

The Hierarchical Structure of Psychopathy

Abbey L. Robbins, M.S. & Matthew M. Yalch, Ph.D.
Palo Alto University

Introduction

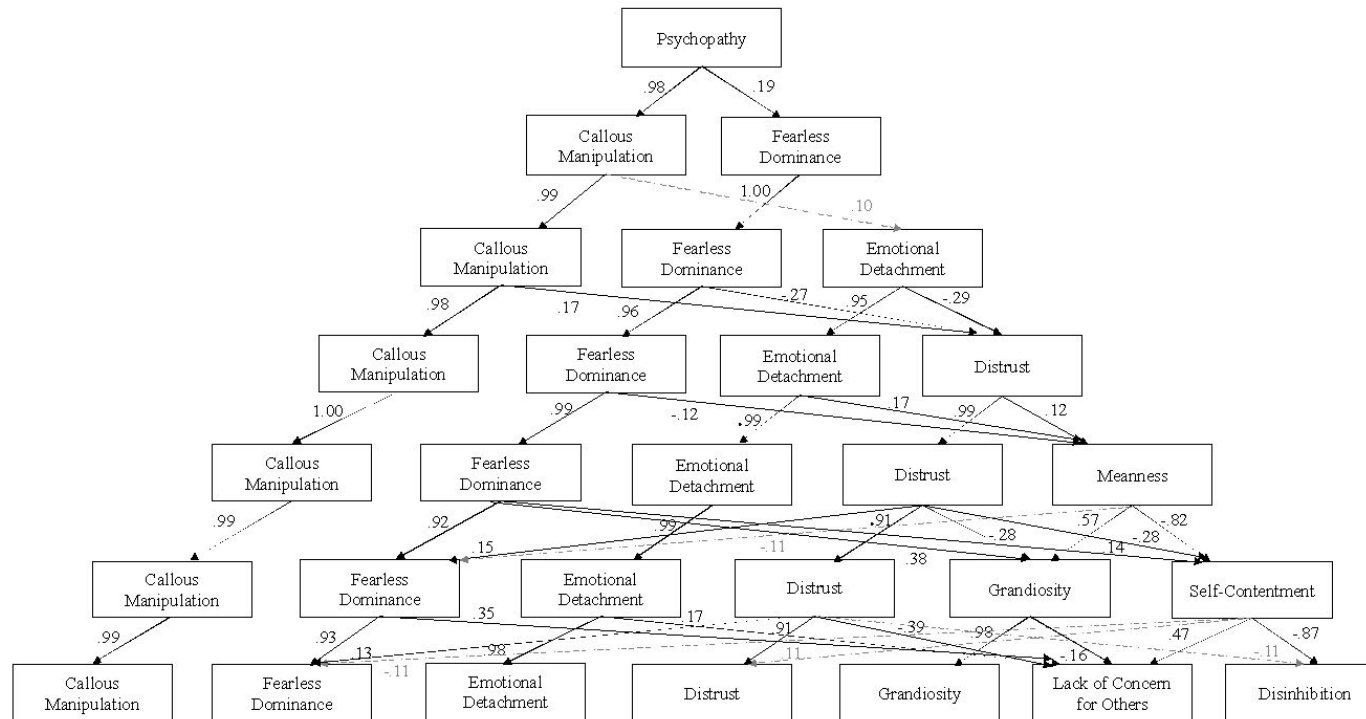
- Psychopathy is characterized by callousness, social potency, reduced capacity for empathy and remorse, and aggression.
- There are several models conceptualizing psychopathy in varying degrees of specificity:
 - Single dimension
 - Two-factor model: social deviation and affective/interpersonal dysfunction
 - 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.

Figure 1

Hierarchical Structure of Psychopathy



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



Table 1

Sample Demographics

	<i>n (%)</i>
Sex	
Female	151 (54%)
Male	135 (46%)
Race	
White	240 (85%)
Asian	23 (8%)
Black	8 (3%)
Multiracial	8 (3%)
Other	5 (2%)

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.

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.