The Hierarchical Structure of Psychopathy

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Introduction
- Psychopathy is characterized by callousness, social potency, reduced capacity for empathy and remorse, and aggression.
- There are several models conceptualizing psychopathy in varying degrees of specificity:
  - Single dimension
  - Two-factor model: social deviation and affective/interpersonal dysfunction
  - Triarchic model: boldness, meanness, disinhibition
  - 18 “elemental” traits
- These dimensions likely overlap with each other, which may be most apparent in a hierarchical structure.
- Examining this hierarchical structure was the goal of this study.

Methods
- Participants were 286 MTurk workers (age mean = 34 years; see Table 1).
- Measures:
  - Short Dark Triad
  - Triarchic Psychopathy Measure
  - Elemental Psychopathy Assessment – Short form
- We examined structure of psychopathy using hierarchical principal components analysis.

Results
- Hierarchical structure of psychopathy consisted of seven-echelon structure.
- Hierarchy generally captured higher-order dimension of psychopathy (see Figure 1).
- The exception concerned Disinhibition, which emerged later than anticipated.

Note. Only correlations > |.10| are listed. Solid black lines indicate significant correlations (p < .05); dashed grey lines indicate non-significant correlations.

Discussion
- The key contrast between study findings and major conceptualizations of psychopathy concerns disinhibition.
- That disinhibition did not emerge until the final echelon suggests that it may be less core to psychopathy than previously thought.
- Namely, psychopathy may be more related to manipulative misanthropy than impulsive hellraising.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>151 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>135 (46%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>240 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>23 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>8 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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