

Summary

The concept and actual term *psychopathy* is no longer in and of itself an actual clinical diagnosis but rather refers to a specific cluster of traits and behaviors used to describe an individual in terms of pervasive dominating personality traits and behaviors (Gunn& Wells, 1999; Hare, 1993). The terms *psychopathy*, *antisocial personality*, and *sociopathy* have periodically been used interchangeably, which has resulted in a degree of conceptual difficulty. This review reveals that psychopathy is a specific type of personality and behavioral phenomena that by its nature has been classified as toxic, parasitic, predatory, destructive, etc., to others. This review also reveals that psychopathy, even while in the midst of conceptual difficulty, has been largely distinguished from personality traits and/or behaviors that have been associated with mental illness or some other type of psychosis related conditions.

Identifying and examining the core personality and behavioral components of psychopathy at first glance appears to be a rather straightforward task. By identifying and describing some of the *psychopathy basics*, specifically the personality, behavioral, and affective characteristics classified psychopathic, one can better appreciate the complexities of such topics. One also gains a better appreciation for the historical struggles that have occurred in labeling, assessing, and managing the behaviors of individuals engaging in psychopathic behaviors.

The future of terms and concepts like antisocial personality disorder, psychopathy, and sociopathy used to describe aberrant behavior remains unclear. Most would agree that various types of aberrant behavior can be difficult to understand, especially if that behavior appears to be chosen of one's freewill or is not related to some type of brain disease. History provides that difficulties of definition and distinction like these have dated back to primitive times. Certainly one could argue that the psychopath seen in primitive times is not the same as a more modern-day psychopath of 2013. This seems especially true considering advancements in technology and mass media that have afforded the modern-day psychopath with a wider range of tools to use. These same tools have facilitated the more sophisticated degrees of psychopathy seen in 2013. While the means and methods employed by contemporary psychopaths have become more complex, it seems that the underlying psychopathic processes and questions surrounding them have essentially remained the same. It is difficult to know whether similar discussions about the similarities and differences related to antisocial personality disorder, psychopathy, and sociopathy will still be occurring 10, 20, or even 100 years from now. One thing is certain though; regardless of labels, the behavior will continue.

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Dr. Paula M. MacKenzie earned her Bachelor's of Science (B.S.) degree from Bradley University, where she majored in Psychology and Social Services. In 1999; she earned a Master's of Science Degree in Education (M.S.Ed.) from Northern Illinois University, where she majored in Counseling Psychology. Dr. MacKenzie went on to complete her doctorate degree (Psy.D.) in Clinical Psychology with a specialization in Forensic Psychology. Dr. Mackenzie's areas of expertise include using a behavioral science model to conduct threat assessments and assessments of psycho-legal competencies such as competency to stand trial, sanity, and other specialized types of forensic examinations. Dr. Mackenzie's additional areas of expertise include the assessment of psychopathy, emergency services, analysis of extremist and cult group behavior, as well as general psychological testing and assessment. Dr. MacKenzie can be reached at; PAULA_MACKENZIE_126@comcast.net

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