

The role of affect and cognitive schemata in the assessment of psychopathy

by

Fiona Wilks-Riley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Central Lancashire

July 2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, for all his love, support and goodness. It is also dedicated to my mother for all her encouragement over the last few years and practical support. Eternal thanks to Chris for his long-suffering and endless cups of tea, I could not have done it without you! Grateful thanks to Robert and Benjamin, thank you for being patient whilst mummy did her work. Heartfelt thanks to Jane for her advice, encouragement, inspiration, faith in me, and for making it possible. Also thanks to John Archer for his advice on the drafts. Thanks also to Ute and Christina for all your support.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examined psychopathy, cognitive schemata and affect in forensic and community populations. This was to identify whether cognitive schemata and affect would assist in the assessment of psychopathy. Study one was conducted on 38 male high secure hospital patients and 38 male prisoners. It focused on the assessment of psychopathy and cognitive schemata. It was predicted that psychopathy would be positively related to negative schemata and early maladaptive schemata and negatively related to positive schemata. This prediction was supported with the exception of Early Maladaptive Schemata. Study two was conducted on 38 male high secure hospital patients and 38 male prisoners and also examined psychopathy and affect. It further explored positive schemata that was significant in study one. It was predicted that psychopathy would be positively related to errors on affective word sentence completion with slower response times. These predictions were not supported. The third study included 101 male prisoners and 108 male university students. An assessment of cognitive schema and affect was also developed. A further core prediction was that psychopathy would have a positive relationship with detached affect and results supported this. Contrary to prediction, it was found that psychopathy was higher in the student group compared to the prisoner group. Study four further explored the core predictions and included an examination of psychopathy, cognitive schema, affect and the 'Big Five' in 174 prisoners and 200 male students. The predictions were supported that psychopathy would be negatively related to positive cognitive schemata and positively related to negative cognitive schemata, in both groups. The predictions that detached affect would be significant to psychopathy was again supported. Contrary to prediction psychopathy was found to be higher in the student group. The current research indicates that cognitive schemata and affect are related to psychopathy. It also shows that similar cognitive profiles of psychopathy are demonstrated in prison and student groups that relate to affect. Further, it highlights the neglected role of positive schemata in psychopathy. Future research could consider the role of positive schemata and refine the cognitive profile in psychopathy, it could also examine the newly proposed cognitive behavioural model of psychopathy .

Student Declaration

Concurrent registration for two or more academic awards

I declare that while registered for the research degree, I was not enrolled for any other awards.

Material submitted for another award

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award and is solely my own work.

Signature of Candidate

Type of award

Doctor of Philosophy _____

School

Psychology _____

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Setting the Scene	1
CHAPTER 2: Psychopathy History and Concept	4
2.1 Structure of the chapter	4
2.2 Definition and controversies	4
2.3 History of psychopathy	6
2.4 Psychopathy and morality	7
2.5 Sociopathy	10
2.6 Psychopathy in different populations	11
2.7 Concluding comments	13
CHAPTER 3: Affect and Psychopathy	16
3.1 Structure of the chapter	16
3.2 Why affect is important in psychopathy	16
3.3 The Low Fear Hypothesis	17
3.4 Language-based research into affective processing and psychopathy	18
3.5 Criticism of the Low Fear Hypothesis	21
3.6 Dual Process Model	24
3.7 Dual Process Model: Factor 1 incorporating personality and affect	27
3.8 Dual Process Model: the development of Factor 2 (lifestyle/antisocial) psychopathy	29
3.9 Criticism of the dual process model	30
3.10 Concluding comments	32
CHAPTER 4: Psychopathy, Personality Disorder and Cognitive Schemata	35
4.1 Structure of the chapter	35
4.2 Theory of criminality and psychopathy	35
4.3 The five factor model and five factor theory of personality	37
4.4 Five factor model and psychopathy	40
4.5 Cognitive behavioural theory of personality disorder	41
4.6 Cognitive analytic theory of personality disorder (Young, 1990)	44
4.7 Concluding comments	46
CHAPTER 5: Assessment of Psychopathy	49
5.1 Structure of the chapter	49
5.2 The Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R)	49
5.3 Criticism of the Psychopathy checklist Revised (PCL-R)	50
5.4 The four facet model of psychopathy	52
5.5 Self-report assessment of psychopathy	54
5.6 Concluding comments	56
CHAPTER 6: Addressing the Research Problem: The Assessment of Cognitive Schemata	58

6.1	Structure of the chapter	58
6.2	The assessment of psychopathy	58
6.3	Psychopathy and affect	58
6.4	Psychopathy, personality and cognition	59
6.5	Aims	61
6.6	How the thesis will address these aims	65

CHAPTER 7: An Investigation of Psychopathy and Cognitive Schemata: An

	Exploration in Two Forensic Populations	66
7.1	Structure of the chapter	66
7.2	Introduction.....	67
7.3	Participants	67
7.4	Ethical considerations	68
7.5	Measures.....	68
7.6	Procedure	72
7.7	Results	72
7.8	Data screening	73
7.9	Thematic analysis of semi structured interview	74
7.10	Relationships between Early Maladaptive, positive and negative schemata	77
7.11	Identifying predictors of psychopathy from the semi-structured interview	77
7.12	Identifying predictors of psychopathy from Early Maladaptive Schemata	79
7.13	Semi-structured interview predictor of psychopathy groups	81
7.14	Early Maladaptive Schema predictors of psychopathy groups	83
7.15	Differences between hospital and prison groups	83
7.16	Summary of results	85
7.17	Discussion	85

CHAPTER 8: Study Two: An Investigation of Psychopathy, Affect and Positive

	Schemata: An Exploration in Two Forensic Populations	91
8.1	Structure of the chapter	91
8.2	Introduction.....	91
8.3	Participants	93
8.4	Ethical considerations	93
8.5	Measures	93
8.6	Procedure	95
8.7	Results	96
8.8	Data screening	96
8.9	Identifying predictors of psychopathy from Early Maladaptive Schemata, positive schema and affect	98
8.10	Identifying predictors of psychopathy groups from affect, positive and Early Maladaptive Schemata	101
8.11	Analyses of relationships between affect, positive schemata and Early Maladaptive Schemata	103
8.12	Analysis of differences between hospital and prison groups	103
8.13	Summary of results	104
8.14	Discussion	105

CHAPTER 9: Study Three: An Investigation of Psychopathy, Affect Positive And Negative Schemata: An Exploration in a Forensic and Community Population	113
9.1 Structure of the chapter	113
9.2 Introduction.....	114
9.3 Participants	114
9.4 Ethical considerations	114
9.5 Measures	115
9.6 Procedure	117
9.7 Results	117
9.8 Data screening	117
9.9 Comparisons between prison and student groups.....	119
9.10 Factor analysis of the positive schemata, negative schemata and detached affect scales – total sample.....	120
9.11 Standard multiple regression analyses to identify predictors of psychopathy the student and prison groups	124
9.12 Predictors of psychopathy from the SPANA-1 factors	128
9.13 Summary of results	131
9.14 Discussion	132

CHAPTER 10: Study Four: An Investigation of Psychopathy, Affect and Schemata: Further Exploration in a Forensic and Community Population ...	138
10.1 Structure of the chapter	138
10.2 Introduction.....	138
10.3 Participants	139
10.3 Ethical considerations	140
10.4 Measures	140
10.5 Procedure	141
10.6 Results	141
10.7 Data screening	142
10.8 Differences between groups: prison and student	143
10.9 Analysis of predictors of psychopathy from the Big Five, positive and negative cognitive schemata and affect	147
10.10 Factor analysis of the SPANA-2 and its subscales.....	149
10.11 Identifying predictors of psychopathy from the SPANA-2	155
10.12 Summary of results	157
10.13 Discussion	159

CHAPTER 11: Discussion	
11.1 Structure of the chapter	165

REFERENCES	184
Appendix A: Materials for Study 1	198
Appendix B: Materials for Study 2	214
Appendix C: Materials for study 3	231
Appendix D: Materials for Study 4	244

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Items from the Psychopathy Checklist (2003)..	5
5.1	Four facet model (Hare, 2003)	53
7.1	Items from the Psychopathy Checklist Screening Version	68
7.2	Early Maladaptive Schema	70
7.3	Correlations between psychopathy, age, positive, negative and Early Maladaptive Schemata	74
7.4	Schemata from the semi structured interview	76
7.5	Correlations amongst variables from the semi-structured interview	78
7.6	Correlations amongst Early Maladaptive Schemata	80
7.7	Classification of low, medium and high PCL-SV categories	82
8.1	Scale Means and Standard Deviations by Location	98
8.2	Correlations amongst variables	100
9.1	Reliabilities of the Levenson self report measure of psychopathy scales	115
9.2	Reliabilities of the SPANA-1 scales	116
9.3	Means table for psychopathy, positive and negative schemata, detached affect and affect sentence completion scales	119
9.4	Means for the four factors, total sample	120
9.5	Factor analysis of SPANA part A. Illustration of four factor solution	121
9.6	Correlations amongst psychopathy, positive schemata, negative schemata, detached affected total schemata and affect sentence completion scores	125
10.1	Reliabilities of the Levenson self report measure of psychopathy scales.	140
10.2	Reliability of the SPANA-2 scales	141
10.3	Psychopathy (LSRP, primary and secondary), positive, negative, affect and Big Five' scale means after modification for extreme scores	143
10.4	Correlations amongst psychopathy (LSRP, primary and Secondary) SPANA-2 scales (positive, negative and affect) and IPIP scales	146
10.5	Factor analysis of SPANA-2 for the prison group. Illustration of seven factor solution	150
10.6	Factor analysis of SPANA-2 for the student group. Illustration of five factor solution	152
10.7	Means Table for the SPANA-2 factors for the prison and student groups	156

List of figures

11.1	Development of psychopathy in a prison population	176
------	---	-----

11.2	Development of psychopathy in a community population	179
------	--	-----