy understanding score ($r = 0.11$, $p = .08$). Relatedly, no significant negative correlations were observed between exposure to literature and psychopathy bias score ($r = 0.11$, $p = .07$), endorsement of positive distractor traits ($r = -0.01$, $p = .46$), or endorsement of negative distractor traits $r = -0.11$, $p = .08$).

Statistically significant relationships were observed among all three relationships of psychopathy trait endorsement. Endorsement of correct traits was positively associated with endorsement of positive distractor traits ($r = 0.46$, $p < .01$), endorsement of correct traits was positively associated with endorsement of negative traits ($r = 0.49$, $p < .01$), and endorsement of positive traits was associated with endorsement of negative distractor traits ($r = 0.49$, $p < .01$). Combined with an eyeball-test of the raw data, these relationships suggest that participants were generally either heavy or light endorsers on the trait checklist.

In light of participants' collective modest ability to identify target psychopaths, as well as correctly identify the traits of psychopathy, additional analyses examined subsets of the data. First, as more female participants endorsed personal exposure to, and victimization by, psychopaths (see *supra;* see also Appendix Q, Table Q1), the first analysis compared male and female participants (see Appendix Q, Table Q4). Examining those 101 female participants, their correct trait endorsement ranged from 0 to 20 ($M = 9.76$, $SD = 4.33$), positive distractor endorsement ranged from 0 to 10 ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 2.32$), negative distractor endorsement ranged from 0 to 10 ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 2.79$), Psychopathy Understanding Score (PUS) ranged from -7 to 13 ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 4.23$), and Psychopathy Bias Score ranged from -6 to 5 ($M = -0.52$, $SD = 2.56$). The 74 male participants did not differ markedly from females in any of these domains, including males' correct trait endorsement, ranging from 2 to 20 ($M = 9.95$, $SD = 3.70$), positive distractor endorsement, ranging from 0 to 10 ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 2.40$), negative distractor endorsement, ranging from 0 to 10 ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 2.78$), PUS, ranging from -7 to 13 ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 3.80$), nor PBS, ranging from -5 to 5 ($M = -0.22$, $SD = 2.68$).

In a second analysis, participants reasoned to be poor judges of psychopathy were compared to those reasoned to be good judges of psychopathy (see Appendix Q, Table Q5). Poor judges were those participants who identified target psychopathic protagonists Dexter Morgan, Tom Ripley, or Tony Soprano as "non-psychopathic" – as these target protagonists had the greatest endorsement (see Appendix Q, Figure Q1), or identified any of the target antagonists as "non-psychopathic" – as each was overwhelmingly endorsed as "psychopathic" by the majority of participants (see Appendix Q, Figure Q2). Examining the 103 "good judges," their correct trait endorsement ranged from 0 to 20 ($M = 9.63$, $SD = 4.00$), positive distractor endorsement ranged from 0 to 10 ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 2.33$), negative distractor endorsement ranged from 0 to 10 ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 2.72$), PUS ranged from -7 to 13 ($M = 1.62$, $SD = 4.05$), and

Psychopathy Bias Score ranged from -6 to 5 (M = -0.83, SD = 2.61). Compared to the 72 "poor

judges," correct trait endorsement ranged from 2 to 20 (M = 10.14, SD = 4.17), positive

distractor endorsement ranged from 0 to 10 (M = 3.86, SD = 2.38), negative distractor

endorsement ranged from 0 to 10 (M = 3.64, SD = 2.81), PUS ranged from -7 to 11 (M = 2.64,

SD = 3.98), and Psychopathy Bias Score ranged from -6 to 5 (M = 0.222, SD = 2.50). Thus,

participants reasoned to be poor judges of psychopathy actually outperformed good judges by a

small margin in identifying the correct traits of psychopathy, non-endorsement of negative

distractors, and the related calculations of psychopathy understanding (PUS) and bias (PBS).

Discussion

Summary of Findings

A total of 198 participants completed the survey assessing demographic information,

exposure to various sources of psychopathy, and conceptualization of psychopathy as a

construct. Participants were of varied race, from different parts of the United States, of different

religions, subscribing to different political philosophies, and exhibited a wide range of

educational achievement. Moreover, they espoused different attitudes about psychopaths and

reported varying levels of self-perceived expertise about psychopathy.

Participants also reported widely ranging exposure to television and movies, both with

and without characters exhibiting psychopathic traits. However, reported exposure to

professionally authored literature on psychopathy – even that specifically written for the lay

reader – was surprisingly low. Nonetheless, participants as a whole were able to identify

familiar fictional characters as psychopathic or not. Although their identification of target

protagonists as non-psychopathic went against anticipated results, their identification of target

antagonists as psychopathic was as expected.

One of two possible explanations can likely explain this trend of lower-than-expected

endorsement of protagonists as psychopathic. On the one hand, it could suggest a weakness or limitation the survey design, inasmuch as the target characters were misidentified as psychopathic. On the other hand, it could suggest that viewers are reluctant – or unable – to recognize protagonists as psychopathic, a personality historically depicted only among villains (Wilson, 1999). There are reasons to support either interpretation, and for the moment neither is immediately obvious as correct. However, high endorsement of target antagonists as psychopathic pushes the interpretation toward a reluctance among participants to identify protagonists as psychopathic.

Finally, participants endorsed a wide range of traits as characteristic of psychopathy. Many of the endorsed traits appear on Hare's (2002) PCL-R, which were operationally defined in this experiment as the accurate traits describing psychopathy. At the same time, though, numerous traits appearing on the PCL-R received very little endorsement. Additionally, many of the distractors received high endorsement, including those commonly confabulated with psychopathy in popular media and those historically associated with psychopathy.

In analyzing the aggregate data provided by the 175 lay participants, a number of statistically significant correlations emerged. For one thing, analyses suggest that individuals with greater exposure to combined popular media and professional literature view themselves as greater experts on psychopathy. Results of the ad-hoc analysis, though, challenged the accuracy of this self-assessment, as those same individuals did not outperform others in their ability to correctly identify the traits of psychopathy.

As originally hypothesized, exposure to an increased number of protagonist psychopaths was found to be positively correlated with endorsement of positive psychopathy distractor traits. This suggests that individuals more familiar with protagonist psychopaths have a greater tendency to view psychopathy in romanticized terms. However, the hypothesized mirror

relationship with antagonist psychopaths was not supported. Rather, increased exposure to antagonist psychopaths was not found to be associated with a tendency to demonize psychopathy as a construct.

Additional ad-hoc exploratory analyses were run, which revealed a number of statistically significant relationships. One had to do with age, which was found to be negatively associated with exposure to the comparatively novel protagonist psychopaths.   Another relationship had to do with exposure to psychopathy popular media and professional literature, which were found to be positively correlated. Last, positive correlations were found among endorsement of correct psychopathy traits and positive distractors, correct traits and negative distractors, and between positive distractors and negative distractors. Combined with a cursory examination of the data, participants seem to have either approached the trait checklist with a tendency to endorse many traits or few traits, notwithstanding their various degrees of accurate conceptualization. In light of participants' heavy or light endorsement patterns on the psychopathy traits checklist, an interesting follow-up study might examine what traits participants would endorse if forced to choose exactly 20 traits.

Implications

A number of important implications can be drawn from the research described herein. The first of these stems largely from descriptive data and has to do with lay perception of psychopathy as a construct. This research suggests that lay individuals, as a group, possess a vast misunderstanding about psychopathy as a construct. On the individual level, this may be a tendency to view psychopathy as a bit more endearing than its reality, or even a tendency to romanticize psychopathy. Then again, it may be a tendency to view psychopathy as a little harsher than it actually is, or even a tendency to demonize psychopathy. Yet still, it may just be a tendency toward conceptualizing psychopathy as an amalgamation of true characteristics and

other traits or behaviors often comingled with psychopathy in the popular media.

The obvious follow-up question to this observation is why that trend matters. After all, lay individuals misunderstand plenty of things about countless disciplines – such is the nature of being a member of "the laity." Convention would likely agree that non-psychologists misunderstand psychological constructs, non-lawyers misunderstand legal procedures, and non-doctors misunderstand things about medicine. A ubiquitous mischaracterization of psychopathy, though, is important because lay individuals are put in the position to make life-altering decisions using that information. The United States Constitution guarantees defendants a trial by their peers and, like the 175 out of 198 participants questioned in this study, the vast majority of those peers lack psychological expertise. When jurors hear that a defendant is a psychopath, sociopath, or was administered a measure like the PCL-R to measure psychopathy, that activates in each juror's mind the schema for what a psychopath is. What this research suggests is that those schemas may vary tremendously among 12 randomly selected individuals.

Indeed, a growing body of research has examined the labeling effect of psychopathy on the minds of mock or potential jurors. Much of this research has found that the "psychopath" label confers negative connotations (Caponecchia, Sun & Wyatt, 2012) and is associated with harsher treatment in criminal trials (Boccaccini, Murrie, Clark, & Cornell, 2008; Edens, Davis, Fernandez-Smith, Guy, 2013; Lloyd, Clark, & Forth, 2010). However, the research is inconsistent, with some finding no such effect and some finding the opposite effect (see, e.g., Cox, DeMatteo, & Foster, 2010). Thus far, collective interpretation of these contrasted findings has been limited to speculation. However, participants' varying conceptualizations of psychopathy could be the confounding variable that explains these inconsistent findings. Thus, experimenters assessing the labeling effect of psychopathy may be advised to assess participants' psychopathy understanding.

Additional implications have to do with ethics, both on a systemic and individual level. On the systemic level, psychology as a field may be ethically compelled to help remedy misconception of psychopathy as a construct (American Psychological Association, 2002). As the Preamble to the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct reads: "Psychologists are committed to increasing scientific and professional knowledge of behavior and people's understanding of themselves and others…" (APA, 2002, p. 1063). Legal organizations have worked to educate the public about Miranda rights, medical organizations have educated the public about reacting to everyday emergencies – would psychologists educating a country of potential jurors about the true nature of psychopathy be so different? Once again, lay jurors presented with psychopathy information must make life-altering decisions about a defendant. Proactively educating potential jurors would be one way to help make that a more informed decision, ultimately leading to fairer and more just outcomes.

Additionally, in light of the mixed messages that the public receives about psychopathy, there may be reason for psychologists as a community to comment on this trend. As an educated body of helping professionals, the argument could be made that psychologists should protect their clients and the general public from misinformation. Adding to that, there may also be a vested interest in safeguarding the integrity of the profession as psychologists continue to strive toward broader acceptance as a professional community. Intervening to stop – or at least question – the misrepresentation of diagnoses and constructs will present psychologists as a more unified front, and assert themselves as experts about that which they truly have expertise. In practical terms, this could manifest as proactive efforts, such as following Kanaris's (2006) suggestion that psychologists seek out media opportunities as a way of educating the public. This could also manifest as reactive efforts when opportunity arises, for example through the use of an APA *amicus curiae* brief, should a relevant case come before one of the high courts

(Bersoff, 2013). Whatever the case may be, the efforts of psychologists can be helped by this research described herein.

In addition to ethical implications at the systemic level, implications may affect the individual practitioner. One such implication has to do with forensic psychologists working in legal proceedings. Regardless of the field-wide action of psychology, forensic psychologists speaking about psychopathy in a legal action must aspire to best practices. The Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychology state that practitioners must "…make reasonable efforts to ensure that the products of their services, as well as their own public statements and professional reports and testimony, are communicated in ways that promote understanding and avoid deception." (APA, 2013, section 11.01) This research suggests that presuming lay understanding of psychopathy would not only be naïve, but in fact misguided. Combining the Specialty Guidelines and this research, one can see that any psychologist rendering an opinion about a defendant as psychopathic should consider a primer for the jury about psychopathy indispensable. This not only comports with best practice recommendations, but safeguards a psychologist against running afoul of ethical mandates (APA, 2002; Heilbrun, 2001).

A second ethical implication affecting the individual addresses the media consultant rather than the forensic expert (see APA, 2002, Standard 5: Advertising and Other Public Statements). As television shows and movies have become more complex, it is common knowledge that writers and producers have grown to rely increasingly on the expertise of consultants. Psychologists are no exception to this rule, and should be on notice to wield their expertise with care (see APA, 2002, 5.04 Media Presentations). The research described herein suggests a concerning relationship between viewers' exposure to protagonist psychopaths and a tendency to romanticize psychopathy as a construct. Psychologists consulting on these and other shows may moreover be under aspirational ethical guidelines to present psychological constructs

faithfully (see, e.g., APA, 2002, Principle A: Beneficence & Nonmaleficence & Principle C: Integrity.) Or, as was displayed by Dr. Paul Ekman while consulting on Fox's *Lie to Me*, consultants would be on firmer ethical footing by providing information to distinguish the real science from artistic license (see APA, 2002, Principle C: Integrity). Paul Ekman did this in the form of a blog on the *Lie to Me* website, which he wrote on after each episode aired (Ekman, 2010).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Many of this project's limitations are attributable to its largely exploratory nature. Thus, it is possible that subsequent research could identify television shows or movies with greater viewership or with characters displaying greater psychopathic characteristics. Additionally, though endorsement of distractor items on the blended psychopathy trait checklist was widespread, there is doubtless room for improvement and further refinement. Finally, participants' low endorsement of exposure to psychopathy professional literature yielded a sample too small to allow for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn. However, it seems plausible that the trend is due to low base-rates rather than failure to access the appropriate participants. Subsequent research could test that by reformulating the way in which the survey would be advertised.

As for future research directions, this exploratory investigation holds potential to supply the foundation toward a psychopathy bias scale – a tool that could be utilized in research on the labeling effects of psychopathy. Additional steps in that direction would focus on the refinement and then validation of the blended psychopathy trait and distractor checklist. Additional research conducted since this project's inception (e.g., Edens, Clark, Smith, Cox, & Kelley, 2012; Smith, Edens, Clark, Rulseh, & Cox, 2013), combined with the descriptive data regarding the trait checklist, could yield a better list of distractors (i.e., the traits or behaviors most commonly

mistaken as characteristic of psychopathy). Through additional refinement, a final 40-item

checklist could be derived which measures individuals' psychopathy bias better than was done in

this project. A final step would be validating that tool, seeing whether – when combined in a

psychopathy labeling study, and requiring participants to choose exactly 20 items – a

participants' bias score is related to legal decision making.

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Appendix A

Hervey Cleckley's (1941) 16 Characteristics of a Psychopath

1. Superficial charm and good "intelligence"

2. Absence of delusions and other signs of irrational thinking

3. Absence of nervousness or psychoneurotic manifestations

4. Unreliability

5. Untruthfulness and insincerity

6. Lack of remorse and shame

7. Inadequately motivated antisocial behavior

8. Poor judgment and failure to learn by experience

9. Pathologic egocentricity and incapacity for love

10. General poverty in major affective reactions

11. Specific loss of insight

12. Unresponsiveness in general interpersonal relations

13. Fantastic and uninviting behavior with drink and sometimes without

14. Suicide threats rarely carried out

15. Sex life impersonal, trivial, and poorly integrated

16. Failure to follow any life plan.

Appendix B

American Psychiatric Association's 1952 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

(DSM) Psychopathy Conceptualization

Antisocial Reaction:

"…chronically antisocial individuals who are always in trouble, profiting neither from experience nor punishment, and maintaining no real loyalties to any person, group, or code…frequently callous and hedonistic, showing marked emotional immaturity, with lack of sense of responsibility, lack of judgment, and an ability to rationalize their behavior so that it appears warranted, reasonable, and justified. The term includes cases previously classified as "constitutional psychopathic state" and "psychopathic personality"…

Dyssocial Reaction:

"…disregard for the usual social codes, and often come in conflict with them, as the result of having lived all their lives in an abnormal moral environment…may be capable of strong loyalties…typically do not show significant personality deviations other than those implied by adherence to the values or code of their own predatory, criminal, or other social group…includes such diagnoses as "pseudosocial personality" and "psychopathic personality with asocial and amoral trends."

Emotionally Unstable Personality:

"… react[ing] with excitability and ineffectiveness when confronted by minor stress…judgment may be undependable under stress…relationship to other people is continuously fraught with fluctuating emotional attitudes, because of strong and poorly controlled hostility, guilt, and anxiety…[S]ynonymous with the former term "psychopathic personality with emotional instability."

Appendix C

American Psychiatric Association's 1968 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental

Disorders, Second Edition (DSM-II) Psychopathy Conceptualization

Antisocial Personality:
"…individuals who are basically unsocialized, and whose behavior pattern brings them repeatedly into conflict with society. They are incapable of significant loyalty to individuals, groups, or social values. They are grossly selfish, callous, irresponsible, impulsive, and unable to feel guilt or to learn from experience and punishment. Frustration tolerance is low. They tend to blame others or offer plausible rationalizations for their behavior."

Dyssocial Behavior *("Social maladjustments without manifest psychiatric disorder" subtype):*
"…individuals who are not classifiable as anti-social personalities, but who are predatory and follow more or less criminal pursuits, such as racketeers, dishonest gamblers, prostitutes, and dope peddlers. (DSM-I classified this condition as "Sociopathic personality disorder, dyssocial type.")"

Appendix D

World Health Organization's 1977 International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9) Psychopathy

Conceptualization

Personality Disorder with Predominantly Sociopathic or Asocial Manifestation:
"…characterized by disregard for social obligations, lack of feeling for others, and impetuous violence or callous unconcern. There is a gross disparity between behaviour and the prevailing social norms. Behaviour is not readily modifiable by experience, including punishment. People with this personality are often affectively cold and may be abnormally aggressive or irresponsible. Their tolerance to frustration is low; they blame others or offer plausible rationalizations for the behaviour which brings them into conflict with society.

Appendix E

*American Psychiatric Association's 1980 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental
Disorders, Third Edition (DSM-III) Antisocial Personality Disorder Diagnostic Criteria*

Diagnostic criteria for Antisocial Personality Disorder:
A. Current age at least 18

B. Onset before age 15, as indicated by a history of three or more of the
following before that age:

    (1) truancy (positive if it amounted to at least five days per year
    for at least two years, not including the last year of school)
    (2) expulsion or suspension from school for misbehavior
    (3) delinquency (arrested or referred to juvenile court because of
    behavior)
    (4) running away from home overnight at least twice while living
    in parental or parental surrogate home
    (5) persistent lying
    (6) repeated sexual intercourse in a casual relationship
    (7) repeated drunkenness or substance abuse
    (8) thefts
    (9) vandalism
    (10) school grades markedly below expectations in relation to esti-
    mated or known IQ (may have resulted in repeating a year)
    (11) chronic violations of rules at home and/or at school (other than
    truancy)
    (12) initiation of fights

C. At least four of the following manifestations of the disorder since
age 18:

    (1) inability to sustain consistent work behavior, as indicated by
    any of the following: *(a)* too frequent job changes (e.g., three or
    more jobs in five years not accounted for by nature of job or eco-
    nomic or seasonal fluctuation), *(b)* significant unemployment (e.g.,
    six months or more in five years when expected to work), *(c)* serious
    absenteeism from work (e.g., average three days or more of lateness
    or absence per month, *(d)* walking off several jobs without other
    jobs in sight (Note: similar behavior in an academic setting during
    the last few years of school may substitute for this criterion in indi-
    viduals who by reason of their age or circumstances have not had an
    opportunity to demonstrate occupational adjustment)
    (2) lack of ability to function as a responsible parent as evidenced by
    one or more of the following: *(a)* child's malnutrition, *(b)* child's
    illness resulting from lack of minimal hygiene standards, *(c)* failure

to obtain medical care for a seriously ill child, *(d)* child's dependence on neighbors or nonresident relatives for food or shelter, *(e)* failure to arrange for a caretaker for a child under six when parent is away from home, *(f)* repeated squandering, on personal items, of money required for household necessities

(3) failure to accept social norms with respect to lawful behavior, as indicated by any of the following: repeated thefts, illegal occupation (pimping, prostitution, fencing, selling drugs), multiple arrests, a felony conviction

(4) Inability to maintain enduring attachment to a sexual partner as indicated by two or more divorces and/or separations (whether legally married or not), desertion of spouse, promiscuity (ten or more sexual partners within one year)

(5) irritability and aggressiveness as indicated by repeated physical fights or assault (not required by one's job or to defend someone or oneself), including spouse or child beating

(6) failure to honor financial obligations, as indicated by repeated defaulting on debts, failure to provide child support, failure to support other dependents on a regular basis

(7) failure to plan ahead, or impulsivity, as indicated by traveling from place to place without a prearranged job or clear goal for the period of travel or clear idea about when the travel would terminate, or lack of a fixed address for a month or more

(8) disregard for the truth as indicated by repeated lying, use of aliases, "conning" others for personal profit

(9) recklessness, as indicated by driving while intoxicated or recurrent Speeding

D. A pattern of continuous antisocial behavior in which the rights of others are violated, with no intervening period of at least five years without antisocial behavior between age 15 and the present time (except when the individual was bedridden or confined in a hospital or penal institution).

E. Antisocial behavior is not due to either Severe Mental Retardation, Schizophrenia or manic episodes.

Appendix F

American Psychiatric Association's 1987 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition, Revised (DSM-III-R) Antisocial Personality Disorder Diagnostic Criteria

Diagnostic criteria for 301.70 Antisocial Personality Disorder

A. Current age at least 18.

B. Evidence of Conduct Disorder with onset before age 15, as indicated by a history of *three* or more of the following:

   (1) was often truant
   (2) ran away from home overnight at least twice while living in parental or parental surrogate home (or once without returning)
   (3) often initiated physical fights
   (4) used a weapon in more than one fight
   (5) forced someone into sexual activity with him or her
   (6) was physically cruel to animals
   (7) was physically cruel to other people
   (8) deliberately destroyed others' property (other than by fire-setting)
   (9) deliberately engaged in fire-setting
   (10) often lied (other than to avoid physical or sexual abuse)
   (11) has stolen without confrontation of a victim on more than one occasion (including forgery)
   (12) has stolen with confrontation of a victim (e.g., mugging, purse-snatching, extortion, armed robbery)

C. A pattern of irresponsible and antisocial behavior since the age of 15, as indicated by at least *four* of the following:

   (1) is unable to sustain consistent work behavior, as indicated by any of the following (including similar behavior in academic settings if the person is a student):

   (a) significant unemployment for six months or more within five years when expected to work and work was available
   (b) repeated absences from work unexplained by illness in self or family
   (c) abandonment of several jobs without realistic plans for others

   (2) fails to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behavior, as indicated by repeatedly performing antisocial acts that are grounds for arrest (whether arrested or not), e.g., destroying property, harassing others, stealing, pursuing an illegal occupation

(3) is irritable and aggressive, as indicated by repeated physical fights or assaults (not required by one's job or to defend someone or oneself), including spouse- or child-beating

(4) repeatedly fails to honor financial obligations, as indicated by defaulting on debts or failing to provide child support or support for other dependents on a regular basis

(5) fails to plan ahead, or is impulsive, as indicated by one or both of the following:

  (a) traveling from place to place without a prearranged job or clear goal for the period of travel or clear idea about when the travel will terminate

  (b) lack of a fixed address for a month or more

(6) has no regard for the truth, as indicated by repeated lying, use of aliases, or "conning" others for personal profit or pleasure

(7) is reckless regarding his or her own or others' personal safety, as indicated by driving while intoxicated, or recurrent speeding

(8) if a parent or guardian, lacks ability to function as a responsible parent, as indicated by one or more of the following:

  (a) malnutrition of child

  (b) child's illness resulting from lack of minimal hygiene

  (c) failure to obtain medical care for a seriously ill child

  (d) child's dependence on neighbors or nonresident relatives for food or shelter

  (e) failure to arrange for a caretaker for young child when parent is away from home

  (f) repeated squandering, on personal items, of money required for household necessities

(9) has never sustained a totally monogamous relationship for more than one year

(10) lacks remorse (feels justified in having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another)

D. Occurrence of antisocial behavior not exclusively during the course of Schizophrenia or Manic Episodes.

Appendix G

Robert Hare's 1991 Psychopathy Checklist, Revised

Factor 1: Personality "Aggressive Narcissism"

- Glibness / superficial charm

- Grandiose sense of self-worth

- Pathological lying

- Cunning/manipulative

- Lack of remorse or guilt

- Shallow affect (genuine emotion is short-lived and egocentric)

- Callous /lack of empathy

- Failure to accept responsibility for own actions

Factor 2: Case history "Socially deviant lifestyle"

- Need for stimulation/proneness to boredom

- Parasitic lifestyle

- Poor behavioral control

- Lack of realistic long-term goals

- Impulsivity

- Irresponsibility

- Juvenile delinquency

- Early behavior problems

- Revocation of conditional release

Characteristic Traits not correlated with either factor

- Promiscuous sexual behavior

- Many short-term marital relationships

- Criminal versatility

Appendix H

World Health Organization's 1992 International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) Dissocial

Personality Disorder Diagnostic Criteria

Dissocial Personality Disorder

A. …at least three of the following:

1. Callous unconcern for the feelings of others and lack of the capacity for empathy.

2. …attitude of irresponsibility and disregard for social norms, rules, and obligations.

3. Incapacity to maintain enduring relationships.

4. …low tolerance to frustration and a low threshold for discharge of aggression, including violence.

5. Incapacity to experience guilt and to profit from experience, particularly punishment.

6. Markedly prone to blame others or to offer plausible rationalizations for the behavior bringing the subject into conflict.

7. Persistent irritability.

Appendix I

American Psychiatric Association's 1994 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental

Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) Antisocial Personality Disorder Diagnostic Criteria

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Diagnostic Criteria for 301.7 Antisocial Personality Disorder

A. There is a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others occurring since age 15 years, as indicated by three (or more) 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 profit or pleasure.
   (3) Impulsivity or failure to plan ahead.
   (4) Irritability and aggressiveness, as indicated by repeated physical 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
   (7) Lack of remorse, as indicated by being indifferent to or rationalizing having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another.

B. The individual is at least age 18 years.

C. There is evidence of conduct disorder with onset before age 15 years.

D. The occurrence of antisocial behavior is not exclusively during the course of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Appendix J

American Psychiatric Association's 1994 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental

Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-V) Antisocial Personality Disorder Diagnostic Criteria

Antisocial Personality Disorder

Diagnostic Criteria	**301.7** (F60.2)

A. A pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others, occurring since age 15 years, as indicated by three (or more) 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 profit or pleasure.

3. Impulsivity or failure to plan ahead.

4. Irritability and aggressiveness, as indicated by repeated physical 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

7. Lack of remorse, as indicated by being indifferent to or rationalizing having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another.

B. The individual is at least age 18 years.

C. There is evidence of conduct disorder with onset before age 15 years.

D. The occurrence of antisocial behavior is not exclusively during the course of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Appendix K

General Questionnaire

1) In what year were you born?[3]

   a) _____

2) What is your gender?

   a) Male

   b) Female

   c) Decline to answer

3) What is your ethnicity?

   a) Hispanic or Latino

   b) Not Hispanic or Latino

4) What is your race?

   a) American Indian or Alaska Native

   b) Asian

   c) Black or African American

   d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

   e) White

   f) Mixed Race

5) Where did you grow up?

   a) Northeastern United States

   b) Southern United States

   c) Western United States

   d) Midwestern United States

   e) Central United States

   f) Outside United States Mainland

6) Are you a legal United States citizen?

   a) Yes

   b) No

7) Have you ever been convicted of a felony?

   a) Yes

---

[3] Participants reporting 1994 or later were not included in the analysis, as they were not be at least 18 at the time of survey.

    b) No

8) What is your political affiliation?

    a) Democrat

    b) Republican

    c) Progressive Party

    d) Green Party

    e) Other Third-Party

    f) Unaffiliated

    g) Non-Political

9) Do you identify with a specific major religious or spiritual group?

    a) Christianity

    b) Judaism

    c) Islam

    d) Hinduism

    e) Buddhism

    f) Other Major Religion

    g) Agnosticism (i.e., undecided)

    h) Atheism

10) What is the highest level of education you attained?

    a) Some high school

    b) High school diploma or equivalent

    c) Some college

    d) 2-year college degree

    e) 4-year college degree

    f) Post-college degree or certification

    g) Doctoral / Medical / Legal degree

11) Have you taken any psychology coursework?

    a) Some in high school

    b) Some in college

    c) Majored in psychology in college

    d) Psychology master's degree

    e) Psychology doctoral degree

12) Do you work in the mass media industry (e.g., news, books, television, movies, etc.)

a) Yes

   i)   Please explain: _____

b) No

13) How much do you know about psychopaths, on a scale from 1 (nothing) to 100 (everything)

a)   _____

14) Have you ever dealt with a psychopath in real life?

a) Yes

b) No

15) Have you or a close friend or relative ever been the victim of a psychopath?

a) Yes

b) No

16) Do you know a psychopath when you meet one?

a) Yes

b) No

17) If you answered 'yes' to the last question, how do you know a psychopath?

a) A 'gut' or instinctual feeling

b) Certain specific characteristics they exhibit

c) After seeing or learning about a person the psychopath has victimized

d) Other:_____

18) Are most psychopaths men, women, or are there a roughly equal number?

a) All psychopaths are men

b) Most psychopaths are men

c) Most psychopaths are women

d) All psychopaths are women

e) There are roughly equal numbers of male and female psychopaths

19) True or false: All psychopaths are serial killers.

a) True

b) False

20) True or False: All serial killers are psychopaths.

a) True

b) False

Appendix L

Television/Movie Watching Questionnaire[4]

1) How many unique episodes of the television show ***House, M.D.*** have you watched?[5]

   a) 0 episodes

   b) 1-3 episodes

   c) More than 3 episodes, but less than a full season

   d) At least one full season, but not the whole show in its entirety

   e) Pretty much the whole show

2) How many unique episodes of the show *Grey's Anatomy* have you watched? [matched by "television, medical, drama"][6]

3) Have you seen the movie ***American Psycho***?[7]

   a) I never heard of it.

   b) I heard of the movie or saw trailers, but didn't see it.

   c) I watched part of the movie, but did not finish it.

   d) I saw the movie, but I did not like it.

   e) I saw the movie, and I liked it.

4) Have you seen the movie *A Perfect Murder*? [matched by "movie, wall street, murders"]

5) Have you seen the movie ***The Talented Mr. Ripley***?

6) Have you seen the movie *Matchstick Men*? [matched by "movie, con man"]

7) Have you seen the movie ***Cape Fear***?

8) Have you seen the movie *What About Bob*? [matched by "movie, family, vacation, uninvited"]

9) How many unique episodes of the television show ***Dexter*** have you watched?

---

[4] For counterbalancing, the number of protagonists with psychopathic features (bold-italics, standard underline) equals the number of antagonist psychopaths (bold-italics, wavy underlined), with each having a control (plain italics) matched to medium (television vs. movie), time period (shown within ten years of each other), and theme (e.g., medical drama). In the participants' actual survey, these markers were dropped, and presentation order of all three categories was holistically randomized using a random number generator.

[5] This is a sample of how television watching behavior was assessed. Other television shows are abbreviated in this appendix in the interest of space.

[6] Each counterbalancing example succeeds its target show featuring a character with psychopathic traits, and denotes in brackets what search terms were used to match this counterbalancing example. The bracketed section was dropped in the actual survey administered to participants.

[7] This is a sample of how movie watching behavior was assessed. Other movies are abbreviated in this appendix in the interest of space.

10) How many episodes of the *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* shows have you seen, combined? [matched by "television, police, forensics, murder"]

11) Have you seen the movie *Se7en*?

12) Have you seen the movie *A Few Good Men*? [matched by "movie, murder, crime, mystery"]

13) How many unique episodes of the television show *The Sopranos* have you watched?

14) How many unique episodes of the show *The Wire* have you watched? [matched by "television, organized crime"]

15) Have you seen the movie *Reservoir Dogs*?

16) Have you seen the movie *Identity*? [matched by "movie, heist"]

17) How many unique episodes of the television show *Breaking Bad* have you watched?

18) How many unique episodes of the show *Justified* have you watched? [matched by "television, crime, drugs"]

19) Have you seen the movie *No Country for Old Men*?

20) Have you seen the movie *All The Pretty Horses*? [matched by "movie, Cormac McCarthy, western"]

21) How many unique episodes of the television show *The Shield* have you watched?

22) How many unique episodes of the show *Homicide: Life on the Street* have you watched? [matched by "television, crime, "]

23) How many unique episodes of the television show *Oz* have you watched?

24) How many unique episodes of the show *Prison Break* have you watched? [matched by "television, prison"]

25) How many unique episodes of the television show *Boardwalk Empire* have you watched?

26) How many unique episodes of the show *Mad Men* have you watched? [matched by "television, historical drama, period piece"]

27) Have you seen the movie *Natural Born Killers*?

28) Have you seen the movie *Wag the Dog*? [matched by "movie, media-influence"]

29) How many unique episodes of the television show *Weeds* have you watched?

30) How many unique episodes of the show *Desperate Housewives* have you watched? [matched by "television, suburbia"]

31) Have you seen the movie *A Clockwork Orange*?

32) Have you seen the movie *The Manchurian Candidate*? [matched by "movie, brainwash, murder"]

33) Have you seen the movie *American History X*?

34) Have you seen the movie *Crash*? [matched by "movie, race-relations"]

35) Have you seen the movie *Zodiac*?

36) Have you seen the movie *State of Play*? [matched by "movie, journalist, investigation"]

Appendix M

Psychopathy Literature Questionnaire

1) Have you read "Danger Has a Face: The Most Dangerous Psychopath is Educated, Wealthy, and Socially Skilled, by Anne Pike? [published 2011][8]

   a) Yes, I read the whole book.

   b) I read some of it.

   c) No, but I've heard of the book.

   d) No, and I've never heard of it.

2) Have you read "The Psychopath Test" by Jon Ronson? [published 2011]

3) Have you read "Puzzling People: The Labyrinth of the Psychopath" by Thomas Sheridan? [published 2011]

4) Have you read "Violent Offenders" by Matt DeLisi? [published 2011]

5) Have you read "Women Who Love Psychopaths: Inside the Relationships of Inevitable Harm With Psychopaths, Sociopaths, & Narcissists" by Sandra L. Brown? [published 2011]

6) Have you read "Corporate Psychopaths: Organizational Destroyers" by Clive Boddy? [published 2011]

7) Have you read: *Working with Monsters: How to Identify and Protect Yourself from the Workplace Psychopath* by John Clarke? [published 2010]

8) Have you read "A Dance With the Devil: A True Story of Marriage to a Psychopath" by Barbara Bentley? [published 2008]

9) Have you read "Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work", written by Babiak and Hare? [published 2007]

10) Have you read "The Sociopath Next Door" Martha Stout? [published 2006]

11) Have you read "The Psychopath: Emotion and the Brain" by James Blair? [published 2005]

12) Have you read "Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us" by Robert Hare? [published 1999]

13) Have you read "Manufacturing Social Distress: Psychopathy in Everyday Life" by Robert Rieber? [published 1997]

14) Have you read "The Antisocial Personalities" by David T. Lykken? [published 1995]

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[8] This is a sample of how professional literature exposure was assessed. The other professional literature assessment is abbreviated in the interest of space.

Appendix N

Psychopath Identification Questionnaire

1) Is Greg House a psychopath? (Hugh Laurie's character from Fox's *House, M.D.*)[9]

   a) I do not know.

   b) Psychopath.

   c) Not a Psychopath.

2) Is Meredith Grey a psychopath? (Ellen Pompeo's character from ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*)

3) Is Patrick Bateman a psychopath? (Christian Bale's character from *American Psycho*)

4) Is Steven Taylor a psychopath? (Michael Douglass' character from *A Perfect Murder*)

5) Is Tom Ripley a psychopath? (Matt Damon's character from *The Talented Mr. Ripley*)

6) Is Roy Waller a psychopath? (Nicolas Cage's character from *Matchstick Men*)

7) Is Max Cady a psychopath? (Robert DeNiro's character from *Cape Fear*)

8) Is BobWiley a psychopath? (Bill Murray's character from *What About Bob?*)

9) Is Dexter Morgan a psychopath? (Michael C. Hall's character from *Dexter*)

10) Is D. B. Russell a psychopath? (Ted Danson's character from *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*)

11) Is "John Doe" played by Kevin Spacey in *Se7en* a psychopath?

12) Is Colonel Nathan R. Jessup a psychopath? (Jack Nicholson's character from *A Few Good Men)*

13) Is Tony Soprano a psychopath? (James Gandolfini's character from *The Sopranos*)

14) Is Jimmy McNulty a psychopath? (Dominic West's character from *The Wire*)

15) Is Mr. Blonde played by Vic Vega in *Reservoir Dogs* a psychopath?

16) Is "Ed" played by John Cusack in *Identity* a psychopath?

17) Is Walter White a psychopath? (Bryan Cranston's character from *Breaking Bad*)

18) Is Raylan Givens a psychopath? (Timothy Olyphant's character from *Justified*)

19) Is Anton Chigurth a psychopath? (Javier Bardem's character from *No Country for Old Men*)

20) Is John Grady Cole a psychopath? (Matt Damon's character from *All the Pretty Horses*)

21) Is Detective Vic Mackey a psychopath? (Michael Chiklis' character from *The Shield*)

---

[9] This is a sample of how psychopath identification was assessed. Other psychopath identification items are abbreviated in this appendix in the interest of space.

22) Is Timothy Bayliss a psychopath? (Kyle Secor's character from *Homicide: Life on the Street*)

23) Is Vernon Schillinger a psychopath? (J. K. Simmons' character from *Oz*)

24) Is Michael Scofield a psychopath? (Wentworth Miller's character from *Prison Break*)

25) Is Nucky Thomspon a psychopath? (Steve Buscemi's character from *Boardwalk Empire*)

26) Is Don Draper a psychopath? (Jon Hamm's character from *Mad Men*)

27) Is Mickey Knox a psychopath? (Woody Harrelson's character from *Natural Born Killers*)

28) Is Conrad Brean a psychopath? (Robert DeNiro's character from *Wag the Dog*)

29) Is Nancy Botwin a psychopath? (Mary-Louise Parker's character from *Weeds*)

30) Is Susan Mayer a psychopath? (Teri Hatcher's character from *Desperate Housewives*)

31) Is Alex DeLarge played a psychopath? (Malcolm McDowell's character from *A Clockwork Orange*)

32) Is Captain Bennett Marco a psychopath? (Denzel Washington's character from *The Manchurian Candidate*)

33) Is Derek Vinyard a psychopath? (Edward Norton's character from *American History X*)

34) Is Officer John Ryan a psychopath? (Matt Dillon's character from *Crash*)

35) Is the Zodiac Killer a psychopath? (From the 2007 film *Zodiac*)

36) Is Congressman Stephen Collins a psychopath? (Ben Affleck's character from *State of Play*)

Appendix O

Psychopathy/Sociopathy Characteristics[10]

☐ Tries to charm everyone – a good talker	☐ *Misunderstood by most people*
☐ Has high sense of self-worth or importance	☐ *Unusually Intelligent or Detail Oriented*
☐ Lies often, without justification or goal	☐ *Mysterious or unique*
☐ Cunning and/or manipulates others	☐ *Attractive / sexually desired by others*
☐ Remorseless, or does not feel guilt	☐ *Doesn't give up; unrelenting; persevering*
☐ Does not feel emotion strongly	☐ *Rebellious, but may be well-intentioned*
☐ Callous and not empathetic to others' pain	☐ *Have unusual abilities (e.g., memory)*
☐ Won't take responsibility for own actions	☐ *Excellent at figuring out/reading people*
☐ Needs stimulation / prone to boredom	☐ *Good at solving real-world puzzles*
☐ May con or leach resources off others	☐ *Secretive / Does not let others get close*
☐ Difficulty controlling behavior - impatient	☐ <u>Physically violent</u>
☐ Lacks realistic long-term goals - grandiose	☐ <u>Prone to unusual sexual behavior</u>
☐ Impulsive, or doesn't think through actions	☐ <u>More likely to commit murder</u>
☐ Irresponsible (with e.g., children, bills, etc.)	☐ <u>More likely to commit rape</u>
☐ Had legal problems as a child or teen	☐ <u>More likely to torture people / animals</u>
☐ As a child was badly-behaved	☐ <u>More likely to engage in cannibalism</u>
☐ Violated or failed legal parole or probation	☐ <u>Grew up in a disadvantaged environment</u>
☐ Is sexually promiscuous; many partners	☐ <u>Was Abused / molested / raped as a child</u>
☐ Had many short-term relationships	☐ <u>Had first sexual experience when young</u>
☐ Commits many different types of crimes	☐ <u>Prone to bouts of explosive rage</u>

[10] The left column are modified items from the PCL-R (Hare, 2003). In the right column, positive traits are italicized, perhaps characterizing a romanticized psychopath; negative traits are underlined, perhaps denoting the demonized psychopath. In the survey administered to participants, these markers were dropped, and presentation order was randomized.

Appendix P

Psychopathy/Sociopathy Characteristics[11]

☐ Does not feel emotion strongly	☐ Have unusual abilities (e.g., memory)
☐ Grew up in a disadvantaged environment	☐ Lacks realistic long-term goals – grandiose
☐ Won't take responsibility for own actions	☐ Prone to bouts of explosive rage
☐ Violated or failed legal parole or probation	☐ Good at solving real-world puzzles
☐ Rebellious, but may be well-intentioned	☐ Had first sexual experience when young
☐ Physically violent	☐ As a child was badly-behaved
☐ Unusually Intelligent or Detail Oriented	☐ Misunderstood by most people
☐ Commits many different types of crimes	☐ Prone to unusual sexual behavior
☐ More likely to commit rape	☐ Tries to charm everyone – a good talker
☐ Cunning and/or manipulates others	☐ Secretive / Does not let others get close
☐ Excellent at figuring out/reading people	☐ More likely to torture people / animals
☐ Irresponsible (with e.g., children, bills, etc.)	☐ Difficulty controlling behavior - impatient
☐ Needs stimulation / prone to boredom	☐ Remorseless, or does not feel guilt
☐ Was Abused / molested / raped as a child	☐ Had legal problems as a child or teen
☐ Mysterious or unique	☐ Callous and not empathetic to others' pain
☐ Has high sense of self-worth or importance	☐ Doesn't give up; unrelenting; persevering
☐ More likely to commit murder	☐ May con or leach resources off others
☐ Attractive / sexually desired by others	☐ More likely to engage in cannibalism
☐ Is sexually promiscuous; many partners	☐ Had many short-term relationships
☐ Lies often, without justification or goal	☐ Impulsive, or doesn't think through actions

[11] Here, the traits have been randomized using a random number generator, controlling such that an equal number of each distractor type appears in each column, alternating the order of positive and negative distractors. This is the list that participants saw, albeit in black and white ink.

Appendix Q

Table Q1

Demographic Statistics

	Female N *or* M (SD)	Male N *or* M (SD)	Combined N *or* M (SD)
Gender	119	79	198
Ethnicity			
American Indian / Alaska Native	1	0	1
African-American	9	5	14
Asian-American	9	5	14
Caucasian	93	65	158
Mixed Ethnicity	7	4	11
Age	M = 32.6 (12.3)	M = 32.5 (10.4)	M = 32.5 (11.5)
Regionality			
Central United States	4	1	5
Midwestern United States	26	12	38
Northeast United States	29	25	54
Outside United States mainland	2	2	4
Southern United States	39	19	58
Western United States	18	20	38
Religion			
Agnostic	28	21	49
Atheist	29	22	51
Buddhist	1	1	2
Christian	51	32	83
Hindu	1	0	1
Jewish	1	1	2
Other	6	2	8
Political Affiliation			
Democrat	59	33	92
Green Party	1	1	2
Non-Political	13	2	15
Progressive Party	1	0	1
Republican	11	11	22
Unaffiliated	28	28	56
Other 3rd Party	6	4	10
Highest Educational Attainment			
Some high school	1	2	3
High school diploma	13	10	23
Some college	45	23	68
2-year college degree	8	9	17
4-year college degree	38	27	65
Post-graduate degree or certification	9	7	16
Doctoral / medical / legal degree	5	1	6

Demographic Statistics (cont'd)

	Female N *or* M (SD)	Male N *or* M (SD)	Combined N *or* M (SD)
Psychology Training			
Some high school	37	25	62
Some undergraduate	62	50	112
Undergraduate psychology major	13	3	16
Psychology master's degree	2	0	2
Psychology doctoral degree	2	0	2
Non-United States citizens	0	0	0
Felony history	1	3	4
Mass media employment history	1	2	3
Personal exposure to psychopath	37	12	49
Personal victimization by psychopath	24	12	36
Able to "spot" a psychopath	33	15	48
How psychopath "spotted"			
After learning about victimization	2	1	3
Gut / instinctual feeling	9	3	12
Other	1	0	1
Personal characteristics	23	12	35
Self-reported psychopathy expertise	M = 36.8 (24.9)	M = 32.6 (22.0)	M = 35.2 (23.9)
Endorsed: "Most psychopaths are men."	73	52	125
Endorsed: "Most psychopaths are women."	2	0	2
Endorsed psychopaths equally men and women	44	27	71
Endorsed: "All psychopaths are serial killers."	1	2	3
Endorsed: "All serial killers are psychopaths."	45	28	73

Note: Values given represent the 198 participants who satisfactorily completed the survey; with occasional missing data not included

Table Q2

Television / Movie Watching Behavior for Works Featuring Psychopaths

Television Show	Never watched	Watched 1-3 episodes	Over 3 episodes, less than 1 season	Over one season, less than entirety	Watched basic entirety
House MD	36	41	31	55	35
Dexter	84	23	14	30	47
The Sopranos	100	37	24	15	22
Breaking Bad	107	19	13	14	45
The Shield	152	23	7	9	7
Oz	143	22	14	8	11
Boardwalk Empire	161	15	7	5	10
Weeds	100	24	7	27	40

Movie	Do not know of	Know movie, did not see	Watched part of movie	Saw movie, liked it	Saw movie, disliked it
American Psycho	22	76	15	68	17
The Talented Mr. Ripley	35	99	10	50	4
Cape Fear	64	62	14	54	4
Se7en	33	38	12	104	11
Reservoir Dogs	36	73	12	67	10
No Country For Old Men	28	71	8	77	14
Natural Born Killers	45	60	20	52	21
A Clockwork Orange	28	65	23	61	21
American History X	47	43	10	83	15
Zodiac	43	82	17	43	13

Note: Values given are the number of participants, of the 198 satisfactorily completing the survey, endorsing various degree of exposure to target television shows or movies

Table Q3

Professional Psychopathy Literature Exposure

Book	Never heard of book	Heard of book, but not read	Read some of the book	Read the whole book
Danger Has a Face: The Most Dangerous Psychopath is Educated, Wealthy, and Socially Skilled by Anne Pike	178	16	3	1
The Psychopath Test by Jon Ronson	174	17	1	6
Puzzling People: The Labyrinth of the Psychopath by Thomas Sheridan	184	18	2	1
Violent Offenders by Matt DeLisi	181	13	2	2
Women Who Love Psychopaths: Inside the Relationships of Inevitable Harm With Psychopaths, Sociopaths, & Narcissists by Sandra L. Brown	175	17	6	0
Corporate Psychopaths: Organizational Destroyers by Clive Boddy	182	13	2	1
Working with Monsters: How to Identify and Protect Yourself from the Workplace Psychopath by John Clarke	183	12	2	1
A Dance With the Devil: A True Story of Marriage to a Psychopath by Barbara Bentley	176	16	4	2
Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work by Babiak and Hare	188	9	1	0
The Sociopath Next Door Martha Stout	171	19	3	5
The Psychopath: Emotion and the Brain by James Blair	180	14	4	0
Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us by Robert Hare	178	14	5	1
Manufacturing Social Distress: Psychopathy in Everyday Life by Robert Rieber	190	7	1	0
The Antisocial Personalities by David T. Lykken	181	13	1	3

Note: Values given are the number of participants, of the 198 satisfactorily completing the survey, endorsing various degree of exposure to professionally authored literature on psychopathy

Table Q4

Comparison of Genders in Correctly Characterizing Psychopathy

Measure	Females (N=101)	Males (N=74)	Combined (N=175)
Correct Psychopathy Traits Endorsed			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	20 (0 to 20)	20 (0 to 20)	20 (0 to 20)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	9.76 (4.33)	9.94 (3.70)	9.84 (4.07)
Positive Distractor Traits Endorsed			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	10 (0 to 10)	10 (0 to 10)	10 (0 to 10)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	3.60 (2.32)	3.84 (2.40)	3.70 (2.35)
Negative Distractor Traits Endorsed			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	10 (0 to 10)	10 (0 to 10)	10 (0 to 10)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	4.13 (2.79)	4.05 (2.78)	4.10 (2.78)
Psychopathy Understanding Score (PUS)			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	20 (-7 to 13)	20 (-7 to 13)	20 (-7 to 13)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	2.03 (4.23)	2.05 (3.80)	2.04 (4.04)
Psychopathy Bias Score (PBS)			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	11 (-6 to 5)	10 (-5 to 5)	11 (-6 to 5)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	-0.52 (2.56)	-0.22 (2.68)	-0.39 (2.61)

Note: Values given reflect the 175 participants judged to be "lay", of the original 198 successfully completing the survey.

Table Q5

Comparison of Good and Poor Psychopathy Judges in Correctly Characterizing Psychopathy

Measure	Good Judges (N=103)	Poor Judges (N=72)	Combined (N=175)
Correct Psychopathy Traits Endorsed			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	20 (0 to 20)	18 (2 to 20)	20 (0 to 20)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	9.63 (4.00)	10.14 (4.17)	9.84 (4.07)
Positive Distractor Traits Endorsed			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	10 (0 to 10)	10 (0 to 10)	10 (0 to 10)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	3.59 (2.33)	3.86 (2.38)	3.70 (2.35)
Negative Distractor Traits Endorsed			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	10 (0 to 10)	10 (0 to 10)	10 (0 to 10)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	4.42 (2.72)	3.64 (2.81)	4.10 (2.78)
Psychopathy Understanding Score (PUS)			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	20 (-7 to 13)	18 (-7 to 11)	20 (-7 to 13)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	1.62 (4.05)	2.64 (3.98)	2.04 (4.04)
Psychopathy Bias Score (PBS)			
Range (Minimum to Maximum)	11 (-6 to 5)	11 (-6 to 5)	11 (-6 to 5)
Mean (Standard Deviation)	0.83 (2.61)	0.22 (2.50)	-0.39 (2.61)

Note: Values given reflect the 175 participants judged to be "lay", of the original 198 successfully completing the survey.

Figure Q1

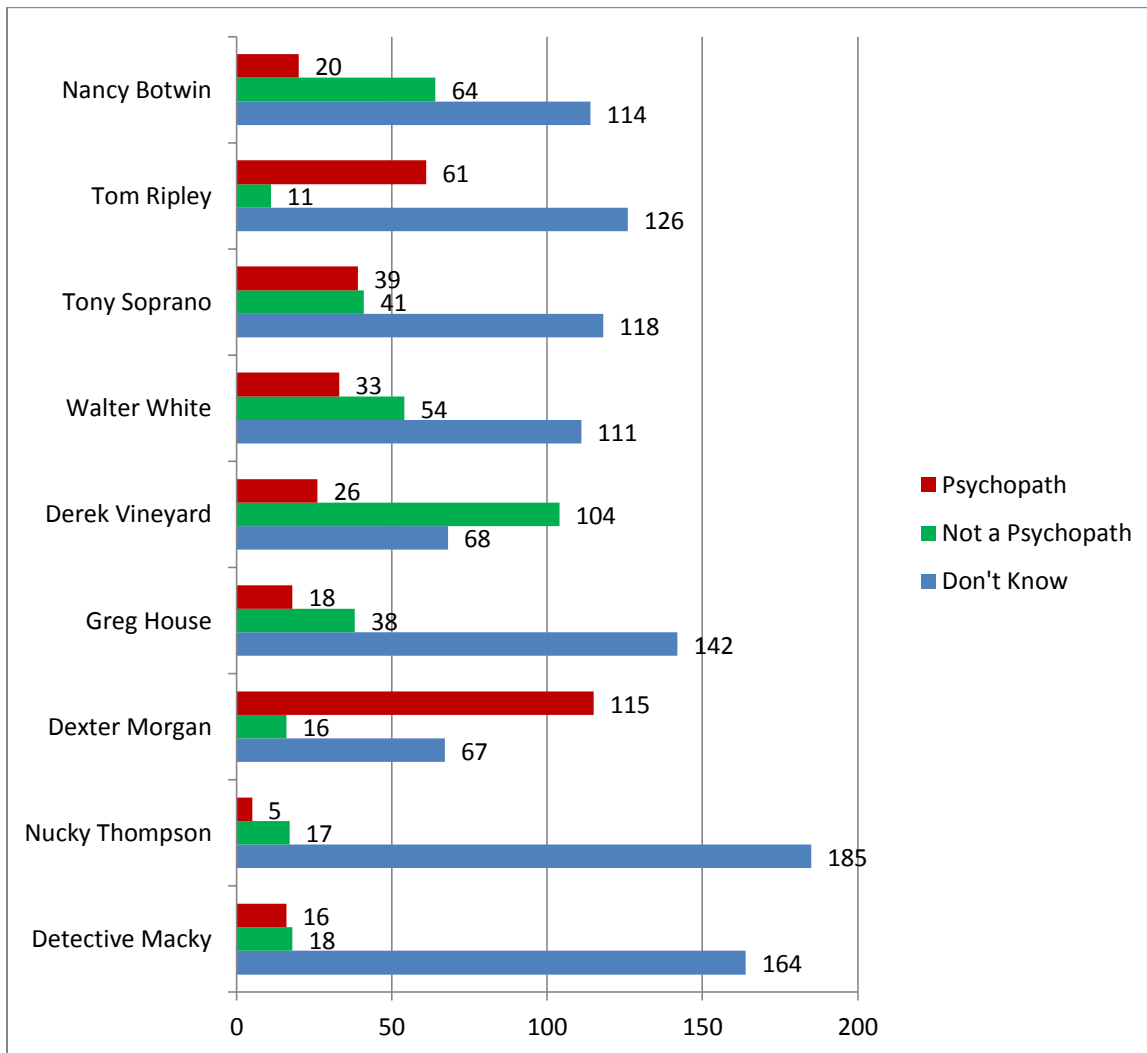*198 Participant Endorsement of Target Protagonist Psychopathic Characters as Psychopaths*

Figure Q2

198 Participant Endorsement of Target Antagonist Psychopathic Characters as Psychopaths
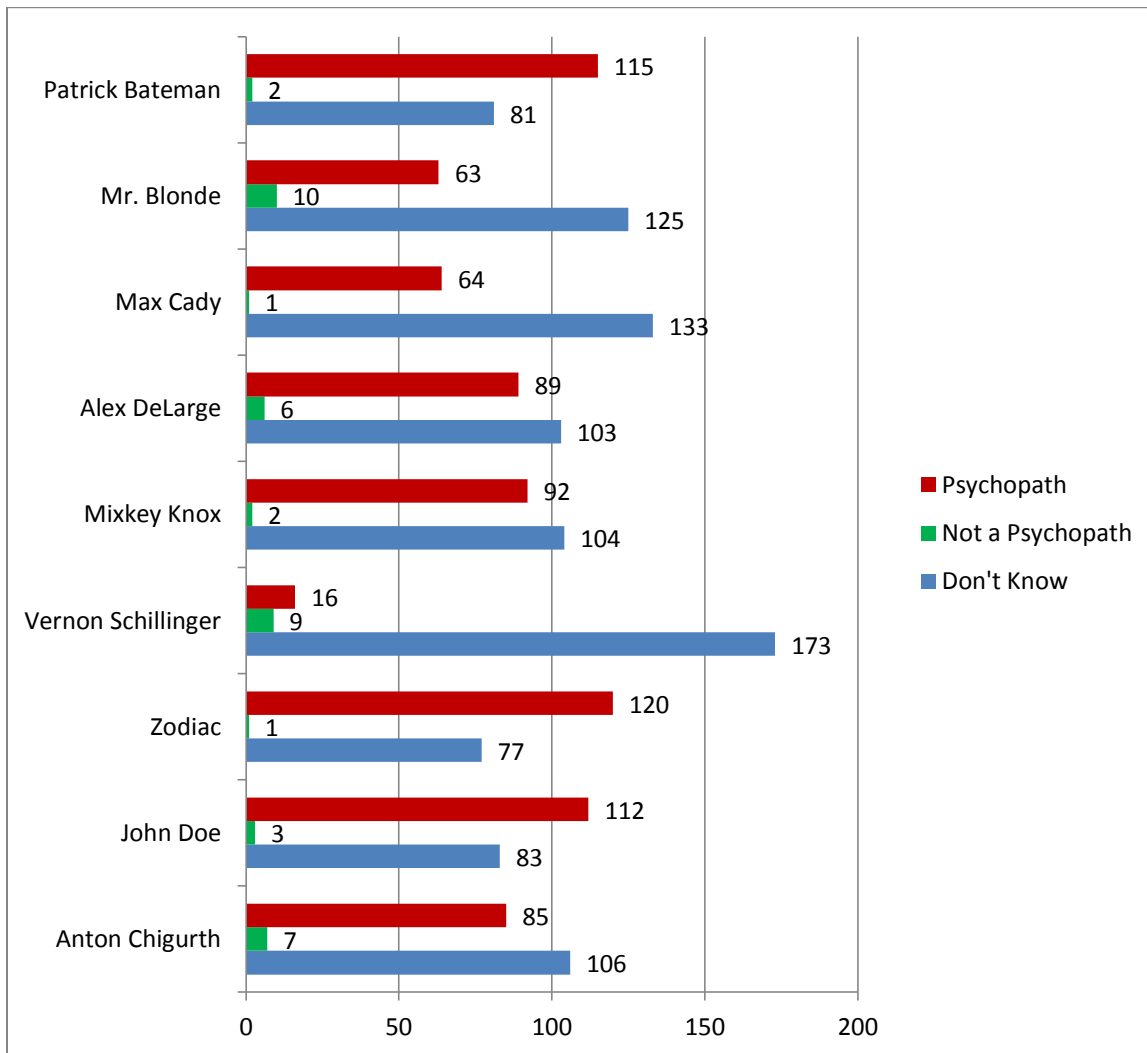
Figure Q3

198 Participant Endorsement of Distractors Characters as Psychopaths
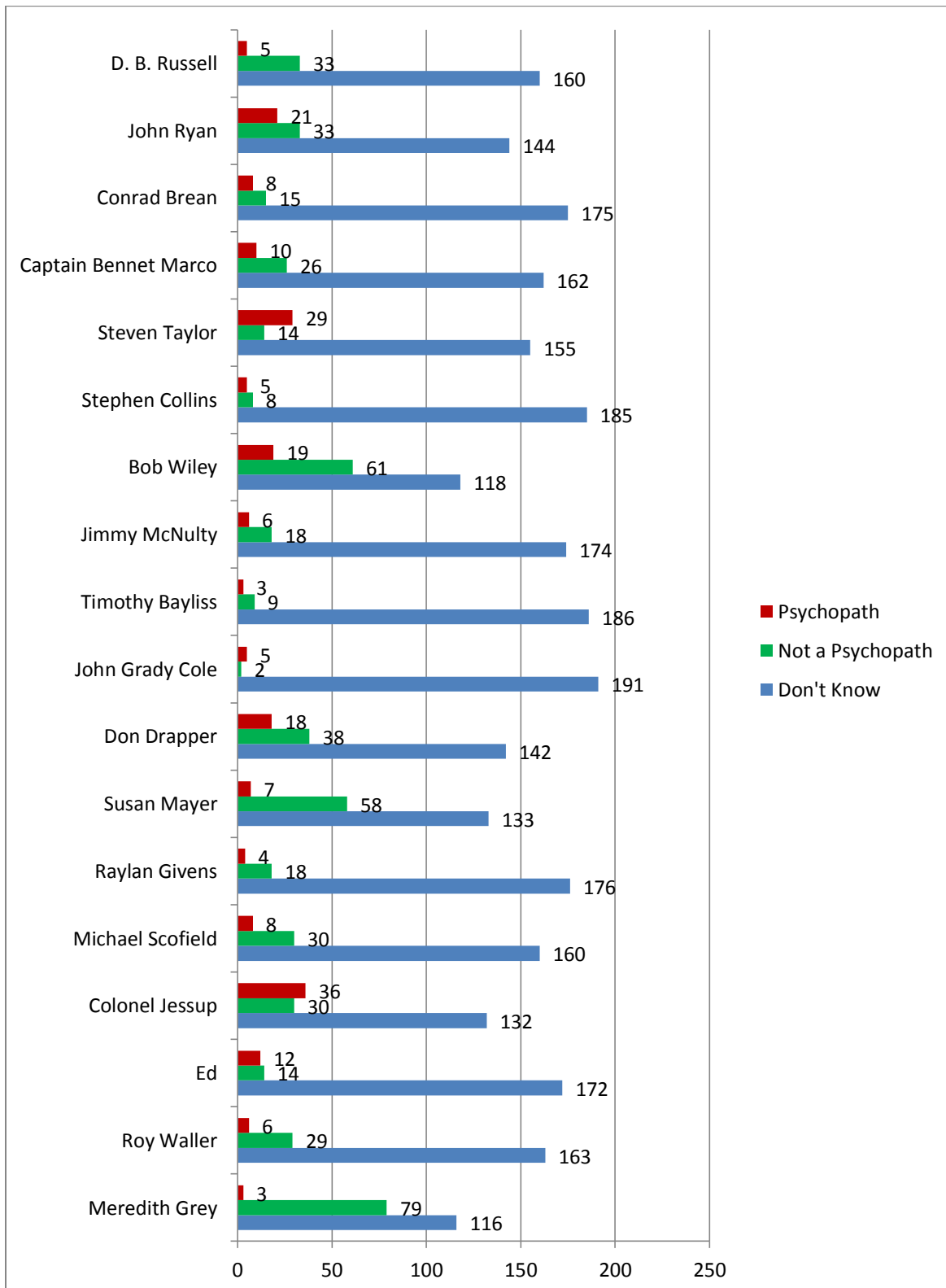
Figure Q4

PCL-R Items Endorsement by 175 Lay Participants

Item	Participants
Remorselessness	150
Manipulative	146
Shallow affect	130
Callousness	129
Pathological lying	116
Superficially charming	108
Denies responsibility	107
Grandiosity	102
Need for stimulation	96
Parasitic lifestyle	93
Poor behavioral control	91
Impulsivity	82
Lacks realistic goals	77
Criminal versatility	66
Early behavior problems	47
Many short relationships	46
Promiscuous	45
Violated parole/prob.	31
Irresponsibility	31
Juvenile delinquency	29

Figure Q5

Psychopathy Positive Distractor Trait Endorsement by 175 Lay Participants

Trait	Participants
Secretive	110
Intelligent	107
Good people-reader	101
Unrelenting / persevering	66
Misunderstood	66
Dark / mysterious	62
Unusual / savant abilities	51
Good puzzle-solver	31
Attractive	28
Rebellious, well-intentioned	26

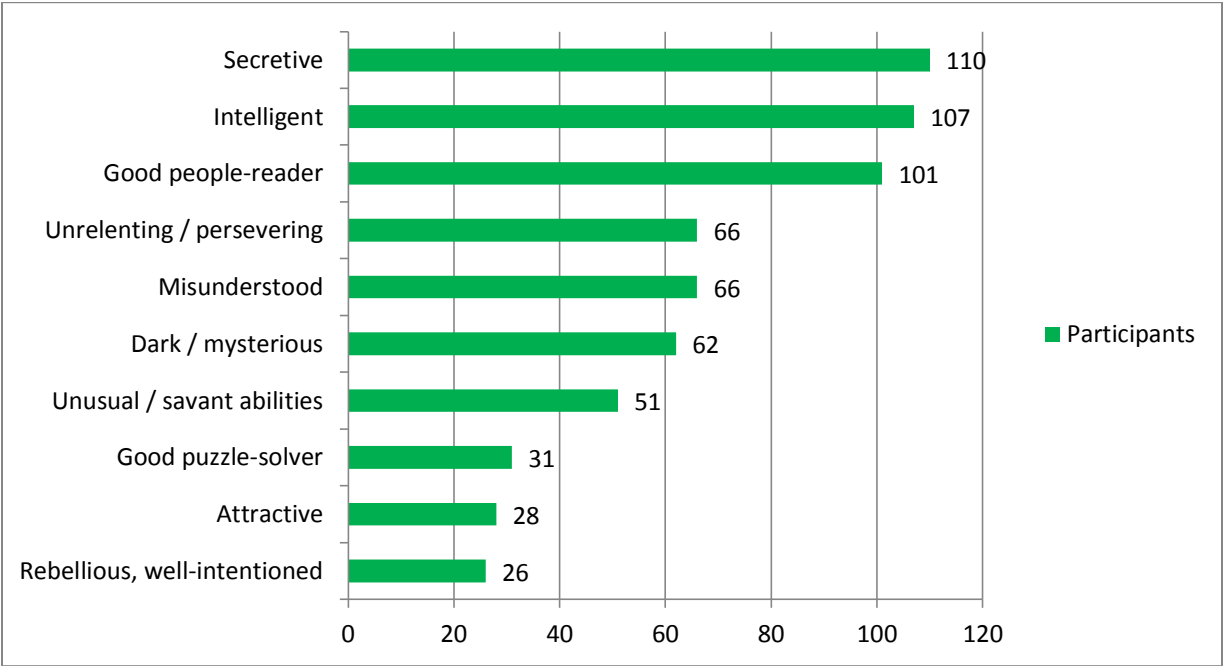**Figure Q6**

Psychopathy Negative Distractor Trait Endorsement by 175 Lay Participants

Trait	Participants
Prone to torture	126
Prone to murder	105
Violent	101
Explosive rage	82
Sexual fetishist	65
Prone to rape	64
History of abuse	51
Prone to cannibalism	48
Disadvantaged youth	41
Early sexualization	34