

PSYCHOPATHY IN THE MEDIA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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Master of Arts Degree

by

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Abstract

The construct of psychopathy has become an important concept in the criminal justice system for risk assessment. This study examines the portrayal of psychopathy in the media, through a content analysis of three major newspapers and the Internet. Variables for analysis included source characteristics, descriptions of characters, mental health variables and crime characteristics. From 1980 to 2006, the frequency of the term “psychopath” appearing in newspapers, increased by 315%. The composite psychopath in newspapers was (a) criminal, (b) cold and unemotional, (c) superficially charming, and (d) egocentric. For Internet content, the psychopath was (a) cold and unemotional, (b) deceptive, (c) superficially charming, and (d) criminal. Treatment issues were rarely discussed in newspapers (9%), but were mentioned in 45% of Internet websites, and psychopaths were most likely to be described as untreatable. Implications regarding the influence of media on attitudes about psychopathy with respect to jury decision-making are discussed.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgement	ii
List of Tables	vi
List of Tables in Appendices.....	vii
Introduction	1
Psychopathy in the Media	3
Commonly Confused Mental Health Constructs	4
The Media's Psychotic Psychopath	7
The Impact of Media	10
Does the Public Believe What They Read?	10
Social Learning Theory	12
Psychopathy Research	16
Psychopathy Defined	17
Psychopathy as a Discreet Diagnostic Class	21
Issues in the Legal System	24
The Psychopathic Label	24
Legislation	28
Capital Punishment	30
The Corporate (Organizational) Psychopath	31
Treatment	33
Current Study	38
Methods	39

Newspaper Content Analysis	42
Internet Content Analysis	43
Coding	44
Results	45
Reliability Analysis	45
How is Psychopathy Portrayed in Newspapers and the Internet?	48
Crime	48
Business	54
Psychopathy and Mental Illness	54
Treatment Issues	56
How well does the Media's Portrayal of Psychopathy Parallel Empirical Findings?	57
Expert Opinion	57
Sensational Articles	59
The PCL-R	60
Temporal Changes in Reporting on Psychopathy	61
Frequency of Psychopathic Terms Appearing Within Newspapers Over Time ...	61
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	63
<i>The New York Times</i>	66
<i>The Times</i>	69
Comparison Between Internet and Newspaper Content	72
Discussion	74
Hypotheses	75
Portrait of a Psychopath	86

Differences Across Newspapers	88
Social Learning Theory	90
Limitations	93
Future Directions	94
Conclusions	96
References	99
Appendices	108

List of Tables

Table 1	<i>PCL-R Items by Factor</i>	19
Table 2	<i>Cleckley's (1976) Criteria for Psychopathy by Factor</i>	20
Table 3	<i>The Effects of Workplace Psychopaths</i>	32
Table 4	<i>Reliability Analysis across Coding Variables for Newspapers and Internet</i>	46
Table 5	<i>Frequency of Crime Variables that Differed Across Newspapers and Over Time</i>	48
Table 6	<i>Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported on Internet Websites</i>	60
Table 7	<i>Search Results (Number of Articles) Based on Search Term</i>	62

List of Tables in Appendices

APPENDIX E.....	122
Table 8.1 <i>Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported in the Globe and Mail for Central Characters</i>	122
Table 8.2 <i>Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported in the New York Times for Central Characters</i>	122
Table 8.3 <i>Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported in the Times for Central Characters.....</i>	123
Table 8.4 <i>Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported on Internet Websites.....</i>	124
Table 8.5 <i>Frequency of the Top Psychopathic Traits Reported for Psychopathic Individuals when Psychopathy is the Central Focus of the Article</i>	124
APPENDIX F.....	125
Table 9.1 <i>Comparison of Variables for the Globe and Mail across Time Periods ...</i>	125
Table 9.2 <i>Comparison of Variables for the New York Times across Time Periods...</i>	127
Table 9.3 <i>Comparison of Variables for the Times across Time Periods</i>	129
Table 9.4 <i>Comparison of Variables for all Newspapers across Time Periods</i>	131
APPENDIX G.....	133
Table 10.1 <i>Comparison of Internet and Newspaper Content</i>	133

“A colleague who was interviewing a psychopath asked ‘What sort of person would you find it difficult to kill?’. After much thought at this novel possibility, the interviewee replied: ‘perhaps someone who has a dog’. This colleague now carries a photo of a dog on all his travels.”

– Surviving a Disaster (Thompson, 2003)

“Dozens of books, movies and television programs, and hundreds of newspaper articles and headlines, tell the story: Psychopaths make up a significant portion of the people the media describe – serial killers, rapists, thieves, swindlers, con men, wife beaters, white-collar criminals...terrorists, cult leaders...Read the newspaper in this light, and the clues to the extent of the problem virtually jump off the page. Most dramatic are the cold-blooded, conscienceless killers who both repel and fascinate the public.”

-- Without Conscience (Hare, 1993, p. 2-3)

Introduction

The media is a commanding information center in today's society, containing content that both reflects and informs prevailing popular opinions (Day & Page, 1985; Wahl, 1995). As Surette (1992) notes in this regard, "We are a media nation" (p. ix). In the United States alone, there exist approximately 1,500 daily newspapers, 40,000 yearly book publications, 11,000 magazines, 12,000 radio stations, 1,500 television stations, and 25,000 movie theaters (Sacco, 2005). Furthermore, the Internet now offers people virtually unlimited access to news and other media sources. Consequently, socialization processes and conceptions of the world are influenced not only by family, education, and occupation, but also by the mass media, as more and more people experience the world through a steady consumption of media (Angermeyer & Schulze, 2001).

Since the media has become such a powerful vehicle for disseminating information to the public, a controversial question has been whether this information is influential in shaping attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. In other words, is the public influenced by the contents of media transmissions, and to what extent does acquired media information influence personal decision-making? While there is currently no research regarding how psychopathy is represented in the media, research examining media effects and stereotypic portrayals of mentally disordered individuals has demonstrated that biased media about mental illness does negatively influence attitudes and decision-making regarding the mentally ill. It is the belief of the author that stereotypic portrayals of psychopathy could have an array of negative implications for legal decision-making, including overly harsh sentencing for those who possess some psychopathic traits but who are not PCL-R defined psychopaths, or overly lenient

sentences for psychopaths who do not appear to be the composite psychopath (e.g., the corporate psychopath or the mentally ill psychopath), but who are potentially very dangerous.

A concern among mental health advocates in this regard is how mental health issues are handled in the media. News reporting on mental illness is dominated by negative stereotypes (Angermeyer & Schulze, 2001; Day & Page, 1986), and the assignment of inaccurate psychiatric labels only serve to confuse and misinform readers (Wahl, 1995). Moreover, unbalanced, misleading, or negligent public communications could potentially have serious effects on people's daily experiences. As Wahl (1995) notes: "whether [people] are deciding about a group home, making hiring decisions about someone with a psychiatric history...or sitting on a jury asked to [reach a verdict], their reactions and decisions may well be based on the images they have encountered and the information they have received through the mass media" (p. 12). If this is true, what does the mass media communicate about psychopathy, and what are the implications for legal decision making? For instance, will the information people acquire through the media about psychopathy influence the various decision processes involved when rendering verdicts or recommending sentences in criminal trials? While it is not the purpose of the present study to identify actual behavioural outcomes based on these media communications, this research hopes to provide a starting point to motivate such research, whereby predictions about actual behaviours or cognitions might be made based on the media's "composite psychopath".

Psychopathy in the Media

The term psychopath can increasingly be identified in the media, whether in newspapers, on television, or in films, with common themes of violence, criminality and insanity often accompanying these portrayals. For example, a book review found in a Canadian newspaper, reads: “Just when Alan thinks he's hit bottom, he learns that one of his former patients, a dangerous psychopath...has escaped from the Colorado state mental hospital” (Desilva, 2007, p.C5). Furthermore, television dramas like the American series *Oz*, or the British soap opera *Hollyoaks*, and Hollywood movies including *Red Dragon*, *Copycat*, and *Seven*, involve psychopathic characters presented as immoral, evil and dangerous.

News media on the other hand, provides a forum for public discussion, and directs the construction of community concerns on the public agenda (Conrad, 2001; Spector & Kitsuse, 1977). The way in which scientific topics are reported in the news are often criticized for being distorted based on inaccurate, sensationalized or biased coverage (Conrad, 2001), or for being uncritical or overzealous (Nelkin, 1995). Sometimes the media will feature professionals to promote more reliable journalism. Still, expert accounts can vary dramatically depending on the source, or the authority being interviewed. For instance, Wahl, Wood, and Richards (2002) reported that American journalists rarely interview professionals who actually work with the mentally ill when reporting on mental illness. Instead, media portrayals of mentally disordered individuals are frequently dictated by academics or others “who speak generically, and often unsympathetically, about mental disorders” (p. 281). Furthermore, depending on the focus of the newscaster, editing can take expert comments out of context.

While most scientific research does not receive an abundance of media attention, psychopathy makes headlines because of its relation to violence and crime. Crime news is the third largest category of news, representing approximately 7% of all news coverage, ranging from 4% to 28% (Sacco, 2005). Since news stories are constantly competing for space and attention (Conrad, 2001), and criminal acts committed under exceptional circumstances make exciting news, it is not surprising that there is an overrepresentation of reporting bizarre acts exhibited by the mentally ill (Nairn & Coverdale, 2005), nor would it be alarming to find an overabundance of headlines about heinous crimes committed by psychopaths.

Commonly Confused Mental Health Constructs

While there is little contradiction in the research literature regarding what constitutes a specific mental disorder, journalists may not always be so well informed when it comes to reporting about disorders including schizophrenia, antisocial personality disorder (APD) and psychopathy. The term psychosis describes a condition for which there are severe deficits of thought, speech and behaviour, and typically involves symptoms of delusions or hallucinations. Schizophrenia is an example of a psychotic disorder inaccurately represented in the mass media. While it literally means “split psyche,” schizophrenia is not characterized by dissociation or multiple personalities. Still, the media persistently communicates that schizophrenia is synonymous with having multiple personalities (Wahl, 1995). Psychopathy on the other hand, is a personality disorder. Unlike individuals with psychotic disorders, psychopaths are not mentally deficient, nor are they unable to function effectively in social, educational, or occupational situations. While some may argue that psychopaths do not function

“effectively” in the regular sense, others might reply that they in fact function more effectively, and are better able to attain their goals since they are unconcerned with who they hurt in order to achieve their goals. Those diagnosed with psychopathic personality disorder are calculating, rational beings who charm and manipulate their way through life. Despite the clear diagnostic differences between psychopathy and psychosis however, these terms are often used interchangeably in the media (Wahl, 1995).

APD is another construct that has been confused with psychopathy. Part of this misconception stems from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 2000), since it does not recognize psychopathy as a disorder, distinct from APD. Smith (1999) commented on this difficulty (referring to the earlier version of the DSM), noting that while psychopathy is “officially if debatably designated” as APD by the DSM-III, it is still a problematic construct to define, classify, and relate to society (p. 165). Furthermore, semantic confusion arises simply based on the fact that “personality” disorders are described in a book of “mental” disorders. Psychopathy and APD are both personality disorders that share similar characteristics, but they are different disorders. APD is characterized by severe behavioural problems (including evidence of conduct disorder) prior to the age of 15. After age 15, an individual must meet at least three of the following seven symptoms: repeat offending, deceitfulness, impulsivity, irritability, recklessness, irresponsibility or lack of remorse. Psychopathy is characterized by a constellation of interpersonal and affective traits (e.g., lack of remorse, callousness) in addition to the predominantly behavioural criteria central to APD. Thus, while most psychopaths will meet the criteria for APD, the reverse is not true: Most individuals diagnosed with APD are not

psychopaths (Edens, Marcus, Lilienfeld, & Poythress, 2006; Skilling, Harris, Rice, & Quinsey, 2002). Not surprisingly, a large proportion of inmates (60 – 80%) will meet criteria for antisocial personality disorder, but only 10 to 25% will be diagnosed as psychopaths (Hare, 2003).

A recent example of how confusion is created by media presentations is demonstrated by a headline in *The Vancouver Sun*, reading: “The media should not provide podiums for attention-seeking psychopaths.” This editorial was printed in response to the Virginia Tech massacre that occurred in 2007, when a student killed 32 people and wounded a number of others before ending his own life. A few years earlier in 2005, Cho was accused of stalking two female students and was identified as mentally ill and was urged to seek mental health counseling. A number of concerned citizens wrote letters to the editor, appalled by the media coverage presented by the newspaper regarding the massacre. Disappointed members of the public commented on the inclusion of unnecessary photographs, the inappropriate substance of the top story, and the insensitivity of the news coverage to victims. One reader pleaded for the community to “be kind to each other and report mental illness” (Hunt, 2007, p. A14), while another described the culprit as a “mentally ill person” and “insane” (Stiefenhofer, 2007, p. A14). Poor congruence is demonstrated between the headline of the communication (which refers to psychopathy) and the content of the editorials (which remark about mental illness and insanity), which may confuse readers unclear about the meaning of psychopathy.

It should be noted in this context that it is not unheard of for psychopathic individuals to possess symptoms of mental illness. In fact, psychopathy research is often

conducted in forensic psychiatric facilities where psychopathy sometimes exists in addition to other mental health problems. For instance, psychopathy can exist on a continuum, such that an individual can have more psychopathic traits and a higher *Psychopathy Checklist-Revised* (PCL-R; Hare, 2003) score than another individual who still possesses a number of psychopathic characteristics. However, for the purposes of this research, a differentiation must be made based on Axis I disorders (clinical syndromes) and Axis II disorders (personality disorders). For the remainder of this paper, references to “mental illness” will refer to clinical syndromes found on Axis I of the DSM-IV. Diagnostic confusion in this respect does not generally occur within the literature; however it is one of the purposes of this research to determine whether this confusion is present within the media.

The Media's Psychotic Psychopath

Many notorious psychopaths have made headlines (e.g., Kenneth Bianchi, Ted Bundy, Clifford Olson; Hare, 1993). The media's ‘psychotic psychopaths’ are not only newsworthy, but are often the substance of books, television and horror films, many of which involve serial killers (Hare, 1993; Surette, 1992; Wahl, 1995). Often, the psychopathic persona becomes confused when associated with infamous killers like Ed Gein, David Berkowitz and Jeffrey Dahmer, allowing psychopaths to “share the spotlight with a mixed bag of killers and mass murderers whose crimes, often unbelievably horrific, appear to be related to serious mental problems” (Hare, 1993, p. 5). Frequently, these characters are depicted as intelligent, resourceful individuals who are occupationally secure, socially interactive, and financially comfortable. However, they also tend to possess strange delusions, hallucinations or obsessions which they

(unrealistically) manage to keep hidden until confrontation leads to the discovery of their disorganized, symptomatic behaviour (Wahl, 1995). Perhaps the media's psychotic psychopath reflects the public's inability to understand how a sane, rational person could commit such ghastly, unfeeling crimes.

To illustrate the potential effects that media characterizations may have on the public, a recent study by Wijdicks and Wijdicks (2006), found that the portrayal of coma is grossly inaccurate, and that these inaccuracies negatively influenced the public's decision making in potentially real life scenarios. They reported that after reviewing 30 movies over a nearly thirty-five year timeframe (1970-2004), only two percent could be described as accurate portrayals of coma victims awakening from a coma. Among the many problems featured in movies included patients with no feeding tubes, abruptly awakening from lengthy comas, without physical or mental problems, with a "Sleeping Beauty" type of appearance. The authors note that while these depictions serve to increase entertainment value, they also mislead viewers. In their study, the authors showed clips of 22 movies depicting coma patients and asked participants how accurately the movies portrayed coma victims. Roughly one-third of participants were not able to spot important inaccuracies in the movies, and nearly 40% of participants admitted that certain scenes of movies might influence their decisions in real life if they were making important decisions regarding a family member in a coma.

Filmmakers have also depicted the psychopath as an indestructible super-male, portrayed as malicious, smart, and cunning, coupled with "superior strength, endurance and stealth" (Surette, 1992, p. 41). The idea that psychopaths are highly intelligent is a recurring characteristic assigned to psychopaths by the media. This may not be surprising

considering that Cleckley (1982) included this characteristic as one of his 16 items describing the classic psychopath. Yet research has shown that there is no relationship between intelligence and psychopathy (e.g., Johansson & Kerr, 2005; Walsh, Swogger, & Kosson, 2004). Johansson and Kerr (2005) found that there were no overall differences in intelligence for psychopathic and non-psychopathic offenders, however intelligence (particularly verbal intelligence) was related to age of onset of violent crime. That is, high intelligence among non-psychopaths was associated with a delayed onset of violent offending, whereas high intelligence among psychopaths was related to an early onset of violent offending and other problematic misbehaviour across a variety of settings. Further, Walsh and colleagues (2004) found no interaction between intelligence and psychopathy among a sample of nearly 700 European American and African American male inmates. While psychopathy alone was a robust predictor of violence for both ethnic offender groups, intelligence did not moderate the effect of psychopathy for violence prediction. When comparing extreme groups, the authors noted that the low IQ psychopaths were the most violent, however these findings resulted from additive effects and not an interaction between the two variables.

Nonetheless, horror films often present these brilliant but 'insane' psychopathic characters as able to artfully contrive murderous plots of perverse revenge, or lucidly engage in random violence (Surette, 1992). Hare (1993) notes that even though "their unspeakable acts, their grotesque sexual fantasies, and their fascination with power, torture, and death severely test the bounds of sanity" (p. 5), psychopaths are not mad. Rather, they are cold, calculating and rational (Smith, 1999). Their shallow emotions and

inability to empathize with others is routinely what makes their behaviour appear incomprehensible. Perhaps Babiak and Hare (2006) articulate it best with the statement:

Novels and movies portray psychopaths in extreme, stereotypical ways. They appear as cold-blooded serial killers, stalkers, sex offenders, con men and women, or the prototypical evil, manipulating villain, such as...Hannibal Lecter. Reality, unfortunately, provides some support for this view, but the picture is somewhat more complex than this. (p. 17)

Hare (1993) cautions that readers keep a clear perspective when thinking about psychopathy. The public should not lose sight of the bigger picture by placing too much emphasis on the most brutal and horrific examples of psychopathic behaviour, while ignoring the psychopaths who impact us daily. He notes in this regard that “[we] are far more likely to lose our life savings to an oily tongued swindler than our lives to a steely-eyed killer” (p. 5-6).

The Impact of Media

Does the Public Believe what they Read?

Some academics argue that people are not necessarily influenced by what they read or see in the media. Angermeyer and Schulze (2001) note that a direct relationship between media representations and personal attitudes does not necessarily exist because “[r]eception is a creative process, and meaning is constructed actively in the process of reading” (p.485). They note that the way a media message will be received will depend on a variety of variables including age, education, social status, reading comprehension, personal history and values, and previous knowledge on the subject.

In a study which examined focus group discussions regarding media portrayals, Philo, Secker, Platt, and Henderson (1994) reported that negative media content was not retained if participants had personally had a positive experience with mental illness. This

of course makes sense, but calls into question the likelihood of (a) being able to spot a psychopath, and (b) having a positive experience with a psychopath. Angermeyer and Schulze (2001) point out that few people will have had personal experiences with the mentally ill. Conversely, many people will have likely encountered psychopaths without ever knowing it. Angermeyer and Schulze claim that since the media has become a main resource for information and images, it plays a critical role in shaping public attitudes and beliefs. Many of our interactions now occur indirectly through media outlets, and subsequent public understanding of a number of popular issues will rely predominantly on the images and information proliferated by these media sources (e.g., Internet, television, newspapers, movies). For instance, a significant amount of research has demonstrated that while there is evidence that some specific symptoms increase the likelihood that a patient may be violent (e.g., persecutory delusions, command hallucinations and threat/control-override symptoms), there is no relationship between mental illness and violence in general (see Bjorkly, 2002a, 2002b, Bjorkly & Havik, 2003, and Junginger & McGuire, 2004 for reviews). Despite these findings, the public remain unconvinced: The results of a recent probability survey administered nationwide revealed that 75% of the public believe people with mental illnesses to be violent (Corrigan & Watson, 2005). In line with these beliefs, Signorielli (1989) found that 71.2% of prime-time adult characters on dramatic television who were portrayed as mentally disordered, either injured or killed others (as cited by Diefenbach, 1997). Stereotypic public beliefs supporting the notion that dangerousness is a core component of the mentally ill stereotype was further demonstrated by a German survey, of which nearly 50% of respondents in the study believed that mentally ill individuals were

unpredictable, and roughly 25% expressed the attitude that mental illness was associated with aggressiveness and violence (Angermeyer & Matschinger, 1994).

Social Learning Theory

The influence of media messages on actual behaviours have been implicated in a number of social problems, including eating disorders, gender stereotypes, violence and aggression, suicide, sex, substance use, and a general desensitization to sensitive issues. Social learning theory suggests that the media influences the thoughts and behaviours of the public through social modeling, as people learn and imitate what they observe in the media (Bandura, 1977). For instance, youth may become uninhibited and desensitized to violence growing up in a culture which observes violence regularly on the news, television, internet, and in movies. Similarly, attitudes and cognitions are susceptible to media effects. Attitudes and beliefs can be learned through media messages about issues which are common in the news. As a result, stereotypes and attitudes towards marginalized groups in society (e.g., the mentally ill, criminals, ethnic minorities) can be modeled from observations gleaned from television, news, or entertainment media.

Bandura (2002) notes that behaviour is first affected by internal cognitive processes, which influence what is observed, what meaning is derived from the observation, whether there will be any enduring effects, whether any emotional impressions are made, whether any motivational impact occurs, and how the information will be stored and organized. Symbols are used to bridge the interpretation of single experiences into the development of cognitive models that later dictate attitudes and behaviour. He notes that through the use of symbols, “people give meaning, form, and continuity to their experiences” (p.122). In other words, an understanding of the world is

developed by using symbols to interpret the mass amount of information generated from experiences that are both personal and vicarious (e.g., learned through watching television or reading the news). Problem solving, evaluative judgments, and decision-making can therefore occur absent any “laborious behavioral search” (p.123). In the context of the current research, the public encounters the psychopath vicariously through the media, without ever having met a Paul Bernardo, since information about psychopathy is experienced through media communications. Similarly, social cognitive theory is interested in how social influences are able to impact cognitive functioning. In other words, how does the media influence beliefs about psychopathy?

A general principle in social cognition research is the concept of ‘vividness’, which is the extent to which something is “emotionally interesting, concrete and imagery provoking” (Shrum, 2002, p.73). This principle posits that the more a construct is vivid and provokes a concrete and emotionally laden image in the mind, the more easily it is recovered from memory; since stories reported by the media are often dramatized and sensational, these images may stand out more than personal experiences. If psychopaths are portrayed in the media as cold-blooded murderers, as many have suggested they often are (e.g., Babiak & Hare, 2006; Hare, 1993; Surette, 1992; Wahl, 1995), a symbolic representation of the psychopath will likely become a vivid image in the mind of the public, not to be readily forgotten.

Support for social learning theory exists across a number of domains, but is largely explored in the context of crime and deviance, where it attempts to explain what social mechanisms influence some people to adopt antisocial patterns of thinking which lead to decision-making supportive of criminal behaviour (see Akers, 1998 or Akers & Jensen,

2006 for a review). Research has long explored violence in the media to determine whether an overrepresentation of gratuitous and sensational violence promotes a dangerous criminal culture by modeling aggression and shaping attitudes supportive of violence as a viable solution to problems. In the present context, attitudes gathered from the media about psychopathy may translate into decisions made about psychopathic defendants in the courtroom. Since media constructions of social reality can promote global misconceptions of people, places and events (Shrum, 2002) attitudes based on possible distortions may lead to problematic decision-making. The profile of the media's psychopath may be inaccurate, or conversely, the prosecution's claim that the defendant is a psychopath may be overtly prejudicial. For example, a great deal of research has explored media effects with respect to negative publicity regarding mental illness, especially in the context of overrepresentation of violent crimes committed by the mentally ill. Thornton and Wahl (1996) found that the concerns of mental health advocates were well founded after media effects were discovered when participants read a stereotypical newspaper article about a mentally ill man. Those who read the "target article" (an actual newspaper story) were more likely to endorse restricting the liberties of mentally ill people, were generally less accepting of those with mental disorders, were more fearful of people with mental illness, and were more likely to perceive them as dangerous. In addition, individuals stated that the news article they read was exactly the type of article they would choose to read, because the sensational headline and content of the story was interesting. Moreover, Thornton and Wahl note that this type of coverage would be repeated, and thus actual real-world exposure would result in magnified stigmatization. Finally, Thornton and Wahl (1996) note that providing accurate

information to readers “could reduce the stigmatizing impact of articles about criminal madmen” (p.23), since participants who were given accurate information to read about mental illness, prior to the target article, had less distorted views.

Cultivation Theory. A similar theory, which can be thought of here in the context of social learning theory, is cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969). Unlike social learning theory, it takes into account the amount of media an individual is exposed to. For instance, the more violent television a person watches, the more likely that person will have a social perception of reality which is consistent with the violence she or he has viewed on television, even though demonstrations of violence on television may not be accurate representations of the dangers which exists in reality. In 1994, an American Gallup Poll revealed that public worry about crime reached its highest point in history during that year, despite police records and statistics demonstrating that crime had been declining throughout the 1990s (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). Cultivation theory is frequently used to explain the effects of television on the general public, claiming that prime-time television over-represents crime in relation to the real world. Local news is particularly salient in terms of the public’s views on crime. These stories can be highly sensational, with a particular emphasis on homicide and other serious violent crimes. News coverage of this nature can amplify fear of crime by cultivating attitudes that victimization is probable and beyond our control (Romer et al., 2003). Romer and associates (2003) tested the hypothesis that fear of crime was proportional to the amount of exposure to crime coverage on the news, by analyzing three surveys of public perception. Their results supported cultivation theory, since they found that those who viewed local television news more heavily, were more likely to rate crime-related risks

more severely than those who watched less local news. They also found that media regions which broadcasted more crime coverage had higher rates of individuals who feared crime.

Deifenbach (1997) notes that the portrayal of the mentally ill population on television is correlated highly with incidents of violent crime shown on television. He found that mentally ill television characters had a negative impact on society, a negative quality of life, were 10 times more violent than the general population of television characters, and were up to 20 times more violent than mentally ill people in the United States.

Psychopathy Research

Psychopathy is one of the most investigated clinical constructs in the area of psychology and law (Guy & Edens, 2006). The rising widespread interest over the past few decades is reflected in the growing number of journal articles which have been published on psychopathy, including entire issues which have been devoted exclusively to this topic (Edens et al., 2006). Psychopathy has also become a popular topic of discussion in court proceedings, with the PCL-R being commonly introduced to demonstrate that an individual is high risk (e.g., *Martinez v. Dretke*, 2004; *State v. Bare*, 2000), or conversely, in an attempt to show that an individual is not dangerous because she or he has a low PCL-R score (e.g., *Muhammad v. State*, 2001; *State v. Walters*, 2004; see DeMatteo & Edens, 2006; Walsh & Walsh, 2006). The increasing use of the PCL-R in criminal proceedings has incited recent research to examine the role of psychopathy relative to legal decision making (Edens et al., 2006; e.g., Edens, Guy, & Fernandez, 2003).

The mounting awareness regarding psychopathy in legal domains is not surprising since many psychopaths are criminals (Hare, 1993). While Hare (1996) estimates that psychopaths make up only 1% of the population, they comprise 15 to 25% of prison populations. Naturally, these notorious rule-breakers have inspired an important and necessary branch of criminological research which has reported a number of principal findings. With 50% of crime being committed by a disproportional five to six percent of the most persistent offenders (Skilling et al., 2002), psychopaths are a problematic population given that studies consistently report a strong association between psychopathy and an increased risk for violent and nonviolent offending (e.g., Hemphill, Hare, & Wong, 1998; Porter & Porter, 2007) and disruptive, aggressive institutional misbehaviour among criminal populations (e.g., Hare, & McPherson, 1984; Hildebrand, Ruiters, & Nijman, 2004). They also tend to be career criminals, engaging in criminality earlier, and desisting later in life than non-psychopathic criminals (e.g., Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 1991; Hemphill, Hare, & Wong, 1998). Furthermore, sexual offenders who target both adults and children tend to have higher PCL-R scores than do other types of sexual offenders (Brown & Forth, 1997; Firestone, Bradford, Greenberg, & Serran, 2000; Porter, Fairweather, Drugge, Hervé, Birt, & Boer, 2000).

Psychopathy Defined

Psychopathy is a personality disorder characterized by a number of interpersonal, affective and lifestyle characteristics. Interpersonally, psychopaths are arrogant, manipulative and deceitful; affectively they are remorseless, callous, and short-tempered; and behaviourally they are irresponsible, impulsive, and tend to ignore the rules and regulations of society (Hare, 1999). Not all psychopaths are criminals, however a

diagnosis of psychopathy has become one of the most important risk factors for predicting general and sexual recidivism (Hare, 1999).

The most extensively used measure of psychopathy is the *Psychopathy Checklist-Revised* (PCL-R; Hare, 2003), which is a 20 item measure with four main factors (see Table 1). The PCL-R is the most widely used assessment tool for measuring psychopathy in forensic and correctional arenas, and is considered to be the most reliable and valid instrument to measure psychopathy in these populations (DeMatteo & Edens, 2006). DeMatteo and Edens (2006) note that while “the exact prevalence of its use is unclear, surveys of the field and other sources of information...suggest that the courts are admitting evidence of the PCL-R with increasing regularity to address a variety of pretrial, trial-related, and dispositional issues in criminal and civil cases” (p. 214). Walsh and Walsh (2006) identified nine domains in which the PCL-R is applied in the criminal justice system: sexual violent predator commitments (75%), parole hearings, death penalty sentencing, civil commitment, transfer from juvenile to adult court, termination of parental rights, sentence moderation and mitigation, competency to stand trial, and determination of guilt. DeMatteo and Edens (2006), after documenting the use of the PCL-R in American courts from 1991 through 2004, found that expert witnesses are increasingly relying on the PCL-R for purposes of risk assessment, and determination of future dangerousness. The PCL-R was used in a total of 87 different cases, increasing considerably as of 1999. The PCL-R was used more by the prosecution to support arguments that the defendant was dangerous and less by the defense to show the reverse (49 cases versus 13). The authors noted that, consistent with their “own anecdotal experiences, the increase in its introduction suggests that prosecutors are becoming more

aware of this measure and its potential to influence jurors when mental health evidence is at issue” (p. 218).

Table 1

PCL-R Items by Factor

Items	Factor
1. Glibness/superficial charm	1
2. Grandiose sense of self worth	1
3. Need for stimulation/ proneness to boredom	2
4. Pathological lying	1
5. Conning/manipulative	1
6. Lack of remorse or guilt	1
7. Shallow affect	1
8. Callous/lacks empathy	1
9. Parasitic lifestyle	2
10. Poor behavioral controls	2
11. Promiscuous sexual behavior	-
12. Early behavioral problems	2
13. Lack of realistic/long term goals	2
14. Impulsivity	2
15. Irresponsibility	2
16. Failure to accept responsibility for actions	1
17. Numerous short-term marital relationships	-
18. Juvenile delinquency	2
19. Revocation of conditional release	2
20. Criminal versatility	-

As can be seen in Table 1, symptoms of clinical syndromes are not characteristics of psychopathy as defined by the PCL-R. On the contrary, the psychopath is rational and deliberate, using others in a purposeful fashion to attain self-serving goals. In fact, Cleckley’s conception of psychopathy specifically highlighted the absence of delusions, irrational thinking, and other psychoneurotic manifestations like nervousness and anxiety (see Table 2). Cleckley, who first introduced the concept of psychopathy in 1941, wrote

detailed accounts of his patients, providing the public with the first vivid picture of the psychopath. He described the psychopath as shrewd, charming, chatty, and intelligent, but also disruptive, antisocial, and manipulative. Most notably, Cleckley revealed the disturbing lack of emotion displayed by psychopaths. He wrote that concepts like beauty and ugliness, good and evil, love and hate, and horror and humor are essentially meaningless, and have no power to emotionally stir the psychopath beyond a very superficial degree (Cleckley, 1982). Cleckley's work greatly influenced North American researchers and was the foundation upon which psychopathy research was based (Hare, 1993). However there was still much confusion surrounding the construct, illustrated by the following statement made by Cleckley:

But vague as the concept of schizophrenia remains, and as various as are its manifestations, the schizophrenic, when recognized, is promptly called a patient with mental illness and treated as such. The psychopath, however, continues to be treated as a petty criminal at one moment, as a mentally ill person at the next, and again as a well and normal human being—all without the slightest change in his condition having occurred. I do not have any dogmatic advice as to a final or even a satisfactory way of successfully rehabilitating psychopaths but believe that it is important for some consistent attitude to be reached. (1982, p. 100)

Table 2

Cleckley's (1976) Criteria for Psychopathy by Factor

Items	Factor
1. Superficial charm and good intelligence	4
2. Absence of delusions and other signs of irrational thinking	4
3. Absence of psychoneurotic manifestations (e.g., nervousness)	4
4. Unreliability	2
5. Deceitful and insincere	1
6. Lack of remorse and shame	1
7. Inadequately motivated social behavior	3

8. Poor judgment and failure to learn from experience	2
9. Pathological egocentricity and incapacity to love	1
10. General poverty in major affective reactions	1
11. Specific loss of insight	3
12. Unresponsiveness in general interpersonal relations	1
13. Fantastic and uninviting behavior with drink and sometimes without	5
14. Suicide rarely carried out	5
15. Sex is impersonal, trivial, and poorly integrated	-
16. Failure to follow any life plan	2

Note. Adapted from Hare (1980).

Psychopathy as a Discreet Diagnostic Class

It has been suggested by a number of authors that psychopaths make up a discrete class of individuals who are qualitatively different from nonpsychopaths. For instance, Harris and colleagues (2001) describe psychopathy as a categorical construct with potentially indistinct boundaries. They suggest that psychopaths are a “discrete natural class” such that they are fundamentally and qualitatively different from nonpsychopaths.

Media representations can portray this kind of an image when on-screen psychopathic killers are depicted as virtually sub-human (Surette, 1992). This is a dangerous debate with potentially serious consequences with respect to treatment approaches to psychopathy, as well as how psychopathic offenders are dealt with in the criminal justice system. For instance, the PCL-R assigns a score for psychopathy which ranges from 0 to 40, with a score of 30 being the designated cutoff for psychopathy. But what does a score of 25 mean to a judge or juror? Certainly, there will be those individuals who score in an ambiguous range, who possess some psychopathic traits, but are not PCL-R defined psychopaths. In a courtroom, it is likely that experts will testify on both sides in an attempt to sway the jury one way or the other. Edens and colleagues (2006) claim that “the outcome of this debate may be of considerable practical

significance given the increasing role of the highly charged label of *psychopath* in the legal system, where the PCL-R has been used to justify indeterminate commitment, rebut insanity defenses, and bolster support for the death penalty in capital murder trials” (Edens et al., 2006, p. 132).

Harris, Rice and Quinsey (1994) reviewed file information and assigned PCL-R scores to a large sample of mentally disordered offenders. They reported evidence for a categorical structure of Factor 2 psychopathy, using a cutoff of about 20 (which is significantly lower than the typical cutoff of 30). Their results however were inconsistent for Factor 1. This study however has encountered considerable criticism regarding its methodology and analyses. For example, psychotic patients were not entirely removed from the sample (e.g., some NGRI acquittees were included) rendering the population atypical, and permitting the possibility that the authors discovered a taxon for another disorder like schizotypy (Edens et al., 2006).

Similar to Harris and colleagues (1994), Skilling and associates (2002) found support for an underlying taxon based on antisocial personality disorder (APD) items, as outlined in the DSM. In the first of two studies, Skilling and colleagues reported a large association between APD criteria and psychopathy scores. In the second study, a discreet underlying taxon was evident for APD criteria. This is similar to what has been reported in taxometric research examining PCL-R scores, using PCL-R items and childhood antisociality variables (Harris et al., 1994). The authors noted that the same strong relationship between the PCL-R and APD criteria was evident when employing continuous measures, indicating that the members of these groups could form part of a natural taxon. When PCL-R and APD criteria were scored as continuous measures,

participants were ranked in essentially the same order, and thus the two methods were highly associated. They concluded, in contrast to Cooke and Michie (1997, 1999) who used item response theory to support the use of interpersonal and affective aspects of psychopathy for taxon identification, that the social deviance traits of psychopathy (Factor 2) were more influential for identifying a taxometric structure of psychopathy, noting that for the purpose of violence risk assessment, interpersonal characteristics are ultimately harder to expose and measure. Skilling and associates pointed out that item response theory does not test the predictive validity of items, but only the manner in which items place individuals on some continuum. Therefore, it may ultimately depend on the purpose of the assessment, as affective traits have been shown to better predict general, violent and sexual offending.

A more recent investigation by Edens and colleagues (2006) however, failed to support findings of a categorical structure for PCL-R psychopathy, reporting instead that the construct appears to be dimensional. In terms of assessment, they questioned the value of dichotomizing total PCL-R scores to establish groups that would ultimately be arbitrary if individuals vary on continuous dimensions. While distinctions may be useful for practical purposes including risk management or for predicting dangerousness, they cautioned that the differences between psychopaths and nonpsychopaths are likely pragmatic. In terms of policy, they highlighted the widespread use of the PCL-R in legal and forensic settings, and drew attention to the fact that legal debates often occur which attempt to identify whether an individual is a psychopath, or is not a psychopath (categorical perspective). Again, they note the arbitrariness of designating strict

categorical boundaries, but do not discount the value of the PCL-R to inform decision making.

These concerns are important with respect to how psychopathy is represented in the media because these two fundamentally different conceptions of psychopathy may lead to discrepant reporting strategies that may differentially influence public perceptions of the construct. For example, pseudo-psychopaths may possess some psychopathic traits, but are not PCL-R defined psychopaths. In the media, such individuals may have other symptoms attributed to them because they are not psychopaths in a categorical sense (e.g., they may be callous and remorseless, but also depressed and withdrawn). While it will be easy to classify those who score in the top percentiles for psychopathy (e.g., Paul Bernardo and Ted Bundy), those who fall somewhere in between will be left to the whims of the media as to how they choose to portray them. If the media's psychopath comes to refer to a "different species" of offender, the psychopathic label becomes even more dangerous when applied.

Issues in the Legal System

The Psychopathic Label

Regarding media effects and the influence of mass communications on public beliefs, Rosenhan (1973) raised an excellent question regarding the concept of insanity: "[Do] the salient characteristics that lead to diagnoses reside in the patients themselves or in the environments and contexts in which observers find them?" (p. 251). In the context of the current discussion, is the psychopath of the popular media insane? Has the psychopath been conceptualized based on the limited capacity in which she or he is presented in an environment of headlines? And if so, in what context have observers

perceived the media's psychopath? Rosenhan's legendary (1973) study demonstrates how stigmatizing labels can be once applied. In his study, eight experimenters admitted themselves to a psychiatric hospital complaining of audio hallucinations. These pseudo-patients were hospitalized from 7 to 52 days, with none of the staff recognizing that they were no longer demonstrating symptoms. Rosenhan stated that once an individual was deemed ill, she or he essentially became the label, such that the exhibited behaviours (whether normal or not) were interpreted as manifestations of the labels that had been applied. For example, what is considered normal in one context (e.g., note-taking in a classroom or on public transit), could be considered a manifestation of illness in an alternate environment (e.g., note-taking in a psychiatric facility may be passed off as the result of paranoid delusions).

This research expresses the significance of labels and how behaviours are interpreted in response to the contexts and environments in which they are presented. Consequently, it will be important to identify specific contexts in which psychopathy is observed in the media. Returning to the concept of social learning theory and symbolism: If psychopathy is presented consistently in the news in relation to acts of horrendous violence, or if they are incessantly depicted as insane, the vividness of these images would create easy, identifiable symbols with which to categorize the psychopath. Given this hypothetical scenario, would the jury recognize the psychopath in a different guise when she or he takes the stand – a rational, capable businessman, for example – if all the public knows is the violent, sadistic, axe-wielding psychopath?

Preliminary research suggests that labels are not as influential as the traits used to describe the construct of psychopathy (e.g., Edens et al., 2003; Guy & Edens, 2003,

2006; Murrie, Cornell, & McCoy, 2005) as defendants described as possessing many of the hallmark characteristics of a psychopath (e.g., callous, lack of remorse and empathy) are treated more harshly (i.e., assigned longer sentences) than those who are described as psychopaths outright. Thus, people are able to appreciate the dangerousness of an individual who lacks remorse, lies pathologically, and has a criminal history, but is less likely to recognize the importance of the label absent the corresponding description of the behavioural or affective characteristics associated with psychopathy. This would suggest that the general public is not fully aware of what the term implies.

Guy and Edens (2003) however found that mock female jurors in a mock-sexually violent predator (SVP) trial were more likely to encourage civil commitment in the prosecution phase than those in clinical and actuarial groups when the defendant was described as a “high risk psychopath”. Women differed from men drastically on this variable (92.5% versus 63.2%). Thus, when women were the decision makers, being labeled a “high risk psychopathic sex offender” was more damaging than being labeled a “high risk sexual offender” (see also Edens et al., 2003). This type of research serves a practical purpose, since jury trials exist in the majority of American states with SVP statutes (representing 19 states, nearly 80% of which employ juries for decision-making; Kendall & Cheung, 2004).

Further research has replicated these types of mock-trial designs with probation officers in place of laypeople, to determine whether a labelling effect exists among professionals who are presumably more familiar with the psychopathic label. Murrie and colleagues (2005) explored whether juvenile probation officers (JPOs) were influenced by traits or labels associated with conduct disorder (CD) and psychopathy. They

examined whether JPO recommendations would be influenced by psychological evaluations that “systematically varied antisocial behavioral history, psychopathic personality traits, and diagnostic label (psychopathy, [CD], or no diagnosis) in a juvenile offender” (p. 324). Their results supported diagnostic criterion effects over labeling effects. In other words, as has been found with mock-jury research, labels were less influential upon decision making than were the variables upon which the labels were based, like antisocial history or psychopathic personality traits, even among professionals who are familiar with the terminology.

Perhaps the most controversial discussions surrounding the psychopathy label in the criminal justice system have arisen regarding the label’s application to youth. Notions of extending psychopathy to adolescents have sparked considerable interest and debate among forensic researchers regarding the ethical, empirical and policy implications of imposing such a pejorative label upon a young offender (Petrila & Skeem, 2003). While the early identification of psychopathy could promote an enhanced understanding of the disorder, allow for earlier intervention, and perhaps an increased potential for rehabilitation and prevention, the consequences of this extension could be damaging, especially if normal developmental features of youth (e.g., impulsivity and sensation seeking) are mistaken for psychopathic traits (Campbell, Porter, & Santor, 2004). Examining attitudes and identifying public biases about psychopathy associated with young offenders is important since social worries regarding today’s violent youth appear to largely instruct public policy (Edens et al., 2003). Moreover, media characterizations of predatory and dangerous youth have promoted a culture of fear, leading to public demands that harsher sanctions be given to juvenile offenders, fueling a ‘get tough on

crime' agenda (Edens et al., 2003). These attitudes may be reflected in jury verdicts if derogatory trait descriptions depicting juveniles as dangerous are presented during a criminal trial.

Illustrating how mental health labels and stereotypes are presented in the news, Day and Page (1986) analyzed news reporting in a sample of Canadian newspapers and found that personality profiles describing a "composite patient" surfaced when examining news articles discussing psychiatric disorders. Mentally ill patients were considered dangerous, unpredictable, antisocial, unproductive, and incapable of caring for themselves. In terms of the tone of newspapers, nearly half of all statements found in articles on mental illness (41.8%) were coded as negative, with only 18.3% coded as positive. Also, negative statements appeared more often as front page news. Interestingly, they found that headline congruence (whether the headline was an accurate reflection of the article's content) was correlated with location of the article, such that front-page stories were less likely to accurately represent the news they represented.

Legislation

While it is not the focus of this discussion, it should be noted that there are specific laws that attempt to target psychopathic, repeat offenders. It should also be said that these legislative acts have been, in part, reactions to public outcry in response to media profiles that cultivated fear within the public (Hogue, Jones, Talkes, & Tennant, 2007). For example, in the latter part of the 1990s in England, the government proposed changes to how dangerous offenders like Sydney Cooke and Michael Stone were treated in response to an overwhelming public demand. Those who were targeted by the new interventions were identified as being extremely dangerous with a severe personality

disorder (DSPD), generally having a diagnosis of psychopathy, and deemed to be a significant danger to society (Howells, Langton, & Hogue, 2007).

In Canada, the Criminal Sexual Psychopath law was enacted in 1948, which is now recognized as Dangerous Offender (DO) legislation, an application for assessment that can be made prior to sentencing. For DO designation, the court must be satisfied that the offence is a personal injury offence and there is a repeated pattern of criminal behaviour, evidence of a failure to restrain the behaviour (which may cause death or injury to another person), indifference on the part of the offender, and brutality compelling the conclusion that the individual cannot be normally restrained. DO designation can also apply to offenders if the offence is sexual in nature, and there is evidence that the offender has uncontrollable sexual impulses which will result in injury or pain to others. Bonta, Harris, Zinger, and Carriere (1998) reported that 72.9% of DOs were diagnosed with APD, and 39.6% were psychopaths, a base rate nearly twice as high as found in prison populations. They noted that this rate would likely have been higher if they had used interviews in addition to file information, as the latter results in more conservative psychopathy scores. They also noted that DOs were not typically mentally ill (only 8.5% had diagnoses of schizophrenia).

In the early to mid twentieth century in the United States, media reporting on sex offenders “sparked an outcry for more serious legal penalties” (Kendall & Cheung, 2004, p. 44), urging judges to deal with repeat sex offenders in drastic ways (Mercado & Ogloff, 2007). This resulted in the Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) legislation, which defines a sexually violent predator as a particularly predatory, repeat sex offender (Kendall & Cheung, 2004). Minnesota’s 1939 SVP statute required a formal diagnosis of

psychopathy for commitment. Illinois however, which passed the first commitment statute in 1938, included individuals with mental disorders (Kendall & Cheung, 2004). This statute was termed the *sexual psychopathic law*, and was based on the idea that these individuals were “mad, not bad” (Kendall & Cheung, 2004, p.45), confusing mental illness and psychopathy within the legislation itself. Seventeen States now possess some form of SVP legislation, which, similar to DO legislation, allows for the post-sentencing (continuation of sentence after expiration) and indefinite civil commitment of a small group of especially dangerous offenders.

Capital Punishment

A final legal issue involves the death penalty, as in the United States there are currently 37 States that permit capital punishment as a sentencing option. Up until 2005, 22 of these states permitted execution for offenders under the age of 18 (Edens et al., 2003). Since the Supreme Court decision of *Roper v. Simmons* (2005), the minimum age at the time of the offence for an offender to be sentenced to death is now age 18, which alleviates earlier concerns that youth labeled as psychopaths could potentially be sentenced to death (e.g., Edens et al., 2003). Still, the potentially damaging affects that the pejorative psychopathic label could have on youth and adult offenders alike if applied carelessly, particularly for adult offenders on trial in States that support capital punishment, is a significant concern.

A study by Edens et al. (2003) illustrates the influence of labels in a criminal trial with capital punishment as a possible sentence. Edens and colleagues investigated the effects of psychopathic traits on jurors by inserting Factor 1 (refer to Table 1 for examples) traits from the PCL-R into a newspaper article about a young offender

awaiting capital punishment who had been convicted of murder as a juvenile. They found that juror perceptions of the defendant were significantly more negative when prototypical psychopathic traits were described (e.g., lack of remorse). Participants also favoured a death sentence (36.3%) when the defendant displayed psychopathic traits, compared to those in the non-psychopathic condition (20.9%), even after being asked to consider mitigating factors (Edens et al., 2003). These percentages are even higher than public opinion polls, indicating that the inclusion of psychopathic traits in a case may be especially prejudicial. For instance, public opinion polls show that 70% of people will endorse capital punishment in general, while only 10 to 30% will support the death penalty when dealing with a specific case (Cruise, Colwell, Lyons, & Baker, 2003).

The Corporate (Organizational) Psychopath

Have you recently read any headlines involving corruption and fraud in a large corporation? Hare speculates that psychopaths can be found in the corporate world (Kirkman, 2002), but since the idea of the corporate psychopath is relatively new, there is currently little research to support the notion of the white-collar psychopath (Hare, 2003). However this is rapidly changing with publications such as *Working with Monsters* (Clarke, 2005) and *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work* (Babiak & Hare, 2006). As a result, an increasing amount of concern has ensued based on speculations that psychopaths may be quite successful in the corporate sector. For instance, Boddy (2006) suggests that psychopaths in the workplace may contribute significantly to corporate misconduct, including accounting fraud, stock manipulation, job losses, and even environmental harm caused by businesses. As a result of their superficial charm and networking abilities, organizational psychopaths are able to easily manipulate their way

to the tops of business ladders. They are highly motivated to succeed because they crave power, money and recognition. In addition, they lack the empathy and compassion for others to worry about who may be affected by their ruthlessness, and they will go to great lengths to achieve their goals, even if it involves lying, cheating or stealing. Public awareness about the corporate psychopath is important because, as Boddy (2006) notes: “If large organisations and corporations are run by psychopaths then any chance of decisions being made that are friendly to the environment, to employees or to investors is greatly reduced” (p. 1462). Based on a thorough review of the literature on corporate psychopaths, Boddy (2006) lists 14 causes for concern regarding psychopathy in the workplace, and are listed in Table 3. He suggests that corporations which employ psychopaths will potentially run into problems which involve fraudulent behavior, a manipulated and exploited workforce, a lack of corporate social responsibility, potential workplace bullying, impulsive decision making or decisions of questionable legality.

Table 3

The Effects of Workplace Psychopaths

1. Corporate failure
 2. Fraudulent activities
 3. Unnecessary employee redundancies
 4. Exploited workforce
 5. No sense of corporate social responsibility
 6. Disheartened workforce
 7. Political decision-making
 8. Workplace bullying
 9. Short-term decision-making
 10. Disregarded investor interests
 11. Lost economies of expertise
 12. Environmental damage
 13. Decisions of questionable legality
 14. Poor business partnerships
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The question then remains, what can be done about these “social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, leaving a broad trail of broken hearts, shattered expectations, and empty wallets” (Hare, 1993, p.xi)? How do we guard against these individuals, and what is being done to modify the behaviour once it is identified? In other words, can psychopaths be treated? One purpose of the current research is to identify what the media relates to the public about treating psychopathy.

Treatment

Regarding mental illness, Riedel-Heller, Matschinger and Angermeyer (2005) note that a significant disparity is evident when comparing scientifically validated treatment strategies and public opinion. The results of their study showed that psychotherapy was favoured far more than psychotropic drugs as a treatment option for the mentally ill by the lay public. In this regard, the authors noted that beliefs about mental illness and socio-demographic characteristics appear to be linked to specific treatment recommendations.

With respect to treatment and psychopathy, the attitude that psychopaths are unreceptive to treatment has been largely resistant to change (Skeem, Monahan, & Mulvey, 2002). Perhaps the most influential study in this regard was conducted by Harris, Rice and Cormier (1991). The authors looked at a mandatory therapeutic program for mentally disordered offenders with serious criminal histories, to determine if psychopaths (PCL-R score >25) would benefit from a correctional treatment program. Participants were matched on a number of demographic, social, clinical and criminal history variables. The program was intended to promote empathy training and responsibility. As

a result, there was little staff interaction, with psychotic patients included in the programs for the purpose of providing psychopaths with an opportunity to care for them. All evaluations of the correctional programs were retrospective and follow-ups exceeded 10 years. The authors reported that while there were no overall treatment effects (therapy did not reduce recidivism), psychopaths who participated in treatment reoffended violently at higher rates than psychopaths who did not attend treatment programs (77% versus 55% respectively). The opposite effect was observed for non-psychopaths, as only 21% of nonpsychopaths who attended treatment reoffended. This influential study not only suggested that psychopaths responded poorly to treatment, but that therapy actually increased criminal offending among psychopaths.

This particular study has consistently been cited to support the notion that psychopaths are resistant to treatment. However recent criticisms of this study have surfaced due to the radical therapies implemented. For instance, programs were highly coercive, peer-oriented (largely unsupervised), and involved extreme techniques which would be unethical by current standards (e.g., nude encounter groups, illicit drug sessions). Clearly these approaches were not appropriate for individuals with psychopathic personalities (Skeem et al., 2002).

In 1999, Seto and Barbaree reported similar paradoxical findings pertaining to treatment behaviour in relation to recidivism, when they retrospectively examined recidivism data for nearly 300 sex offenders who participated in a group therapy program targeting the prevention of sexual reoffending. While they predicted that those who behaved better in treatment (e.g., good attendance, high motivation and participation, quality homework) would recidivate less, they discovered that inmates who had high

psychopathy scores, and who were documented as behaving well in treatment, were over five times more likely to recidivate than all the remaining groups combined (e.g., those with high PCL-R scores and poor behaviour, and all individuals with low PCL-R scores). Men scoring above 15 on the PCL-R who behaved well in treatment were more likely to commit any offence, and over four times more likely to commit a serious new offence. Seto and Barbaree posited two possible explanations for these findings. It was possible that the high scoring psychopaths were aptly able to con and manipulate the therapists, thereby achieving positive ratings regarding treatment progress. Once in the community, these individuals could then use the skills they gained to target potential victims. The second explanation, as was arrived at by Harris and colleagues (1992), was that therapy made psychopaths worse. In essence, instead of learning about themselves, treatment offered psychopaths insight about ways to better manipulate, deceive and exploit others for their own personal gain. A similar explanation was offered by Hare, Clarke, Grann, and Thornton (2000) who found that those with high Factor 1 psychopathy scores became worse after treatment based on reconviction rates over two years (86% of treated offenders recidivated, versus 59% of non-treated offenders), possibly as a result of being effectively able to manipulate and exploit others involved in the programs.

Barbaree (2005) decided to perform an extended (5 year) follow-up on the 1999 sample of sex offenders. Contrary to the previous findings, he reported that there was no relationship between treatment behaviour and general or serious recidivism among psychopaths. When eliminating the treatment variable however, there were significant differences found when comparing those who scored high on the PCL-R, and those who

scored lower, with regards to recidivism rates. Not surprisingly, those who were high scoring psychopaths recidivated more than those who had lower scores.

Research on treatment for juveniles offenders assessed with the *Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version* (PCL:YV; Forth, Kosson, & Hare, 2003) has also been inconsistent, but has recently provided some optimistic findings. Caldwell, Skeem, Salekin, and Van Rybroek (2006) examined recidivism rates of 141 juvenile offenders after completing either conventional juvenile correctional treatment, or an intensive treatment program at the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center. After a two-year follow-up, youth with psychopathic features who participated in the usual correctional therapy were twice as likely as those in the intensive therapy to recidivate violently in the community. Participants who completed the intensive therapy program desisted for longer periods, and the disparity of recidivism rates was strengthened as the severity of the crime increased. Further, although the general recidivism rates were comparable between the two groups, only 21% ($n = 12$) of those in the intense program were involved in violent reoffending, compared to 49% ($n = 42$) in the usual correctional treatment program.

The Caldwell et al. (2006) study offers optimism about treating young offenders, provided the right programs are implemented. It also differs from previous treatment research examining young psychopathic-like offenders in three important ways. The Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center program was specially designed to target the needs of violent young offenders; the PCL:YV scores of the intensive treatment group ($M = 33.5$) and usual group ($M = 33.8$) were similar to cutoffs used in actual practice to

diagnose psychopathy; and a control group was implemented which involved usual correctional treatment.

A relatively recent review by Salekin (2002) has also challenged popular notions that all treatment programs for psychopathy are ineffective. Salekin reported that across a number of various treatment approaches (e.g., cognitive-behavioural therapy, psychoanalysis), success rates were as high as 62% for psychopaths (57% for PCL-R defined psychopaths). Furthermore, Skeem and associates (2002) found that psychopathy among civil psychiatric patients did not moderate the effects of treatment, such that psychopaths who attended more therapy sessions over a 10 week period, were over three times less likely to recidivate violently over the subsequent 10 week period than those who participated in less sessions, and both individuals with and without psychopathic traits were equally able to benefit from the treatment. The results of this study do suggest however that psychopaths may require more sessions than nonpsychopaths.

More research is needed to determine the types of treatments which are most effective for reducing recidivism rates among psychopaths. A significant difficulty with evaluating treatment programs for psychopaths which are designed to reduce recidivism has been the fact that the construct itself is characterized heavily in terms of criminal behaviour. As a result, the definition becomes circular, with criminal behaviour “identified both as a defining property and as a result” of psychopathy (Harris et al., 1992, p. 400). Further, it is conceivable why it might be difficult to treat a psychopath, and why consequent beliefs about untreatability continue to persist. As Skeem and colleagues (2002) note, the emotional deficits of the psychopath “may prevent them from establishing a strong, genuine alliance with a therapist, thus subverting a factor that

explains much of the controllable variance in predicting psychotherapy outcome” (p. 578). As well, many of the interpersonal features of psychopathy (e.g., manipulativeness, pathological lying, denial of responsibility) are equally problematic when attempting to make progress in psychotherapy. Finally, learning deficits associated with psychopathy may also serve as barriers to treatment success (Skeem et al., 2002).

Despite what the research presents about the treatment responsiveness of psychopaths, studies assessing the beliefs and attitudes of mock jurors are inconsistent regarding treatment effects on the lay public. Edens and associates (2003) found that participants were less likely to support treatment goals for a defendant described as psychopathic. However other research has found no treatment effects (e.g., Guy & Edens, 2003), suggesting that people may be unfamiliar with treatment issues pertaining to psychopathy.

Current Study

This study will explore how psychopathy is presented in the media through a qualitative content analysis of media content. The following questions will be addressed to meet the research objectives:

1. How is psychopathy portrayed in newspapers and on the Internet?
2. Has the portrayal of psychopathy changed over time in newspapers?
3. How well does the media’s portrayal of psychopathy match to what is empirically known about this personality disorder?

Based on the available empirical literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. Media reports communicating issues about psychopathy will contain content predominantly belonging to one of two key domains: (a) violent behaviour (e.g., criminality), and (b) corporate psychopathy (e.g., the organizational psychopath).
2. Psychopathy will be confused with other syndromes/disorders (e.g., psychotic disorders), evidenced by the synonymous use of separate constructs (e.g., 'psychotic psychopaths').
3. Psychopaths will be viewed as untreatable in the media.
4. Psychopathy as represented in newspapers and the Internet will be unsubstantiated by scientific research or academic references.
5. The frequency of references to psychopathy in newspapers will increase over time in each country.

Methods

The hypotheses for the present investigation are tested using content analysis methodology of (1) newspapers and (2) the Internet. Content analysis is a systematic approach to describing communications in a qualitative and quantitative capacity (Champion, 2006). It is most often used to reduce written and verbal messages into meaningful categories that express the significance of the particular communication of interest (Vollum, 2005). This type of classification scheme can organize messages on various levels, and allows for the quantification of qualitative data by calculating the occurrence of content information relating to a particular communication (Vollum, 2005). Content analysis can be used therefore to describe the content of communications, test premises of message characteristics, compare media coverage to the real world, assess images of particular societal groups, and to understand media effects (Wimmer &

Dominick, 1994). It has been used in criminological research to explore interview transcripts, face-to-face interviews, Internet websites, newspapers, criminal records, hospital files, and letters written by victims or offenders (Champion, 2006).

Content analysis can be described as either manifest, or latent. Manifest content analysis refers to coding the elements of a message which are clearly present, and are therefore easy to identify and measure. For instance, these may be specific words or terms which may represent particular groups or concepts. Latent content analysis refers to themes or symbolism within messages which are more obscure and must be interpreted rather than merely identified. Latent content analysis is a more qualitative approach, even though quantitative coding of latent communications may still be involved (Vollum, 2005). The current research will primarily analyze manifest content pertaining to psychopathy, with a lesser emphasis on latent content. Variables which require manifest coding include article characteristics like date, length of source, search term found, expert opinion and nature of expert; personal characteristics like gender, age and race; most crime characteristics like crime type, number of victims, and victim type; and mental health variables like mention of treatment and whether the psychopathic character is treatable. Latent coding requires more subjective appraisal, and includes article characteristic variables including themes, sensational content, and article/headline congruence, and the presence of PCL-R traits, not always explicitly stated.

Content analysis was chosen as a preferred approach for this investigation for a number of reasons, since performing a content analysis has a number of advantages over other data collection procedures. For instance, it is inexpensive, it does not require the preparation of questionnaires or the consent of participants, long periods of time can be

explored over much shorter spans of time, it can be done independently, and computers allow access to a multitude of information and facilitate searches (e.g., for specific words or terms). Conversely however, these advantages come at some potentially problematic costs regarding interpretability, since content analysis has a strong subjective component (Champion, 2006). It is possible, for example, that multiple researchers may come to different conclusions based on the same content, even when following the same set of rules for interpretation. This subjective component to the analysis can make replicating this type of research difficult. Furthermore, since researchers develop their own coding schemes for classifying content, these instructions may possess biases that reflect the underlying views of the creator. Finally, the subject matter of any content analysis is only subject to the interpretation of the researcher, and cannot be manipulated or examined in the same ways as participants can (e.g., with cross examinations or follow up questions).

The current content analysis was carefully administered to limit some of the potential problems mentioned above. A coding manual was developed by the researcher based on items used in previous research employing content analysis exploring similar themes, in addition to items chosen specifically to match the interests of the present investigation. The manual contains clear explanations of items and how they are to be interpreted. Furthermore, items to be coded involve predominantly manifest content, in an attempt to create greater reliability. A pilot study was also conducted on a subset of the Internet websites and the newspapers to determine whether the manual required any modifications.

Newspaper Content Analysis

The first analysis will be performed on three newspapers from three different regions: *The New York Times* (the United States), *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), and *The Times* (England). Each newspaper sampled from three distinct time periods (1980-1986; 1990-1996; and 2000-2006) to assess temporal changes in coverage and perceptions of psychopathy and associated terms over time. The newspapers chosen are major papers with large circulations to ensure that a significant number of people read the papers chosen for analysis. Each paper was chosen based on (a) online availability, (b) daily publication, and (c) large circulation figures.

The *Globe and Mail* is a Canadian, nationally distributed daily newspaper which is based in Toronto and printed in seven different cities across Canada. It has a weekly circulation of approximately two million copies (Wikipedia, 2007a). The *New York Times* is a daily, internationally distributed newspaper published in New York, and is the largest metropolitan newspaper in America. It circulates over one million copies on weekdays, and more than 1.6 million copies on Sundays (The New York, 2006). *The Times* is a national daily newspaper published in the United Kingdom, with a daily circulation of nearly 700,000 (Wikipedia, 2007b).

All three newspapers are available in full-text format on the Internet and were accessed through the search engine Factiva, a database containing selections of hundreds of newspapers from around the world. The newspapers were scanned electronically for any media material containing one or more of the following terms: “psychopath”, “sociopath” or “antisocial personality disorder”. All articles included for analysis were written in English language only, and excluded republished news, recurring pricing and

market data, and obituaries, sports and calendars. Specific date ranges were explored to sample from each of the following decades: 1980s (1980 to 1986), 1990s (1990 to 1996), and 2000s (2000 to 2006). Articles were randomly chosen from the search results presented in Table 4. Ninety-nine articles were chosen for the *Globe and Mail* and 99 for the *New York Times* were selected to create equal groups (33 from each decade), totaling 198. However despite attempts to create equal sized groups for comparisons, this could not be accomplished for the *Times* since there were only 17 articles containing the entered search terms between 1980 and 1986. Therefore, only 83 articles were selected from the *Times* (17 from the 1980s, 33 from the 1990s, and 33 from the 2000s), creating a final newspaper sample of 281 articles.

Internet Content Analysis

The second analysis explored websites selected from the Internet. The search terms “psychopath”, “sociopath” and “antisocial personality disorder” (with “OR” as the connector term) were entered into the Google search engine. The content of the first 47 websites was analyzed (the first five pages of results), since it is reasoned that people searching for information do not sift through more than a few pages when attempting to find something of interest, because the number of hits that appear for broad terms like “psychopath” would be unmanageable. Google was chosen because it is the Internet’s number one search engine (BBC, 2004). It employs a system called “PageRank” to weigh the relative importance of websites, which is an algorithm operating through a complex system where a web page on the Internet is ranked as a function of the number of other websites which offer links to that site. In other words, the importance of a web-page is determined by the number of other web-pages which link to it, and also based on the

importance of those sites as well (Austin, 2007). This is how Google attempts to ensure that people are able to find what they are looking for, without sifting through millions of sites to find the most relevant, important information.

Coding

A small pilot study was performed on 10 newspaper articles and five Internet websites (not used in the final analysis) to test the coding manual prior to the content analysis for purposes of refinement. Congruence between the website title and website content was excluded as a variable during the pilot study, since all website titles were simply the search term, and therefore the “congruence” variable had no real interpretive value. Furthermore, a few PCL-R traits were slightly altered to meet the research objectives. For example, criminal versatility was changed to “criminality” because most articles did not provide detailed enough information to assess versatility. Similarly, pathological lying was changed to any mention of fraud, deception or dishonesty. Finally, Factors 6 (lack of remorse), 7 (shallow affect) and 8 (callous and lack of empathy) were combined to form a single variable (trait) representing shallow emotions. Following these changes to the manual, one coder (the author) performed the content analysis. Two additional coders (one male student with a Bachelor’s degree in psychology and one female, fourth-year psychology student) completed inter-rater reliability for just over 10% of Internet websites ($n = 5$) and just over 10% of newspaper articles ($n = 30$) to assess the agreement between individual interpreters (each student independently coded the same 30 newspaper articles, and the same five Internet websites). Coders were trained regarding the manual, which involved reading an article and filling in a coding sheet, while discussing interpretive issues and comparing responses.

A number of variables were used to evaluate the content of the newspapers and the Internet, including the characteristics of articles and websites (e.g., length, theme), personal characteristics of the individuals described (e.g., gender, age), PCL-R traits attributed to the individual, and evidence of any violence or offending reported (e.g., level and type of violence, victim injury). While it could be argued that different types of articles (e.g., news articles versus entertainment articles) may portray different types of psychopathic characters, these types are collapsed for analyses since it is reasoned that all of these portrayals will influence attitudes about psychopathy, and it is unlikely that the public will discriminate based on the source (e.g., a news profile or a movie review description). Psychopathic traits were recorded in order to identify the types of traits thought to be most salient by the media when depicting the psychopath, and any additional characteristics (non PCL-R traits) were also recorded for descriptive purposes. Appendices A and B provide the Internet and newspaper coding manuals, including descriptions of variables. Appendices C and D provide the Internet and newspaper coding sheets.

Results

Reliability Analysis

Inter-rater reliability was assessed for Internet websites and newspapers by calculating the percentage of agreement between raters to ensure consistency among raters and generalizability of results (see Table 4). Percentages for newspaper articles ranged from 68.9% to 100% agreement for article characteristics, 90% to 93.3% agreement for personal characteristics of key figures, 53.3% to 98.9% agreement for PCL-R traits, 82.2% to 93.3% agreement for mental health variables, and 87.8% to

93.3% agreement for crime characteristics. For Internet websites, percentages of rater agreement ranged from 73.3% to 100% for article characteristics, 60% to 100% for PCL-R traits, and 73.3% to 93.3% for mental health variables. No percentages were reported for personal characteristics or crime variables for Internet websites as only three websites contained crime-specific content and none of the inter-rater coding involved personal or crime variables.

Table 4

Reliability Analysis Across Coding Variables for Newspapers and Internet

Variable	Percentage Agreement	
	Newspaper	Internet
Article characteristics		
Article/website type	86.7%	73.3%
Theme	85.6%	93.3%
Term	100.0%	80.0%
Focus	96.7%	100.0%
Congruence	76.7%	n/a*
Expert	92.2%	93.3%
Expert type	86.7%	93.3%
Sensational	68.9%	73.3%
Personal characteristics^a		
Gender	93.3%	n/a
Age	92.2%	n/a
Race	90.0%	n/a
PCL-R traits		
Total PCL traits	53.3%	60.0%
1	94.4%	93.3%
2	94.4%	86.7%
3	96.7%	86.7%
4	94.4%	86.7%
5	91.1%	93.3%
6	90.0%	100.0%
9	95.6%	80.0%
10	92.2%	86.7%
11	98.9%	80.0%
12	94.4%	93.3%

13	95.6%	80.0%
14	90.0%	86.7%
15	87.8%	86.7%
16	92.2%	80.0%
17	98.9%	80.0%
18	95.6%	73.3%
19	97.8%	73.3%
20	92.2%	80.0%
<hr/>		
Mental health		
Mental illness theme	82.2%	86.7%
Mental illness type	83.3%	73.3%
Differentiation	84.4%	73.3%
Treatment	93.3%	93.3%
Treatable	88.9%	73.3%
<hr/>		
Crime Characteristics^a		
Crime type	88.9%	n/a
Violence	92.2%	n/a
Violence type	88.8%	n/a
Motive	90.0%	n/a
Number of victims	93.3%	n/a
Repeat offender	92.2%	n/a
Victim injury	91.1%	n/a
Victim type	92.2%	n/a
Injury type	92.2%	n/a
Significance of violence	87.8%	n/a
Offender comments	93.3%	n/a

*Congruence between the website title and website content was excluded (see methods).

^aRater agreement was not calculated for personal or crime characteristics of Internet websites since there were no crimes or specific psychopathic individuals to rate for the Internet.

How is Psychopathy Portrayed in Newspapers and the Internet?

Crime

No significant differences across newspapers or over time were found for the following crime variables, based on chi-square analyses: crime theme, crime type, whether a crime involved violence, the type of violence (instrumental versus reactive), motive, number of victims, or victim comments. However, as can be seen in Table 5,

victim injury was not equally distributed across time, as there were increasingly more reports about fatalities over time and very little reporting on other types of injuries, $\chi^2(6, N = 85) = 17.92, p = .01$, Cramer's $V = .33$. As well, significance of violence to story had a statistically significant relationship to the time period, $\chi^2(4, N = 95) = 10.24, p = .03$, Cramer's $V = .23$, such that there were increasingly more stories over time where the violence was deemed central to the reporting; this variable was also significantly different across newspapers, as the *New York Times* had significantly less articles where violence was central to the story, $\chi^2(4, N = 95) = 9.915, p = .04$, Cramer's $V = .23$. Furthermore, victim type was not similarly distributed between newspapers, as the *Times* was much less likely to report about child victims, $\chi^2(2, N = 77) = 8.24, p = .02$, Cramer's $V = .33$, than the *Globe and Mail* and *New York Times*. Finally, the PCL-R trait describing criminality was slightly significant between newspapers, since the *New York Times* was least likely to report that a psychopath was criminal, $\chi^2(2, N = 281) = 6.40, p = .04$, Cramer's $V = .15$. Frequencies for these variables are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Frequencies of Crime Variables that Differed Across Newspapers and Over Time

	<u>Newspapers</u>		
	<i>Globe and Mail</i>	<i>New York Times</i>	<i>Times</i>
High significance of violence	25 (69.4%)	14 (53.8%)	27 (81.8%)
Victim type (child)	15 (53.6%)	11 (50.0%)	5 (18.5%)
Criminality trait reported	67 (67.7%)	50 (50.5%)	52 (62.7%)
	<u>Time Period</u>		
	1980-1986	1990-1996	2000-2006

Victim injury	20 (71.4%)	24 (88.9%)	30 (100.0%)
High significance of violence	19 (52.7%)	21 (72.4%)	26 (86.7%)

For all other variables, newspapers were collapsed across time to evaluate frequencies. Across all newspapers and time periods, 43% of article themes were crime themes. On the Internet, only seven websites contained crime themes (14.9%). In terms of specific offences, only three Internet websites (6.1%) discussed a specific crime, all of which were homicide or attempted homicides. For newspapers, 36% of articles reported on some type of crime, of which 76% were homicides or attempted homicides ($n = 77$). Ninety-seven articles (34.5%) reported provided details to determine whether the crime involved some sort of violence, of which 94% did involve violence. Of the 25% of articles that provided information on whether the crime was premeditated or reactive, 91% of crimes by psychopathic offenders were instrumental in nature. Only 13% of articles made any reference to a motive, of which 81% reportedly had some driving motivation (compared to articles reporting that no motive could be determined). The mean number of victims reported was 5.71 ($SD = 14.28$). Almost all (93%) of 53 psychopathic criminals were repeat offenders (228 articles did not provide this information). Offender comments were made or implied in 28 (10%) of articles. These comments included: contrition ($n = 2$; 7%), minimization ($n = 4$; 14%), denial ($n = 7$; 25%), indifference ($n = 13$; 46%), or no comment ($n = 2$; 7%).

Crime in news articles. News and entertainment articles combined accounted for 84.7% of all newspaper article types. Since 84% of news articles ($n = 63$), and 29% of entertainment articles contained crime themes, these article types were looked at independently of other articles based on crime variables. Chi-square analyses indicated

that, similar to analyses on all types of articles, most crime variables in news articles were not statistically different across newspapers or time, except for victim type between newspapers, $\chi^2(2, N = 43) = 6.79, p = .03$, Cramer's $V = .39$, since the *Globe and Mail* described many more child victims of psychopaths in news stories ($n = 10$) compared to the *New York Times* ($n = 3$) and the *Times* ($n = 2$). News articles ($N = 75$) were an average of 831 words ($SD = 740.1$), and had a mean page appearance (within a section) of 7.5 (i.e., page one does not necessarily mean front-page, but the front page of a given newspaper section). As was mentioned, 84% of news articles contained crime themes. Eighty-nine percent used headlines that accurately described the article content, and 28% discussed the search term as a central focus.

Regarding PCL-R traits, the main trait reported in news articles was criminality ($n = 58; 77.3\%$), followed by shallow emotions ($n = 19; 25.3\%$), juvenile delinquency ($n = 10; 13.3\%$), and grandiosity, lying, conning or manipulative behaviour, and poor behavioural controls, each at 8% ($n = 6$). Therefore, three of the main seven traits described in news articles were related to criminality or violence (criminality, juvenile delinquency and poor behavioural controls).

Thirty-seven news articles reported on homicides or attempted homicides (72.5%), out of 51 identifiable crimes. Ninety percent of the reported crimes were violent ($n = 44$) and the violence was almost exclusively (93.5%) highly significant to the story; 92% of crimes were premeditated and involved a motive, 93.3% of known criminals were repeat offenders, and 79.5% of crimes resulted in at least one fatality. When offenders made comments regarding their crimes, there were seven indifferent responses (38.9%),

five denials (27.8%), three expressions of minimization (16.7%), one expression of contrition (5.6%), and two offenders gave no comment.

Crime in entertainment articles (n = 163). Entertainment articles had crime themes in 29% of the articles ($n = 48$). Crime variables were collapsed across time and newspapers because chi-square analyses demonstrated no significant differences for these variables based on the newspaper or the time period. PCL-R traits were reported in 67.5% of articles, of which the main trait reported was criminality ($n = 91$; 55.8%) followed by superficial charm ($n = 26$; 16%), shallow emotions ($n = 21$; 13%), poor behavioural controls ($n = 16$; 9.8%), grandiosity ($n = 14$; 8.6%) and lying ($n = 13$; 8%).

In entertainment articles 43 crimes were committed by psychopathic characters, 35 of which were homicides or attempted homicides, and 97.6% involved violence. The violence was central to the entertainment story (high significance) in 40.5% of cases. Of 28 crimes of which the nature of the violence could be determined, 92% were instrumental, six of ten contained a motive, and 19 of 21 psychopathic characters were repeat offenders (90.5%). Victim injuries in entertainment media were predominantly fatalities (97%). Victim types were as follows: adult victims accounted for 55.2% of known victims, children accounted for 27.6%, and both children and adults comprised 17.2%. Therefore, nearly half of the victims of psychopaths described in entertainment articles across newspapers were children (44.8%). Offender comments regarding their crimes included indifference ($n = 4$; 50%), denial ($n = 2$; 25%), one offender expressing minimization and one expressing contrition (12.5% each).

Crime in sensational articles. When examining highly sensational articles, significant differences in the relationship between victim type and time period were

found, $\chi^2(2, N = 22) = 14.21, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .80$, with the 1980s and 2000s reporting significantly less child victims ($n = 0$ and $n = 1$, respectively) than in the 1990s ($n = 6$). Furthermore, across newspapers, themes were unevenly distributed for sensational stories, $\chi^2(2, N = 79) = 7.44, p = .02$, Cramer's $V = .31$, as sensationalized crime stories in the *Globe and Mail* were less frequent than other themes of sensational stories ($n = 17$ versus $n = 30$), the *New York Times*' sensational stories were more often crime themes than other themes ($n = 15$ versus $n = 6$), and the *Times* had roughly equal crime and non-crime themes for sensational stories ($n = 6$ versus $n = 5$).

Thirty-one of 79 sensational articles described specific crimes, 24 of which were homicides or attempted homicides (77.4%), and 96.7% that involved violence. Most of known crimes were instrumental in nature ($n = 20$; 95.2%), with an identifiable motive ($n = 10$; 76.9%). Offenders were largely repeat offenders ($n = 16$; 94%), and injuries were predominantly fatal ($n = 22$; 91.7%). The mean number of victims for sensational articles was high (10.18; $SD = 24.6$). Ten articles presented a range of offender reactions to their crimes, including one expression of contrition (10%), one minimization (10%), two denial (20%), five indifference (50%), and one expression of "no comment" (10%).

Crime in front-page articles. No meaningful differences between newspapers or over time for front-page articles were found for any variables based on chi square analyses, and therefore newspapers and time-periods were collapsed. PCL-R traits in front-page articles included criminality ($n = 19$; 59.4%), shallow emotions ($n = 9$; 28%), poor behavioural controls ($n = 6$; 18.8%), lying ($n = 5$; 15.6%), and manipulation and superficial charm ($n = 4$; 12.5% each). Eleven of the front-page articles described a specific crime of which 10 were homicides; six described crimes as instrumental in

nature, and five described a clear motive. Five of six known offenders were repeat offenders, and 25% of known victims were children ($n = 2$). Violence was of high significance to the story in 80% of front-page articles. Offenders denied ($n = 2$), minimized ($n = 1$) or were indifferent ($n = 1$) about their crimes, when stories were front-page news.

Crime in articles discussing psychopathy centrally. Among articles which focused on psychopathy centrally ($n = 38$), 20 reported on specific crimes (52.6%), 16 which were homicides or attempted homicides (42%). Seventy-seven percent of crimes were instrumental ($n = 10$), four identified a motive (80%), and all of known offenders were repeat offenders. Fourteen of 18 injuries were fatal, and seven of 19 victims were children (18.4%). Violence was of high significance to the story in 85% of cases. Offender comments included indifference in 60% of cases ($n = 3$) and denial or minimization in the remaining two cases.

Business

Only 5% of all article types were business themes, and only three of news articles were business articles (4%). For the Internet, only four websites were business related (8.5%).

Psychopathy and Mental Illness

Chi-square analyses were conducted to determine whether differences existed between newspapers or over time regarding mental illness variables. No significant differences were found for presence of a mental illness theme or the type of disorder attributed to a psychopathic individual (when comparing psychosis and insanity to all other disorders), between newspapers, or over time. Collapsing across time and

newspaper, 28% of articles expressed a mental illness theme (15.4% explicitly and 12.5% implied). Further, of 65 articles describing an individual as mentally ill, 37% of mentally ill labels were “insane”, followed by psychotic (24.6%), “other” (24.6%) or a general, unspecified mental illness (12.3%). Differences did exist over time regarding whether mental illness was differentiated from psychopathy within the article (versus psychopathic and mentally ill labels or symptoms being ascribed to the same individuals without proper distinctions to separate the constructs), $\chi^2(4, N = 71) = 11.70, p = .02$, Cramer’s $V = .29$. In other words, differentiation between psychopathy and other mental illness occurred much less than no differentiation across all time periods, and differentiation increased over time, indicating that better distinctions between psychopathy and mental illness were being reported to eliminate confusion as time passed.

For Internet websites, mental illness themes were recorded for 19 websites (40.4%; $n = 11$, explicitly and $n = 8$, tacitly). Psychotic symptoms were ascribed to five psychopathic characters (10.6%), one was described as insane, and 12 were “other mental illnesses” not belonging to the list provided (25.5%). Six websites differentiated between psychopathy and mental illness by indicating that psychopaths are rational and competent, and know what they are doing (i.e., they know right from wrong; 33.3%); 10 made no such differentiations, relating symptoms of other disorders to psychopathy which are not PCL-R defined characteristics (55.6%), and five provided mixed discussions (10.6%).

Mental illness in news articles. Differences between newspapers were found for mental illness themes in news articles, such that the *New York Times* rarely expressed

mental illness themes in news articles, $\chi^2(4, N = 80) = 10.48, p = .03$, Cramer's $V = .26$. Fifty-three percent of the *Globe and Mail* news articles ($n = 16$), 50% of the *Times* news articles ($n = 16$), and 17% of the *New York Times* news articles described a mental illness theme, either expressly stated or implied. No differences were found across time or between newspapers based on diagnoses or differentiation of constructs. Across all newspapers and time periods, news articles described psychopathic individuals as "insane" (25%), "psychotic" (21.4%), or generally mentally ill (10.7%). Furthermore, 75.9% of news articles with themes of mental illness did not differentiate between psychopathy and other disorders or symptoms attributed to psychopathic individuals.

Mental illness in entertainment articles. Relationships among mental illness variables for entertainment articles were equally distributed across newspapers and time periods, and therefore these variables were collapsed into a single group. A mental illness theme was identified in 19% of entertainment articles; specifically, psychopathic characters were dually referred to as insane (46.4%) or psychotic (28.6%). Of entertainment articles with themes of mental illness, only one differentiated between psychopathy and the mental illness discussed.

Mental illness in sensational and front-page stories. No meaningful differences existed between newspapers or over time for sensational or front-page articles. Mental illness themes were present in 28.4% of sensational stories, 78.9% of which described individuals who were psychotic or insane. Eighty-one percent of the articles did not differentiate between psychopathy and the associated mental illness ($n = 15$).

Furthermore, mental illness themes were present in eight of the 32 front-page articles

(25%), with 71.4% of characters being described as “insane” ($n = 5$). Two of the articles however did differentiate between the mental illnesses described and psychopathy (25%).

Mental illness in articles discussing psychopathy centrally. When psychopathy was discussed as a central focus of an article, mental illness themes were present in 71% of articles (33.3% insane, 28.6% psychotic, 14.3% general mental illness, 4.8% depressed). Significant differences were found however between newspapers regarding whether there was any differentiation between psychopathy and any symptoms of mental illness, $\chi^2(4, N = 23) = 9.78, p = .04$, Cramer’s $V = .46$, as none of the *New York Times* articles clearly differentiated between different constructs, compared to 25% of *Globe and Mail* articles, and 33% of the *Times* articles.

Treatment Issues

Across all newspapers and all decades, no statistically significant differences were found based on treatment variables. Only 7% of articles across all article types mentioned treatment when discussing psychopathy. Of these 19 articles, only 4 claimed that psychopaths (or, the psychopath in question) could be treated, while 11 (58%) reported that psychopaths were not amenable to treatment. An additional 4 articles described uncertainty or debate about treatment options for psychopaths (21%).

For the Internet, 21 websites discussed treatment (44.7%) of which 16 (80%) claimed psychopaths are not treatable; two noted that treatment options were available (10%). The remaining made reference to treatment but did not clarify whether treatment for psychopaths was effective or ineffective.

Treatment in specific types of articles. Thirteen news articles reported on treatment (17.3%), with 8 claiming the individual was unable to be treated (66.7%).

Three entertainment articles made reference to treatment (1.8%), and 2 claimed the individual was untreatable (66.7%). Only four highly sensational articles referred to treatment issues (5.3%), and three of them deemed the psychopath to be untreatable. Treatment for psychopathy was mentioned in two articles on the front-page of their sections (6.3%): one claimed that psychopaths are treatable and the other claimed they are not. Ten articles (26.3%) that discussed psychopathy as a central focus, also commented on treatment issues regarding psychopathy, with 70% claiming that psychopathy is not treatable.

How Well Does the Media's Portrayal of Psychopathy Parallel Empirical Findings?

Expert Opinion

There were a number of differences regarding expert opinion in the media, between newspapers and over time, and therefore newspapers and time-periods were not collapsed. A significant difference was found based on newspaper and the number of references to empirical literature or expert opinion, $\chi^2(2, N = 281) = 13.12, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .22$, since the *New York Times* referred to experts much less (11%) when making reference to psychopathy, compared to the *Globe and Mail* (27%) and the *Times* (32%). A statistically significant relationship also emerged between newspapers and the type of experts used, $\chi^2(4, N = 68) = 9.70, p = .05$, Cramer's $V = .27$. For example, the *Globe and Mail* relied primarily on medical doctors and psychiatrists (62%, $n = 18$), whereas the *Times* relied equally on psychologists and academics (roughly 40% each, $n = 11$ and 12) and the *New York Times*, while rarely using any type of experts, relied on academic sources (55%, $n = 6$).

Over time, there were no significant differences based on references to empirical or expert sources (23% relied on some type of expert), however there were differences discovered based on the type of expert used over time, $\chi^2(4, N = 68) = 11.66, p = .02$, Cramer's $V = .29$. Interestingly, only 9.5% of experts in the 1980s were academic, compared to 59% in the 1990s and 40% between 2000 and 2006; for doctors and psychiatrists, these values were 67%, 27% and 44% for the three time periods respectively.

For Internet websites, empirical literature or academic sources appeared in 57.4% of websites ($n = 27$), all of which were psychologists or academic experts, including one article that referenced a medical expert as well.

Experts in news and entertainment articles. Differences were found based on newspaper and whether experts were used in reporting for news articles, $\chi^2(2, N = 80) = 10.81, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .37$, but no differences were discovered over time. Seventy percent of *Globe and Mail* articles used experts in news articles, compared to only 22% of *New York Times* articles, and 44% of the *Times* articles. In news articles, across newspapers and over time, 55% of experts were medical doctors compared to 20% of psychologists. Not surprisingly for entertainment articles across newspapers and time periods, only 6% referred to experts.

Sensational Articles (n = 75)

Experts were relied on in 19 (24%) of sensational stories across newspapers and time. Thirty-four percent ($n = 11$) of front-page articles made reference to experts or empirical literature when discussing psychopathy (20% medical experts; 60%

academics), and 71% of articles discussing psychopathy as a main focus relied on experts ($n = 27$; 60.7% medical experts and 25% academics).

For the Internet, sensational content was obviously present in 34% of websites ($n = 16$; $n = 15$ contained somewhat sensational content). Across newspapers and time periods, highly sensational newspaper stories were most evident among articles with crime ($n = 34$; 45.3%), entertainment ($n = 30$; 40%) and to a lesser extent, business themes ($n = 6$; 8%). Psychopathic traits most referred to included criminality ($n = 54$; 72%), shallow emotions ($n = 23$; 30.7%), lying ($n = 14$; 18.7%), manipulation and superficial charm ($n = 9$; 12% each) and grandiosity ($n = 7$; 9.3%). Thirty percent of entertainment articles contained obvious sensationalism, and only 20% of news articles presented obvious sensationalism.

Articles presented on the front page of any section ($n = 32$) contained themes of crime ($n = 16$), entertainment ($n = 9$) and business ($n = 16$), which accounted for 13.2%, 8%, and 42.9% of their total respective themes. These articles tended to be slightly longer on average (1396 words; $SD = 1021$) than articles on all pages combined (965 words). The term “psychopath” was used in 65.6% of front-page articles, and “sociopath” was found in 28% of front-page stories. The majority of these articles did not however focus on these search terms centrally. More than half of the articles’ titles (56.3%) accurately represented the article content when they were presented on the front page of a section. Sensationalism was clearly present in 40.6% of front-page stories ($n = 13$).

The PCL-R

Across newspapers and over time, significant differences were found when reporting psychopathic traits paralleling the PCL-R. The trait “superficial charm” had a

large increase between 2000 and 2006 (26%), compared to 7% and 9.6% in the 1990s and 1980s respectively, $\chi^2(2, N = 281) = 18.08, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .18$. Similarly, lying became a trait which gained increased attention between 2000 and 2006, rising from less than 5% in 1980 to 18%, $\chi^2(2, N = 281) = 9.82, p = .01$, Cramer's $V = .19$. Differences between newspapers included the *Globe and Mail* using the description of "conning and manipulative" significantly more frequently than the other newspapers (14% versus 3% for the *New York Times* and 6% for the *Times*), $\chi^2(2, N = 281) = 9.00, p = .01$, Cramer's $V = .18$, and describing psychopaths as having shallow affect significantly more than American or British newspapers (26% versus 12% and 17%), $\chi^2(2, N = 281) = 6.77, p = .03$, Cramer's $V = .16$, and discussing juvenile delinquency more often as well (14% versus 4% and 5%), $\chi^2(2, N = 281) = 8.45, p = .01$, Cramer's $V = .17$.

For all remaining traits collapsed across newspapers and time, grandiosity was reported in 9% of articles, poor behavioural controls in 9%, and criminal versatility in 60% of articles. Presentation of traits within each newspaper can be found in Appendix E. The mean number of traits reported across newspapers and time was 1.7 ($SD = 2.27$).

For Internet websites, the mean number of PCL-R traits recorded for all the websites was 8.48 ($SD = 4.81$). The frequency and percentage of the top 10 traits appearing across all websites is presented in Table 6 (the complete list is reported in Appendix E, Table 8.4).

Table 6

Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported on Internet Websites

Trait	Rank	Frequency	%
Shallow affect	1	44	93.6

Lying	2	36	76.6
Glibness/superficial charm	3	32	68.1
Criminality	4	31	66.0
Conning/manipulative	5	30	63.8
Irresponsibility	6	25	53.2
Impulsivity	7	24	51.1
Poor behavioral controls	8	23	48.9
Grandiose sense of self worth	9	22	46.8
Need for stimulation/prone to boredom	10	19	40.4

Psychopathy as a main focus ($n = 38$). Articles in which psychopathy was a central focus had themes of crime ($n = 24$; 63.2%), mental health ($n = 8$; 21%), business ($n = 4$; 10.5%), and entertainment ($n = 2$; 5.3%). Obvious sensational content for these articles was 21% ($n = 8$). Articles that focused centrally on psychopathy reported more traits on average than newspaper articles generally (3.37 versus 1.7), reporting criminality (76.3%), shallow affect (46%), lying (29.7%), superficial charm (26.3%), egocentric (23.7%) and juvenile delinquency (21.6%) as the top six traits. For a list of the top traits reported for psychopathy in articles where psychopathy was a central focus, see Appendix E (Table 8.5).

Temporal Changes in Reporting on Psychopathy

Frequency of Psychopathic Terms Appearing Within Newspapers Over Time

A one-way analysis of variance was run with each of the search terms as the dependent variable, to determine if significant differences existed over time in terms of the frequency with which the terms appeared in newspapers. Newspapers were collapsed for analysis since no significant mean differences were found to exist between newspapers based on individual terms (e.g., psychopathy, sociopathy, or APD) or combined frequency totals using one-way ANOVAs. As can be seen in Table 7, the

frequencies of all terms increased over time, with the exception of ADP in the *Globe and Mail*. A series of one-way ANOVAs demonstrated that these increases over time were significant for the term “psychopath”, $F(2, 6) = 5.92, p = .04$ and “sociopath”, $F(2, 6) = 9.16, p = .02$, but not for APD, $F(2, 6) = 2.70, n.s.$ Most importantly, there was a significant difference found for the total number of articles (across all newspapers) printed with one of the search terms over time $F(2, 6) = 11.75, p = .01$, such that the amount of articles printed over time significantly increased since 1980 to 1986, to 1990 to 1996, and to 2000 through 2006 ($M = 89, SD = 62.39; M = 162.7, SD = 71.77; M = 364.7, SD = 81$, respectively).

Table 7

Search Results (Number of Articles) Based on Search Term

Term	<u>Newspaper</u>								
	<i>Globe and Mail</i>			<i>New York Times</i>			<i>Times</i>		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Psychopath	115	169	207	103	135	196	17	74	340
Sociopath	9	32	82	24	68	153	0	6	93
APD	0	12	7	0	1	8	0	0	27
Term total	124	213	296	127	204	357	17	80	460
Article total	123	209	292	127	199	350	17	80	452
Articles selected	33	33	33	34	33	32	17	33	33

Note. The numbers 1, 2 and 3 beneath each newspaper designate 1980 to 1986, 1990 to 1996 and 2000 to 2006 respectively.

The Globe and Mail ($N = 99$)

Article characteristics. Within the *Globe and Mail*, there were only a few significant differences found over time for article characteristics: the type of article containing psychopathy was more often news in the 1980s (54.5%) compared to the 1990s (15%) and between 2000 and 2006 (21%), $\chi^2(2, N = 99) = 14.06, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .38$; the titles of psychopathy articles became decreasingly likely to accurately reflect the article content over time, $\chi^2(4, N = 99) = 15.66, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .28$; there were significantly more references to experts in the 1980s (42%), than in the 1990s (24%) and 2000s (15%), $\chi^2(2, N = 99) = 6.42, p = .04$, Cramer's $V = .26$.

The remaining variables were collapsed across all time periods of the *Globe and Mail*, since there were no differences over time. The length of articles ranged from 90 words to 5,161 words, with a mean length of 867.2 words ($SD = 618.4$). The location of the articles (based on the page of the section the article appeared in) ranged from page 1 to page 67, with a mean location of page 10 ($SD = 10.4$). Regarding the search terms, 73.7% of articles contained the search term "psychopath", followed by 19.2% of articles containing the search term "sociopath". Of those, three articles contained both terms (psychopath and sociopath) and four articles contained all three terms (including APD). No articles contained the term APD in isolation. Only 8% of the articles' titles contained a search term; 84.8% of articles did not treat the search term as a central focus. Nearly half ($n = 44$) of articles involved obvious sensational or dramatic reporting ($n = 37$ reported in a slightly sensational fashion). Articles with crime themes accounted for 42.4% of all articles, while entertainment themes accounted for 45.5% of newspaper articles; business themes were reported in 8% of *Globe and Mail* articles. While

differences existed in terms of references to expert opinion over time, no differences were found regarding the nature of the experts. Experts were predominantly medical doctors or psychiatrists (70.8%), with 25% being academic sources (e.g., researchers); in a small number of instances, judges, police officers, or other individuals who could be considered public authority figures also commented on psychopathy (4.2%).

Personal characteristics. In terms of personal characteristics of central figures, 89.9% of individuals described as psychopaths (or associated terms) were males, with a mean age of 31 ($SD = 12.1$), of Caucasian race (62%). Many of the articles were missing information: when describing a specific “psychopathic individual”, gender could not be determined in 5 articles, age in 65 articles and ethnicity in 57 articles.

PCL-R traits. The mean number of PCL-R traits reported across all time periods in the *Globe and Mail* was two ($SD = 2.9$). Eighty of the articles revealed at least one PCL-R trait. Among these traits, the most commonly expressed characteristics were criminality or violence (68.7%), shallow affect (27.3%), superficial charm (14%), juvenile delinquency (13%), conning and manipulative (12%), and lying (9%). For a complete list of reported traits in the *Globe and Mail* across time, see Appendix F (Table 8.1).

Mental health variables. A significant difference was found over time based on diagnosis, when comparing psychopathic characters who were described as either “psychotic” or “crazy” compared to other mental illness references, $\chi^2(2, N = 99) = 6.55$, $p = .04$, Cramer’s $V = .26$, as the highest percentage of attributing psychotic or insane symptoms to psychopaths was in the 1980s (24%). Across all time periods within the *Globe and Mail*, mental illness was identified as a condition of psychopathy, either

explicitly (e.g., a schizophrenic psychopath) or implicitly (e.g., a psychopath who was recently released from a mental institution, or who was described as “deranged” or “crazy”, etc.) in 31.6% of *Globe and Mail* articles across time. Only four of the articles made clear differentiation between psychopathy and mental illness (13.8%), with 75.9% attributing uncharacteristic symptoms of mental illness to the personality disorder, and 10.3% of articles with mixed or uncertain views on the differences between psychopathy and symptoms of other mental disorders.

Eight articles made reference to treatment issues, of which 85.7% presented views that psychopathy is not treatable, or that the psychopath referred to was unresponsive to treatment attempts.

Crime characteristics. Well over half ($n = 63$) of the articles did not report on a specific crime story, and therefore crime characteristics were not collected for these articles. Of the remaining 36 which described criminal acts, 75% were homicides or attempted homicides, 88.9% were violent crimes, and 88% were instrumental crimes, characterized by purpose and planning as opposed to reactive aggression in response to provocation. Where motive could be identified, 87.5% of psychopathic characters had a clear motivation ($n = 13$); there was no mention or indication of motive in 20.2% of the articles, and three articles claimed there was no motive. The average number of victims was four ($SD = 6.7$), ranging from 0 (e.g., no person harmed in the commencement of the crime) to 25. When information on criminal history was available, 94% were repeat offenders (19 articles did not provide this information and one criminal was a first time offender). Most (86.2%) of victim injuries were fatalities ($n = 25$); four involved severe injuries (13.8%). Crimes against adults comprised 46% of the crimes in articles with

known victims ($n = 13$); crimes against children accounted for 40.7% of crime victims, and 7.4% of offenders commit crimes against both adults and children (raising the number of crimes against children committed by psychopathic characters to nearly 50%).

In 69.7% of articles containing violence ($n = 23$), the violence was deemed central to the story (highly significant); 27.3% ($n = 9$) were viewed as being moderately significant to the story, and in one article with violence, the violence was observed to have low significance to the overall story. Offender comments or reactions to their crimes ($n = 10$) were “indifference” (33.3%), “denial” (33.3%), “minimization” (22.2%) or no comment (11%).

For a complete list of variables for the *Globe and Mail* within each time period, see Appendix F (Table 9.1).

The New York Times ($N = 99$)

Article characteristics. Across all time periods of the *New York Times*, the length of articles ranged from 60 words to 4493 words, with a mean length of 1240 words ($SD = 848.6$) and the location of the articles based on newspaper section ranged from page 1 to page 73, with a mean location of page 13 within its given section ($SD = 12.5$). Seventy articles (70.7%) contained the search term “psychopath”, followed by 26.3% containing the search term “sociopath” and one article containing the term “APD”. Two articles contained the terms “psychopath” and “sociopath”. Only 3% of articles’ titles contained one or more of the search terms; 94.9% of articles did not refer to the search terms centrally, as a major focus. In terms of congruence between article titles and article content, 78.8% of article titles reflected the article content to some extent, either accurately (27.3%), or with moderate accuracy (51.5%). Twenty-one percent of articles

involved obvious sensationalistic journalism (45.5% were somewhat sensational). Eighteen articles were news articles, while the majority ($n = 75$) were arts and entertainment (including book and movie reviews); two were editorials and two were educational articles. Article themes were predominantly crime and entertainment, accounting for 43.4% and 42.4% of reporting respectively. Three articles contained a business theme and three contained a mental health theme. Nearly 90 of the 99 articles (88.9%) made no reference to empirical research or interviewed experts. Experts were largely academic sources (50%); 8.3% were doctors or psychiatrists, and 33.3% were other authority figures including judges or police officers.

Personal characteristics. Most (93.1%) of individuals described were male. Among known age and race variables (e.g., articles in which these demographics were revealed in the article), the average age was 23.3 ($SD = 10.5$) and 68.4% were Caucasian. Much of the demographic information could not be obtained from the articles, and therefore gender could not be determined in 13 articles, age in 68 articles and ethnicity in 66 articles.

PCL-R traits. The mean number of PCL-R traits reported across all time periods in the *New York Times* was about one ($n = 1.3$). Thirty-nine articles did not describe any PCL-R traits; 30 mentioned at least one PCL-R trait, and the remaining 30 reported from two to six traits per article. Among these traits, the most commonly expressed characteristics were criminality or violence (50.5%), superficial charm (13.1%), shallow affect (12.1%), poor behavioural controls (11.1%), lying (11.1%), and grandiosity (8.1%). However, a statistically significant chi-square demonstrates that for the trait “superficial charm”, there was a difference over time in reporting, such that this trait was

described significantly more in the 2000s (28%), than in the 1990s (3.4%) or the 1980s (9%), $\chi^2(2, N = 99) = 9.87, p = .01$, Cramer's $V = .32$. For a complete list of reported traits within the *New York Times*, see Appendix E (Table 8.2).

Mental health variables. Mental illness was identified as a condition of psychopathy in 21.2% of total *New York Times* articles ($n = 21$). When a mental illness was identified, psychopathic individuals were described as “insane” (57.9%, $n = 11$), “psychotic” (26.3%, $n = 3$) or as having other mental illnesses (15.8%). No articles differentiated between psychopathy and mental illness, and therefore 81% of articles attributed symptoms of mental illness to psychopathy, which were not typical of the personality disorder (the remaining 19% of articles contained uncertain views or debate as to whether certain characteristics typically associated with other mental disorders were symptomatic of psychopathy). Three articles referred to treating psychopathy, of which two reported that psychopaths are not amenable to treatment.

Crime characteristics. Twenty-three of 29 articles (79.3%) reporting a crime type were homicide or attempted homicide. Seventy of the articles therefore did not report on a specific crime story or mention a specific crime, and therefore crime characteristics were not collected for these reports. Of the 29 articles describing criminal acts, 92.9% were violent crimes, and 95.2% were instrumental (planned or purposeful). Twenty-three percent of psychopathic characters had an identifiable motive ($n = 9$); 19% of motives were unknown and one article reported that there was no motive. The average number of victims was 7.8 ($SD = 23.6$), ranging from no victims to 110. Nearly 62% were repeat offenders (“unknown” for 11 articles and three first time offenders). Most (77.8%) of victim injuries were fatalities ($n = 21$). Victim type was found to be significantly

different over time in this newspaper, since the 1990s contained no adult victims, $\chi^2(2, N = 99) = 6.69, p = .04$, Cramer's $V = .55$, compared to the 1980s (60%) and 2000s (71%).

In 53.8% of articles containing violence ($n = 14$), the violence was deemed central to the story (highly significant); 30.8% ($n = 8$) of articles were viewed as being moderately significant to the story, and in four articles, the violence was observed to have low significance to the overall story. Offender comments (reactions) regarding their crimes ($n = 9$) were “indifference” ($n = 3$), “denial” ($n = 3$), “minimization” ($n = 1$), “contrition” ($n = 1$) or “no comment” ($n = 1$).

For a complete list of variables for the *Globe and Mail* within each time period, see Appendix F (Table 9.2).

The Times ($N = 83$)

Article characteristics. Across all time periods of the *Times*, the length of articles ranged from 59 words to 3081 words, with a mean length of 725.7 words ($SD = 516.4$). The location of the articles based on newspaper section ranged from page 1 to page 16, with a mean location of page 7.7 ($SD = 4.8$), however page number could only be identified in 16.9% of articles ($n = 14$ of 69). Seventy-four articles (89.2%) contained the search term “psychopath”, followed by 4.8% containing the search term “sociopath” ($n = 4$) and two articles containing the term “APD”. Three articles contained all of the search terms. Eight of the articles' titles contained a search term (9.6%), and 78.3% of all article titles reflected the article content accurately ($n = 50$) or moderately accurately ($n = 15$). Close to a quarter of articles (21.7%) discussed psychopathy (or the relevant search term) as a major focus of the article. Thirteen percent of articles reported in an obviously sensational or dramatic manner (45.8% were somewhat dramatic or sensational). Thirty-

two articles were news articles (38.6%), and another 32 were arts and entertainment; 8 articles were educational (9.6%) and 10 were editorials (12%). The three main article themes were crime ($n = 37$; 44.6%), entertainment ($n = 26$; 31.3%) and mental health ($n = 14$; 16.9%); three articles contained a business theme (3.6%). About one third of the articles (32.5%) made reference to empirical research or talked with experts, who were largely academic (39.3%) or medical experts (46.4%).

Personal characteristics. Many of those described were Caucasian (78.6%) males (90%), aged 23 to 55 with a mean age of 31.3 ($SD = 10.1$). Much of the demographic information could not be obtained from the articles; gender could not be determined in 8 articles, age in 51 articles and ethnicity in 52 articles.

PCL-R traits. The mean number of PCL-R traits reported across all time periods in the *Times* approached two (1.71). Twenty-one articles did not describe any PCL-R traits; 33 mentioned at least one PCL-R trait, and the remaining 29 reported from two to 10 traits per article. Among these traits, the most commonly expressed characteristics were criminality or violence (62.7%), shallow affect (17.1%), superficial charm (14.5%), grandiosity (12%), poor behavioural controls (11%) and lying (11%). However, it should be noted that the term “superficial charm” was not evenly distributed over time, and was more frequently reported between 2000 and 2006 (27%) than in the 1980s (12%) and 1990s (3%), $\chi^2(2, N = 83) = 8.00, p = .02$, Cramer’s $V = .31$; as were the terms “grandiosity” (12% versus 0% versus 24%), $\chi^2(2, N = 83) = 9.15, p = .01$, Cramer’s $V = .33$, “lying” (2% versus 3% versus 21%), $\chi^2(2, N = 83) = 6.19, p = .05$, Cramer’s $V = .27$, “manipulative” (0% versus 0% versus 15%), $\chi^2(2, N = 83) = 8.06, p = .02$, Cramer’s $V = .31$, and “shallow affect” (12% versus 3% versus 33%), $\chi^2(2, N = 83) = 11.20, p < .001$,

Cramer's $V = .37$. For a complete list of reported traits for the *Times*, see Appendix E (Table 8.3).

Mental health variables. Mental illness was identified as a condition of psychopathy in 31.3% of the *Times*' articles ($n = 26$). When a mental illness was identified, psychopathic characters were described as "insane" (14.3%, $n = 3$), "psychotic" (38.1%, $n = 8$), mentally ill in some unspecified manner (28.6%; $n = 6$), or "other" (19%; $n = 4$). Five of 21 articles (23.8%) differentiated between psychopathy and mental illness demonstrating the differences between the personality disorder and uncharacteristic symptoms of mental disorders, however all of these were presented between 2000 and 2006, $\chi^2(4, N = 21) = 10.89, p = .03$, Cramer's $V = .51$. One article in the 1990s provided debate or mixed views on this matter.

Nine articles communicated issues relating to treatment for psychopaths (10.8%) of which views were: treatable ($n = 3$), not treatable ($n = 3$), unsure or debate over whether treatable ($n = 3$).

Crime characteristics. Twenty-six of 33 articles (78.8%) reporting a crime type were homicide or attempted homicide. Fifty of the articles therefore did not report on a specific crime story or mention a specific crime, and therefore crime characteristics were not collected for these reports. Of the 33 articles describing criminal acts, 30 were violent crimes (91%), and 91.3% were instrumental. Information regarding motives was reported for nine psychopathic characters, six of who had an identifiable motive (66.7%); 25 of motives were unknown. The average number of victims was 5.3 ($SD = 10.2$), ranging from 0 to 48. Seventeen individuals (of 33) were repeat offenders, and 16 articles did not reveal information in this regard. Most (87.1%) of victim injuries were fatalities ($n = 27$).

Crimes against adults comprised 81.5% of the crimes in articles with known victims ($n = 11$); crimes against children ($n = 4$), or adults and children ($n = 1$), accounted for 18.5% of crime victims.

In 81.8% of articles containing violence ($n = 27$), the violence was deemed central to the story (highly significant); 18.2% ($n = 6$) were viewed as being moderately significant to the story. Offender comments or reactions to their crimes ($n = 9$) were “indifference” ($n = 6$), “denial” ($n = 3$), “minimization” ($n = 1$), or “contrition” ($n = 1$).

For a complete list of variables for the *Times* within each time period, see Appendix F (Table 9.1).

Comparisons between Internet and Newspaper Content

Website and article characteristics. Internet websites were a great deal longer, on average, than newspaper articles (mean word length of 2542 versus 965 respectively). In terms of website type, 20 were general information sites (42.6%) compared to three newspaper articles (1%), eight were entertainment (17%) compared to 163 newspaper articles (58%), and six were news articles (12.8%) compared to 75 newspaper articles (26.7%). In addition, five Internet websites were blogs or discussion forums (10.6%) compared to 25 editorials in newspapers (8.9%). There were significant differences found between news articles found in newspapers (28%) and on the Internet (12.8%), $\chi^2(1, N = 328) = 5.13, p = .02$, Cramer’s $V = .13$.

Thirty-three of the websites contained the search term “psychopath” (70.2%), of which 14 (29.8%) contained this term in isolation to other terms; 229 (81.5%) of newspaper articles contained the search term “psychopath”, however this term occurred more often in isolation in newspaper articles (94.3%). Twenty websites contained the

term “sociopath” (42.5%), with 12.8% containing the term in isolation; fifty-three newspaper articles contained the search term “sociopath” (18.9%), most of which occurred in isolation ($n = 49$; 92.5%). Five websites had content relevant only to APD (10.6%), compared to three newspaper articles (1%). Fourteen websites referenced all three terms (29.8%) compared to no newspaper articles, and five websites discussed either psychopathy or sociopathy in addition to APD (10.6%), compared to seven newspaper articles (2.5%). These differences in the use of terms based on either Internet or newspapers were statistically significant, $\chi^2(5, N = 328) = 122.029, p < .001$, Cramer’s $V = .61$; Internet websites rarely contained a term in isolation of other related search terms.

There were also significant differences in the focus of Internet websites compared to newspaper articles, as only 15% of newspaper articles discussed psychopathy as a central focus, whereas 93.6% of Internet websites discussed terms centrally, $\chi^2(2, N = 328) = 136.80, p < .001$, Cramer’s $V = .65$. Reference to empirical literature or experts also differed between the two media sources, as 23% of newspapers used experts in reporting, whereas 57.4% of Internet websites used experts when discussing psychopathy, $\chi^2(1, N = 328) = 23.50, p < .001$, Cramer’s $V = .27$. The nature of the experts also differed significantly, since Internet websites exclusively used academic experts, compared to 34.7% of newspaper articles relying on academic sources, $\chi^2(4, N = 96) = 31.79, p < .001$, Cramer’s $V = .58$.

Personal characteristics. The gender of psychopathic individuals described on websites was 60% male, 10% female, and 30% noted that psychopaths could be both male and female. Newspaper reporting described 90% of psychopathic individuals as

male, 8% female and 2% mentioned both genders. Age and ethnicity were unknown for all but one website.

Mental health variables. The presentation of mental illness themes was not significantly different for Internet and newspapers (40.4% versus 22.8%), however the nature of attributed illnesses were different, $\chi^2(4, N = 83) = 14.54, p = .01$, Cramer's $V = .42$, with 61% of newspaper articles describing psychopaths as either psychotic or insane, and only 33% of Internet websites reporting the same. No differences existed regarding the frequency with which sources differentiated between psychopathy and the mental illnesses they described, since both rarely reported differences. Finally, no differences were discovered in whether psychopaths were reported to be treatable or not (most were deemed untreatable; 58% of newspapers versus 80% of Internet websites), however there were differences based on the frequency with treatment was mentioned regarding psychopathy, $\chi^2(1, N = 328) = 51.95, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .40$.

For a complete list of variables and comparisons across newspaper and Internet content, see Appendix G (Table 10.1).

Discussion

The present investigation explored the portrayal of psychopathy in the media. Newspaper articles and Internet websites were scanned electronically for the search terms “psychopath”, “sociopath” or “antisocial personality disorder” (APD) to collect media content which provided information about psychopathy. A content analysis was conducted on this content to explore a variety of variables and themes including article or website characteristics, personal characteristics of psychopathic individuals, PCL-R traits, mental health variables, and crime variables. The aim of this study was to describe

how psychopathy is presented to the public. Social learning theory provides a backdrop for how media communications about these constructs may influence attitudes, beliefs, and decision-making processes in the context of jury trials where evidence related to psychopathy is presented.

The following research objectives were examined: (1) How is psychopathy portrayed in newspapers and on the Internet? (2) Has the portrayal of psychopathy changed over time in newspapers? (3) How well does the media's portrayal of psychopathy compare to what is empirically known about this personality disorder? These questions are addressed through a number of hypotheses, each discussed in turn.

Hypotheses

1. *Media communications about psychopathy will contain predominantly violent (criminal) content and business related content (in response to the corporate psychopath).*

This hypothesis was partially supported. Across all newspapers and all time periods, crime themes accounted for the largest amount of content (43%), while business themes relating to the corporate psychopath accounted for only 5% of newspaper content. For Internet websites, crime themes accounted for only 15% while business themes made up only 9%. Furthermore, criminality was a trait used to describe psychopathic characters in 61% of all newspaper articles, and 66% of Internet websites. The corporate or organizational psychopath however, was not as popular a theme in newspapers or on the Internet. However, some of the traits associated with the corporate psychopath were. For instance, manipulation, superficial charm, lack of remorse, ruthlessness and power driven

are all traits that were commonly attributed to psychopaths, however not always in the context of psychopaths in the workforce. Furthermore, when examining newspaper articles appearing on the front-page of a section, business articles accounted for 43% of front-page articles, suggesting that while corporate psychopathy may not be an exciting topic for entertainment media (which accounted for much of the newspaper content), it may be newsworthy after all, based on its appearance in prime, front-page locations. On the Internet, where less of the content was entertainment based, more references were made to corporate psychopathy. Still, even in entertainment pieces, there was more than one quiz that purportedly tested whether your boss was a psychopath or sociopath.

It is not surprising that the psychopath was viewed in such a negative manner given the personality profile outlined by the PCL-R. Not once was the term “psychopath” associated with any positive characteristics – there was always a negative tone to any description; however, there were a few articles which used the term “sociopath” in a comical or light-hearted way to describe an individual who was not a saint, but who was nutty, fun, or pleasant. For example, one article referred to an individual as a “jolly sociopath”, and another as “a good-natured, sociopath drug-dealer”. On the whole, psychopaths were presented as dangerous, reckless and criminal. More than criminal though, psychopaths were shown to be extremely violent, committing an overwhelming number of homicides, and a high proportion of offences against children. Of known crimes committed by psychopaths in newspaper articles, 94% were homicides or attempted homicides, and an average of nearly 40% of victims were children. These results parallel research demonstrating that the prevalence of psychopathy is very high among murderers. For example, Woodworth and Porter (2002) reported that 27% of 125

Canadian incarcerated homicide offenders were psychopaths (using a diagnostic PCL-R cutoff of 30) and Laurell and Daderman (2007) found a similar rate (31%) among 35 homicide offenders within a forensic psychiatric sample. Furthermore, Firestone, Bradford, Greenberg, Larose and Curry (1998) discovered that sex offenders who murdered their child victims had higher PCL-R scores than sex offenders who molested children but did not kill them. Woodworth and Porter (2002) also found that 93% of psychopaths committed instrumental crimes, compared to 48% of nonpsychopaths. In the present analysis, where the nature of the crime could be determined, 91.5% of psychopaths were presented by newspapers as instrumental offenders (see also Cornell, Warren, Hawk, Stafford, Oram & Pine, 1996). Not surprisingly then, some of the adjectives used to refer to psychopath in this analysis included diabolical, murderous, disturbed or deranged, savage, and sadistic.

2. Psychopathy will be confused with other syndromes/disorders (e.g., psychotic disorders), evidenced by the synonymous use of separate constructs (e.g., 'psychotic psychopaths').

Psychopathy was confused or combined with other mental disorders in a number of articles. Forty percent of Internet websites and 23% of newspaper articles had a mental illness theme, by discussing mental illness in addition to psychopathy within an article or website. Of these, 44.4% of Internet websites and 15.6% of newspaper articles differentiated between psychopathy and mental illness, making clear distinctions and avoiding any diagnostic confusion. The remaining content with themes of mental illness either dually diagnosed psychopaths (e.g., schizophrenic psychopath), implied that a

psychopathic character had an illness by describing a context (e.g., recently released from a mental hospital), or assigned symptoms or used words characteristic of other disorders or of insanity (e.g., “deranged” or “demented”). Uncharacteristic mental symptoms attributed to psychopaths were “psychotic” or “insane” in over 30% of Internet websites and over 60% of newspaper articles. Internet websites, which were much more oriented towards education and information, were better at outlining the differences between psychopathy and other mental disorders, and clearly separated psychopathy from other disorders more than did newspapers. That being said, over half of websites still promoted potentially confusing and inaccurate portrayals of psychopathy. The fact that the Internet is a utility that people use as a direct source of information makes this problematic. Many of the websites were purely for entertainment value, while others were discussion forums or personal websites with comments written by any person who would like to contribute to the conversation. Anyone can create a website, but not everyone who decides to use the term “psychopath” will be concerned with portraying an accurate picture of that construct.

The discussion of mental illness and psychopathy warrants further discussion here, since one of the key search terms (APD), is a disorder in the DSM-IV, a manual of mental disorders. However, as was noted earlier in this paper, APD and psychopathy are personality disorders, which do not involve impairments of mental functioning. That being said, it is not inconceivable that an individual with a psychopathic personality possess characteristics of mental illness, nor is it the purpose of this paper to convince readers of this to any degree. What is important for the objectives of this research is to discover the “composite psychopath” as depicted in the media. Psychopathy as defined

by the PCL-R does not involve mental illness. This notion of the rational, charming psychopath, who is intelligent, competent and aware, extends back to Cleckley's conception of psychopathy since one of his items was the absence of delusions or other signs of irrational thinking. The point is that an overrepresentation of psychopaths as mentally ill by the media will promote a composite psychopath that does not match to what is empirically known about the disorder.

Attributions of symptoms of mental disorder to psychopathy may be a public rationalization of an incomprehensible lack of morality on the part of the psychopath. It is not unexpected that an individual who lacks remorse and empathy could be termed "insane" or "mad", because some of the actions performed by psychopaths can seemingly overstep the bounds of sanity. What makes the psychopath so frightening is this complete lack of empathy and morality, the fact that they do not conform to the rules followed by the rest of society. They understand exactly what they are doing, but are unconcerned about how it will effect others, or the long term consequences of their actions. They lack empathy and remorse, whether they are cold, calculated serial killers, or manipulative, deceptive, business colleagues. Thus, the deficit is one of morality, and not of mind. But when their behaviour becomes newsworthy (e.g., Clifford Olson, Paul Bernardo), people have difficulty understanding how a sane, rational person could act in such a manner. The media builds on this disbelief and throws in words like "deranged", "disturbed", and "sick", combined with descriptors like "diabolical", "reckless", and "sadistic" to combine a deadly combination of evil and insane for sensational effect.

These findings reflect what is reported in the literature regarding the psychopath's lack of emotion and empathy. For instance, research has demonstrated that there was less

of a difference between heart rate for neutral and fearful sentences among psychopaths, compared to nonpsychopaths (Patrick, Cuthbert, & Lang, 1994). Furthermore, psychopaths are less responsive to distress cues (Blair, Jones, Clark, & Smith, 1997), and produce less blink responses when viewing unpleasant visual images (Patrick, Bradley, & Lang, 1993). As well, neurological research has shown that psychopaths show reduced activation in the amygdala, a center in the brain responsible for emotional regulation and recognition (e.g., Gordon, Baird, & End, 2004). Others (e.g., Plutchik, 1995) believe that psychopaths simply lack fear. Interestingly, lack of empathy has also been thought of as a “facilitator of instrumental violence” (Kirsch & Becker, 2007, p.916). Cornell and colleagues (1996) found that a self-reported deficit in emotional arousal during the commission of an offence was related to instrumental violence, and that the ability of psychopaths to willfully and purposefully inflict pain on others through premeditated acts of aggression is mediated by deficits of empathy, resulting in the “cold-blooded” label often applied to psychopaths.

3. Psychopaths will be viewed as untreatable in the media.

This hypothesis was supported across all newspapers and over time. However, only a small proportion of newspaper articles made any reference to treatment in relation to psychopathy (7%). A larger proportion of Internet websites discussed treatment issues (45%). In newspapers, only slightly above half of articles reporting about treatment claimed that psychopaths were untreatable, with the remaining articles reporting that treatment options were available, or there was debate over whether treatment will work (inconclusive reporting). Discussions of treatment in newspaper articles were rarely

specific discussions about whether psychopaths were amenable to treatment, but rather they were comments regarding sending a psychopathic individual to a hospital or correctional facility to undergo treatment, or to continue a current treatment regimen. These were indications that there was optimism that the individual could be rehabilitated. In articles where the person was deemed untreatable, an offender may be regarded as being unresponsive to treatment in the past, or simply that treatment has been shown not to be effective for psychopathic individuals. Expressions of “hopelessness” or “beyond help” were common statements in this regard.

For Internet websites, 80% of sites that discussed treatment expressed that psychopaths were not treatable. Since these sites were more likely to discuss psychopathy as a main focus, more attention was given to discussing treatment issues directly related to psychopathy, with more attention to treatment literature. For instance, some websites suggested that treatment makes psychopaths worse, presumably in response to research by Harris and colleagues (1992).

It is not clear yet whether information about treatment in relation to psychopathy has any influence on jurors in criminal trials. Research by Edens and associates (2003) predicted that mock jurors would deem psychopathic defendants as less amenable to treatment, but found that being labeled a psychopath had no significant effects on whether male or female jurors believed that the defendant would respond to treatment interventions. Similarly, Murrie and colleagues (2005) found that among juvenile probation officers, who presumably are more familiar with research relating to treatment of psychopathy than laypeople, psychopathic personality features or psychopathic labels did not influence decisions relating to therapeutic interventions. Instead, probation

officers were more likely to recommend treatment services for youth with psychopathic features, and youth diagnosed with psychopathy or conduct disorder. However, Vidal and Skeem (2007) discovered that youth with psychopathic features were more likely to be treated in a negative manner by juvenile probation officers. Having psychopathic traits as a young offender influenced decision-making among juvenile probation officers to the extent that they were less sympathetic, enforced more strict rules, and anticipated poorer treatment outcomes. Thus, having psychopathy features, especially among youth, could potentially have some extremely damaging effects, and could interfere with treatment options and the way individuals are treated within the justice system.

4. Psychopathy as represented in newspapers and the Internet will be unsubstantiated by scientific research or academic references.

Internet websites featured expert opinion or academic research more than newspapers (57% versus 22%), not surprisingly, since Internet websites involved more in-depth discussions regarding psychopathy and the search terms. Further, there were differences across newspapers, as the *Globe and Mail* frequently used experts, and the *New York Times* rarely used experts. This finding however was likely an artifact of the type of articles associated with psychopathy in each paper, since the *Globe and Mail* was predominantly news and the *New York Times* was largely entertainment focused when discussing psychopathy. Also of interest, the Internet websites relied almost entirely on academic sources (i.e., psychologists and researchers), with only one site referencing a medical expert as well. Newspaper articles relied largely on psychiatrists when discussing psychopathy, since much of the articles were crime news, many reporting on criminal

trials where clinical experts were called to testify. However a significant rise in the use of academic experts (university professors, researchers or criminologists) since the 1980s was also found. Robert Hare and his book *Without Conscience* was a frequent reference.

Interpreting how experts will impact on public views or opinions is worth exploring. The media for instance, will use research and experts to promote concepts and ideas with more authority. The manner of persuasion may depend on the nature of the expert or the person receiving the communication. For instance, does a judge qualify as an expert on psychopathy? Perhaps not for some, but a judge's words may carry significant weight for much of the public, despite his or her genuine knowledge about psychopathy. What about a police officer? In newspaper articles, comments by judges and police officers were sometimes made commenting on the dangerousness of psychopaths. In the present study, judges and police officers were coded as a third category of expert, and accounted for 22% of authority figures whom discussed psychopathy in some manner.

In a similar context, Edens and colleagues (2003) explored the influence of expert testimony regarding psychopathy in a mock trial scenario to determine if experts who relied on clinical opinion would be more influential than those who used statistical evidence. The authors found no statistically different responses between mock jurors based on expert impact. However an earlier study by Krauss and Sales (2001) found that clinical experts were more influential and persuasive than actuarial experts, when comparing juror's dangerousness ratings. These studies are perhaps comparable to the medical opinions (clinical) and academic opinions (actuarial, statistical) in the present investigation. It has been assumed that actuarial or statistical evidence may be less

influential to laypeople because it would be difficult to understand without a specific knowledge base. Newspapers may therefore use medical experts more often for this reason, whereas Internet websites are more about informing people who are interested in a specific set of content, since the person specifically searches for the terms. In terms of the influence experts have on the public, more research will be necessary. To some extent, it may not matter who is the expert, or what they express, but the fact that they are in a position of authority. To the public, a judge or police officer commenting on psychopathy may be just as influential as a psychiatrist or psychologist.

A final issue worthy of discussion in the context of experts and science is the idea that science itself may be biased. Simply having an expert comment on psychopathy does not mean that the expert is in fact correcting the biases of the media. In fact, much like legal counsel often goes “shopping” for experts for testimony tailored to the views of either the prosecution or defense, the media may well use experts to suit their own journalistic agendas, or edit newspaper articles to promote specific scientific sentiments which will enhance the article. Articles with experts then, may provide more influence, but not necessarily more accurate information. Therefore, it will not always be safe to assume that science, or an “expert” will correct biases in the media about psychopathy.

5. The frequency of references to psychopathy in newspapers will increase over time.

There was a clear, significant increase in the frequency of the total number of all terms relating to psychopathy appearing in newspapers over time. Across all newspapers, and timeframes, the appearance of the term “psychopath”, “sociopath” or “antisocial personality disorder” rose 315%. These same increases were found within each

newspaper and for all terms, with the exception of APD in the *Globe and Mail* which rose from 0 appearances in the 1980's, to 12 in the 1990's, and then dropped slightly to 7 in the years 2000 to 2006. On average, the terms in newspapers appeared only once per article, demonstrated by the difference between the total number of articles and the total number of terms appearing from the search. This is reasonable considering that only 13.5% of newspaper articles discussed psychopathy as a main feature of the article.

The increase in the appearance of psychopathy in the media over time is likely a reflection of the increased interest in forensic psychology in academic environments, of which theories and principles find their way into the public sphere (e.g., expert testimony in criminal proceedings, proposed legislation). Consequently, interest in the construct becomes increasingly widespread, within the forensic realm and beyond. Specifically, the dramatic increase in articles reporting on psychopathy in the *Times* from the 1990s to the 2000s is interesting, and the reason for this rise is only speculative. New research or sensational cases may have caused the increase in reporting using the term. For example, as was noted earlier, there were sensational cases that gained a significant amount of media attention in the late 1990s in England (e.g., Sydney Cook and Michael Stone) that spurred legislative debates regarding dangerous offenders and provoked fear of crime. Furthermore, some research presented at British Psychological Society's developmental conference in Bristol reported neurological findings about the reduced capabilities of psychopaths to recognize certain facial expressions, and discussed links to impairments in amygdala functioning (BBC, 2000).

Portrait of a Psychopath

Two of the research objectives of this investigation were to determine how psychopathy is presented in the media, and whether this information is accurate. Overall, the media's psychopath was not so imprecise. Key behavioural, affective and interpersonal traits of psychopathy were frequent descriptors of the disorder. While additional, uncharacteristic adjectives were also used to describe the psychopath, these atypical attributes were generally uncommon. However, the psychopath was overwhelmingly described as violent, which is not completely accurate, as not all psychopaths commit violent offences. Furthermore, the amount of mental illness themes present in articles about psychopathy may also be misleading, however there was a trend over time in newspapers towards a better distinction between psychopathy and other mental disorders. Not surprisingly though, it is the violent crimes committed by disordered offenders which are the stories that make great headlines.

Nearly thirty percent of articles did not report any psychopathic traits at all. For many of these articles, the term alone was assumed to portray a certain type of character – the label was used as a descriptor having inherent implications and associations without any descriptive assistance. For instance, the terms “psychopath” and “sociopath” were used in some articles to describe public figures, past and present: Adolph Hitler, George Bush, Truman Capote, Ernest Hemingway, Osama bin Laden, and Saddam Hussein. The term had clear, implicit meaning when used to describe some of these figures.

In additional instances where no psychopathic traits were recorded psychopaths were described by a wide range of adjectives, including: sadistic, sexually deviant, sinister, murderous and evil. However the number and importance of PCL-R traits used

to describe psychopaths in newspapers and on the Internet demonstrate what type of psychopathic character is presented to the media. On average, based on the frequency of reported PCL-R traits across newspapers and over time, the typical psychopath is (in the following order of importance) criminal, unemotional (lacking remorse and empathy, with a general disregard for the safety and well being of others), charming (a great actor or sham), self-centered and egocentric, easily angered (poor behavioural controls generally; reckless and easily incensed), had a criminal youth (juvenile delinquency), and is manipulative (a great swindler or con-man).

The Internet paints a fairly similar picture, which is perhaps a more accurate portrayal considering the focus on emotional deficits, and less on violence. The psychopath as represented on the Internet (in the following order) is unfeeling and cold, deceptive, superficially charming, criminal, manipulative, irresponsible, impulsive, has poor behavioural controls and is narcissistic. These portrayals remain similar regardless of the decade, or the newspaper. For instance, portrayals of psychopathy within each newspaper had the same top nine frequently cited traits (albeit ranked in slightly different orders): criminality, shallow emotions, glibness and superficial charm, juvenile delinquency, conning and manipulative, lying, egocentrism, and poor behavioural controls. For each newspaper, the top three traits ascribed to psychopathic characters were criminality, superficial charm and shallow affect, with criminality being the number one most frequently cited trait for each newspaper.

Differences Across Newspapers

Article characteristics. When comparing the three different newspapers, there are many similarities in reporting, but also some important differences. Articles from the

New York Times were much longer on average, likely a result of the *New York Times* having such a disproportionate amount of entertainment news involving psychopathy, which were much longer articles. The *New York Times* also used the least amount of experts in their discussions or mentions of psychopathy, also likely related to the large proportion of entertainment articles. For instance, book and movie reviews do not rely on experts when discussing the latest psychopathic character. Both the *Globe and Mail* (23%) and the *Times* (33%) supported discussions of psychopathy with expert opinion more than the *New York Times* (11%). The *New York Times* also had the least amount of articles (5%) focusing centrally on psychopathy (compared to 15% for the *Globe and Mail* and 22% for the *Times*). All newspapers were similar in terms of where the articles were located, which were all widely dispersed but none of which frequently made front-page news. Crime and entertainment themes were also very similar across newspapers, however the *Globe and Mail* had a few more business articles than the *New York Times* and the *Times*, however this may be a result of the fact that the majority of *Globe and Mail* articles were news articles. Of note, the *Times* used the term “sociopath” far less frequently (5%) than the North American newspapers (26% for the *New York Times* and 19% for the *Globe and Mail*). The *Globe and Mail* also had more sensational content than the other newspapers.

Mental health variables. The *Times* and the *Globe and Mail* were similar in the proportion of articles containing themes of mental illness, and discussions of treatment issues regarding psychopathy, while the *New York Times* had fewer of these articles; again, a likely result of the large amount of entertainment stories. Across all newspapers however, the message seems to persist that it is difficult, if not impossible, to treat a

psychopath. It seems unlikely however that this information is yet pervasive enough that the public would retain this information as a key feature of psychopathy. This assumption, based on the results of this study, would be in line with research by Edens and colleagues (2003) regarding public attitudes about treatment.

The Canadian psychopath. The current psychopath as depicted in the *Globe and Mail* from 2000 to 2006 is criminal, lacking in emotion, has superficial charm, is frequently deceptive, conning and manipulative, and engaged in delinquency as a youth.

The American Psychopath. The psychopath as currently portrayed by the *New York Times* is criminal, superficially charming, has poor behavioural controls (i.e., is easily angered and has a reckless disregard for the health and safety of others), lies, has shallow emotions, and is self-centered. Interestingly, this most recent picture of psychopathy in the *New York Times* has shallow emotions as the fifth most frequent psychopathic trait reported. Diagnostically, the affective symptoms of the psychopath are key, and distinguish psychopathy from APD.

The British Psychopath. The Times' psychopath, as of 2006, is criminal, cold and unemotional, superficially charming, egocentric, frequently deceptive, and has poor behavioural controls. The "psychopath" then, has become a construct that conveys a very specific image.

Social Learning Theory

The present study examined the content of media communications about psychopathy and therefore only speculations can be made about how these portrayals might influence attitudes and cognitions. However, social learning theory can help formulate possible explanations about how media messages might influence attitudes

based on the results of the present analysis. For instance, in order for effective cognitive functioning to occur, people need reliable ways to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate beliefs. To do this, people engage in social verification by evaluating their own ideas by what others think. The public often uses the media (and more increasingly in the information age, the Internet) as an affirmation of ideas and beliefs, or as a way to gather knowledge on a particular topic. People also “surf” the Internet regularly, sorting through websites of interest. If media constructions of social reality are distorted, sensationalized, or inaccurate, social learning theory dictates that global misconceptions of people, places or events will shape inappropriate attitudes and behaviours in response.

A particularly salient concept for social learning is that particular behaviours are more likely to occur when the outcome is of value (i.e., rewarding). What is the value of retaining the belief that psychopaths are sinister, criminal and unfeeling? There might be many reasons, depending on the person. For example, incarcerating a psychopath who fits that description provides a feeling of reassurance, that a dangerous offender is off of the street and no longer has any opportunity to reoffend. For instance, women especially (Edens et al., 2003; Guy & Edens, 2003) have been shown to strongly urge civil commitment in mock-jury psychopathic sex-offender trials. Since a major finding of the media’s portrayal of psychopathy in the current study was the relatively formulaic and constant way in which the psychopath was described (the composite psychopath), these depictions provide a script for what the construct represents, and how to respond to it. The composite psychopath in the current study as described in newspapers was always criminal, cold and superficially charming – a character to be despised. Moreover, not only was the psychopath deemed to be criminal, she or he was overwhelmingly depicted

as violent, predatory and murderous. It is easy to symbolize this type of individuals as almost subhuman and highly dangerous, an approach that movies and other forms of entertainment tend to employ. Not only then does keeping a person labeled a psychopath locked up provide value both intrinsically and extrinsically, decision-making is easy because the situational model for dealing with the psychopath has been previously scripted and the reaction comes naturally.

Once these composites are created, the label becomes increasingly dangerous because to be labeled a psychopath carries a particular reaction by the public who has been exposed to these profiles. A particular example is the Canadian case of Martin Ferrier, who was branded by the media as a “menace to society” and described as a “violent psychopathic sexual deviant with aspirations to make a name for himself as Canada's worst serial killer” (Perkel, n.d.). Ferrier, a repeat sex-offender with a versatile criminal history, has been hounded persistently by the media and has recently surprised the public with reports that he has been doing well; still, he cannot escape the label that has been imposed on him. He noted in one news report: “ ‘I just wanted it to be known...the media have been reporting a lot of things,’ he said. ‘A lot of it is wrong’” (CBC, 2004). People like Ferrier, who actually want to change and are making clear efforts to do so, are burdened by the images of them that have been produced to the public through the media.

While studies have shown that this label is not as dangerous as the traits that describe the disorder in a criminal justice context, the increasing frequency with which the term is appearing in newspapers may be cause for concern in this regard, especially when applied to youth. Furthermore, cultivation theory would suggest that increased

exposure to criminal images of psychopathy could amplify fear among the public and present the impression that psychopaths are everywhere and ready to target their next victim. As Hare (2003) notes however, not all psychopaths are obvious criminals. Returning to jury decision-making, those who possess certain characteristics of psychopathy (but are not psychopaths) could be sentenced more harshly, or those who don't appear to fit the psychopathic prototype (but are psychopaths) may slip through the cracks (e.g., the smooth talking corporate snakes). In the United States, an offender would not want to be inappropriately labeled, given that capital punishment is still active in many States.

Not only could a psychopathic individual not completely fitting the description promoted in the media be treated less severely (e.g., the “non-axe-wielding” corporate psychopath), but the mental illness label could have a mitigating effect on a trial outcome if a defendant is deemed to be mentally ill, and the behaviours are thought to stem from mental disorder, instead of personality disorder. For instance, mentally retarded defendants are deemed less capable and are significantly less likely to receive severe sentences. Psychopaths deemed as mentally ill may be deemed less culpable, or may be sentenced to treatment programs that are not suitable for psychopaths and released into society prematurely.

The potential consequences of mislabeling could therefore be profound, especially for youth. The scenario perhaps most deserving of attention is the situation where an individual who is not a psychopath, is labeled as such. Due to the saliency of specific traits in relation to psychopathy, it would not be difficult to imagine that an individual described as criminal, superficially charming and manipulative may be thought of as

psychopathic. Yet psychopathy is a constellation of a number of behavioural and interpersonal traits, and very few will possess the unique combination of traits described by the PCL-R to warrant the diagnosis. This is not to undermine the dangerousness of non-psychopathic criminals, of course, but merely to stress that the label should not be applied frivolously to any criminal who appears unsympathetic due to its pejorative nature. Especially among youth, there is evidence to suggest that those with psychopathic tendencies do have some success with treatment, yet research also reports that juvenile probation officers are less likely to support treatment for those youth who are deemed psychopathic. Thus, an individual who may merely have conduct disorder, attention-deficit disorder, or oppositional defiant disorder, but is mislabeled as a psychopath, could have unfair advantages in terms of how she or he is dealt with interpersonally by staff, and in terms of treatment options. Individuals comprising these other diagnostic categories need treatment as well, and may not receive the appropriate management once the psychopathic label is applied.

Limitations

The present study provided a multitude of descriptive information that is qualitatively useful when examining the content of a variety of communication sources offering the public information about psychopathy. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the data collection, more advanced statistical analyses were not conducted. This type of research however has its own value, and nevertheless provides a revealing glimpse into how the media portrays the psychopath. With the guidance of social learning theory, further predictions may be made and research conducted regarding how these portrayals may influence people's actual behaviours.

Another limitation was the low sensitivity of the coding manual. In order to collect a large quantity of data quickly, broad categories were created which often suppressed some of the richness and detail of the data where more than one response was evident. Where possible, additional variables were created to capture this variance (e.g., in the case of gender, “both” was added). However, due to the complexity of the data, and the myriad of different coding options which could potentially arise, a choice was made which best represented the focus of the article, and notes were made on the coding sheet for later anecdotal reference. Also in this respect, APD and psychopathy were not separated in this analysis. This was not likely problematic in this study, since the frequency of APD was extremely low. However, comparisons between APD descriptions and psychopathy on a larger scale media study would be informative.

Another limitation was the choice of newspapers chosen to perform the content analysis, since these papers target a specific (albeit wide) demographic and all are relatively similar in content. In other words, these newspapers may provide significantly different portraits of psychopathy than, for example, tabloid newspapers. It was initially the intent of the author to also explore these other newspapers, however electronic access to tabloid newspapers was extremely limited.

Future Directions

The present study was a preliminary analysis to determine what the media has been presenting to the public about psychopathy. The next step then, would be to determine whether this type of media is effective in changing attitudes and beliefs in a given direction, and whether these modified beliefs (if attitudes are affected) actually influence behaviour (e.g., legal decision-making). In other words, future research should

examine how the information presented in the media directly influences thoughts and beliefs. Social learning theory could be used to explain models of cognition for determining what types of information about psychopathy are more likely to be retrieved and retained, and to explain why. Cultivation theory could inform determinations of whether increased exposure to certain types of media content results in differential attitudes or amplified fears about psychopathy and criminality. The present study can only speculate as to how this information will influence the way people view psychopathy. Mock jury research similar to that of Edens and associates (2003) using case vignettes inserting psychopathic traits or diagnostic labels should be employed to determine how people respond to psychopathic offenders in criminal proceedings. Mock jurors should be questioned to determine the amount of media they consume, and from what different sources. As well, pre and post attitudes about psychopathy should be assessed. Ultimately, similar to methodologies employed for the purposes of media effects and mental illness, cultivation and social learning theories combined with experimental research could assist in explaining how people's experiences of the media translate into actual behaviour and cognitions in real-world decision-making scenarios regarding psychopathy.

An exploration of tabloid newspapers or popular magazines, as well as television and movies may also be important to capture the full spectrum of media which presents varying pictures of psychopathy. As a further extension of Deifenbach's (1997) work on mental illness as represented on television, it would also be interesting to identify and compare the percentage of psychopaths represented in the media with the proportion of psychopaths estimated to exist in the real world.

Conclusions

The present analysis found that psychopathy was described fairly consistently and accurately across time and different newspapers, despite an overemphasis on violent behaviour in newspapers and the presence of mental illness themes across all media sources. The main difference existed between Internet material and newspaper content, since all newspapers described the psychopath as criminal, cold and unemotional, and superficially charming, with criminality overwhelmingly the number one descriptor. The Internet focused slightly less on criminal activity, describing the psychopath as cold and unemotional, deceptive, and superficially charming; however, criminality and superficial charm were reported in roughly the same number of websites, and therefore criminality and violence was still an important attribute. Still, only three websites discussed specific crimes, and therefore the focus of the Internet was more informative and information based. Conversely, newspaper articles with psychopathic terms often discussed psychopathy in relation to specific, terrible crimes, most of which focused on the violence as a central, significant theme. Furthermore, it was found that mental health themes were presented in relation to psychopathy in newspapers and the Internet, but not overwhelmingly so, as criminal themes tended to be the predominant focus of newspapers. Treatment issues were rarely discussed in newspapers; when treatment issues were presented opinions about treatment amenability were mixed but still in the direction of “untreatable”. The Internet however discussed treatment in almost half of websites, in which 80% expressed that psychopaths were not treatable.

Additionally, an important finding was how psychopaths were depicted as murderous since, where crimes were mentioned, the majority of psychopathic labels were

assigned to individuals who had commit homicides. While some research does support the overrepresentation of psychopathy among homicide offenders, the percentages of homicides committed by psychopaths as presented by the media in the present study were overwhelming. Psychopath became a term that was nearly synonymous with murderer in many instances; this would make the label extremely dangerous if improperly applied. These concerns are amplified for youth, especially in light of recent research reporting that psychopathic features among juvenile offenders impact on the decision-making of juvenile probation officers.

The media is an important information center and will continue to inform public opinions, and reflect social attitudes. To reiterate the statement made by Surette (1992): “We are a media nation” (p. ix). The Internet now offers the public with unlimited access to a wide range of media sources. Our conceptions of the world and our beliefs about different types of people are shaped in part by what we experience vicariously through the media. If a communication outlet can be so powerful, as research suggests that in some instances it is, the effect it has on our attitudes, especially when the decisions we make in some regards can have profound effects on public safety (e.g., the decision to incarcerate, treat, or release an offender) certainly deserves attention.

Consequently, implications of this research could impact the manner in which experts testify about psychopathy, the ways in which probation officers are trained, how jury members are selected and also how judges charge juries. Individuals within the criminal justice system will be responsible for not misrepresenting the construct, however this will be difficult in an adversarial system. Researchers will have a responsibility to promote awareness regarding how potentially dangerous the psychopathic label can be,

and conversely, to illuminate the possibility of observing a psychopath in less typical settings (e.g., in the workforce), or as a less typical candidate (e.g., a woman). For now, more research is needed to provide concrete evidence that media about psychopathy influences attitudes, and that these attitudes do in fact influence behaviours.

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Appendix A

Newspaper Coding Manual

A) *Article Characteristics*

1. Newspaper title *The Globe and Mail* (1)
 The New York Times (2)
 New Times (3)

2. Date of newspaper _____ / _____ / _____ (mm/dd/yyyy)

3. Article title

4. Document type

<input type="checkbox"/> News (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Interview (6)
<input type="checkbox"/> Editorial (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Book/movie review (7)
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts & Entertainment (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational (8)
<input type="checkbox"/> Biography (4)	<input type="checkbox"/> General information (9)
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter (5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (10)

5. Theme of article

<input type="checkbox"/> Crime (1)
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health (2)
<input type="checkbox"/> Business (3)
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (5)

6. Length of source (text word count) _____

7. Location of article (indicate page that the headline appears) _____

8. Indicate the term found in the article:

<input type="checkbox"/> Psychopath (1)
<input type="checkbox"/> Sociopath (2)
<input type="checkbox"/> APD (3)
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychopath AND sociopath (4)
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychopath OR sociopath AND APD (5)
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychopath AND sociopath AND APD (6)

9. Was the term a major focus of the article?

Yes (1) No (2)

10. **Headline/article congruence (Does the headline reflect the article content?)**

Accurately (1) Moderately (2) Inaccurately (3)

11. **Reference to empirical literature or expert opinion regarding the search term(s)? (Does the article cite empirical research, refer to academic researchers, or rely on expert testimony to support claims?)**

Yes (1) No (2)

12. **If 11 is yes, what is the nature of the expert/information?**

- Academic/psychologist (e.g., Robert Hare) (1)
- Doctor/psychiatrist (2)
- Other (e.g., police, judge) (3)

13. **Sensational or dramatic content?**

Does it appear that the subject matter, language, or style of the article is intended to shock or excite the public? Does it appear that the nature or extent of problems or issues are being overstated, dramatized, or amplified; or does the content of the article seem excessively vulgar or scandalous, or read more like a novel than factual reporting?

Example 1. Dramatic Reporting: “As Justice Roberts finished speaking, and applause reverberated over his call for order, Mr. Giles stood up at the defense table, picked up his possessions and, smiling slightly, turned for a moment to face the courtroom gallery. Then, escorted by the officers, he left the room” (Daniels, 1980, p. B1). See Example 1 in Appendix B, for an example of sensational reporting.

Definitely (1) Somewhat (2) Not at all (3) Uncertain (4)

B) *Personal Characteristics of Central Character(s)*

1. **Gender** Male (1) Female (2) Unknown (77) N/A (888)

2. **Age** _____ Unknown (77) N/A (888)

3. **Race**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown (77) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic (4) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A (888) |

4. List any personality or behavioural characteristics (adjectives) which are used to describe the individual. Traits which are implicit within behavioural description(s) or personal comments should also be provided (see Example 1 – a clear lack of remorse is demonstrated from the first sentence of the example).

Example 3: “That report portrayed him as a virtually incorrigible juvenile who had been arrested and incarcerated three times before...” (Daniels, 1980, p. B1).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Glibness/superficial charm (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Promiscuous sexual behavior (11) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandiose sense of self worth (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Early behavioral problems (12) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Need for stimulation/ prone to boredom (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks realistic/long term goals (13) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pathological lying (4) | <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsivity (14) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conning/manipulative (5) | <input type="checkbox"/> Irresponsibility (15) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of remorse or guilt (6) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fails to accept responsibility (16) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shallow affect (7) | <input type="checkbox"/> Many short-term relationships (17) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Callous/lacks empathy (8) | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile delinquency (18) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parasitic lifestyle (9) | <input type="checkbox"/> Revocation of release (19) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor behavioral controls (10) | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal versatility (20) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All APD criteria (222) | |

5. Mental illness theme? Is mental illness mentioned at all in the article, or does the report allude to the possibility of a mental problem?

- Explicitly (1) Tacitly (2) No (3)

6. If question 5 is yes (explicitly or tacitly), describe the type of illness expressed or alluded to.

- Psychotic disorder (e.g., schizophrenia spectrum) (1)
- Major depression (2)
- Bipolar disorder (3)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (4)
- Insanity (5)
- General (e.g., referred to as “mental illness” or “He had a history of psychiatric problems”) (6)
- Other (7)
- N/A (888)

7. Is there explicit differentiation made between the search terms (psychopath/sociopath/APD) and mental illness or insanity? Debate means that there is more than one opinion expressed in the article.

- Yes (1) No (2) Debate (3) N/A (888)

C) *Violence/Criminal Offending*

NOTE: Code the following section only if the article contains a crime theme (question A.5), AND the type of document is one which discusses a crime (real or fictional) of which there is an identifiable offender.

1. Crime type (for multiple crimes, check MOST SEVERE crime)

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homicide or attempted homicide (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Arson (6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assault (non-sexual) (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Theft (7) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual assault (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fraud (8) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance related (4) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (9) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burglary (5) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A (888) |

2. Violence involved? (Beyond physical force, violence includes immoral or unjust exertion of power, as against human rights, or physical damages incurred as the result of an action or treatment; e.g., death caused by drug injection).

- Yes (1) No (2) N/A

3. Violence type

- Instrumental: violence which is goal-directed and purposeful (Were there indications of planning or manipulation to achieve some goal?). (1)
- Reactive: violence which is a spontaneous, hostile response to a perceived provocation (Was the behaviour an impulsive reaction, or a spur-of-the-moment offence?). (2)
- Unknown (77)
- N/A (888)

4. Motive apparent?

- Yes (1) No (2) Unknown (77) N/A (888)

5. Number of victims _____ Unknown (77) N/A (888)

6. Repeat offender? (Are there reports of offences/convictions PRIOR to index offence/charge)

- Yes (1) No (2) Unknown (77)

7. Type of victim injury (for multiple victims, check MOST SEVERE injury)

- Mild (no hospitalization required) (1)
- Moderate (hospitalization, with same-day release) (2)

- Severe (prolonged hospital stay) (3)
- Fatal (death of victim) (4)
- Unknown (77)
- N/A (888)

8. Type of victim(s)

- Adult (18 years of age or older) (1)
- Children (2)
- Both (3)
- Unknown (77)
- N/A (888)

9. Significance of violence to the story

- Low significance (not the main theme of the story) (1)
- Medium significance (somewhat related to the story) (2)
- High significance (central to the story) (3)
- N/A (888)

10. Treatment issues (e.g., rehabilitation efforts) referred to in story?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

11. If 10 is yes, what does the discussion state or imply?

- Treatable (1)
- Not treatable (2)
- Debate (3)
- Unsure (4)

12. Type of offender comments

- Contrition (1)
- Indifferent (4)
- Minimization (2)
- None (5)
- Denial (3)
- N/A (888)

Appendix B

Internet Coding Manual

A) *Website Characteristics*

1. Website uniform resource locator (url)

2. Date of website ____ / ____ / ____ (dd/mm/yyyy)

3. Title of website

4. Website type

- News (1)
- General information (2)
- Arts & Entertainment (e.g., quiz, movie site) (3)
- Blog/discussion forum (4)
- Education (e.g., lecture) (5)
- Other (6)

5. Theme of website

- Crime (1)
- Mental health (2)
- Business (3)
- Arts & Entertainment (4)
- Other (5)

6. Length of source (text word count) _____

7. Rank of website (e.g., result number 11 out of 22,440,000 results) _____

8. Indicate the term found in the website:

- Psychopath (1)
- Sociopath (2)
- APD (3)
- Psychopath AND sociopath (4)
- Psychopath OR sociopath AND APD (5)
- Psychopath AND sociopath AND APD (6)

9. Was the term a major focus of the website?

- Yes (1) No (2)

10. Reference to empirical literature or expert opinion regarding the search term(s)? (Does the article cite empirical research, refer to academic researchers, or rely on expert testimony to support claims?)? OR, does the website refer the reader to another website which offers this information?

- Yes (1) No (2)

11. If 10 is yes, what is the nature of the expert/information?

- Academic/psychologist (e.g., Robert Hare) (1)
 Doctor/psychiatrist (2)
 Other (3) (e.g., police, judge)

12. Sensational or dramatic content?

Does it appear that the subject matter, language, or style of the website is intended to shock or excite the reader? Does it appear that the nature or extent of problems or issues are being overstated, dramatized, or amplified; or does the website content seem excessively vulgar or scandalous, or read more like a novel than factual reporting?

Example 1. Sensational Reporting: “In 1979, sixteen-year-old Brenda Spencer received a rifle for her birthday. She used it to shoot kids at an elementary school near her San Diego home, wounding nine and killing two. A reporter asked her later why she had done it. Her answer: ‘I don't like Mondays. This livens up the day’” (Ramsland, n.d., <www.crimelibrary.com>). See Example 1 in Appendix A for an example of dramatic reporting.

- Definitely (1) Somewhat (2) Not at all (3) Uncertain (4)

B) *Personal Characteristics of Central Character(s)*

1. Gender Male (1) Female (2) Unknown (77) N/A (888)

2. Age _____ Unknown (77) N/A (888)

3. Race

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown (77) |

Hispanic (4)

N/A (888)

4. List any personality or behavioural characteristics (adjectives) which are used to describe the individual. Traits which are implicit within behavioural description(s) or personal comments should also be provided (see Example 1 – a clear lack of remorse is demonstrated by the comment made in the final sentence of the example).

Example 3: “It is generally believed that they have failed to develop affectional bonds that allow them to empathize with another's pain [lack of empathy]. What they have developed are traits of arrogance, dishonesty, narcissism, shamelessness, and callousness.”

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Glibness/superficial charm (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Promiscuous sexual behavior (11) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandiose sense of self worth (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Early behavioral problems (12) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Need for stimulation/ prone to boredom (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks realistic/long term goals (13) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pathological lying (4) | <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsivity (14) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conning/manipulative (5) | <input type="checkbox"/> Irresponsibility (15) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of remorse or guilt (6) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fails to accept responsibility (16) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shallow affect (7) | <input type="checkbox"/> Many short-term relationships (17) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Callous/lacks empathy (8) | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile delinquency (18) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parasitic lifestyle (9) | <input type="checkbox"/> Revocation of conditional release (19) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor behavioral controls (10) | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal versatility (20) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All APD criteria (222) | |

5. Mental illness theme? Does the website allude to the possibility of a mental problem?

Explicitly (1)

Tacitly (2)

No (3)

6. If question 5 is yes (explicitly or tacitly), describe the type of illness expressed or alluded to.

- Psychotic disorder (e.g., schizophrenia spectrum) (1)
- Major depression (2)
- Bipolar disorder (3)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (4)
- Insanity (5)
- General (e.g., referred to as “mentally ill” or “He had a history of psychiatric problems”) (6)
- Other (7)
- N/A (888)

7. Is there explicit differentiation made between the search terms (psychopath/sociopath/APD) and mental illness or insanity?

Yes (1) No (2) Debate (3) N/A (888)

C) *Violence/Criminal Offending*

NOTE: Code the following section only if the website contains a crime theme (question A.5), AND the type of document is one which discusses a crime (real or fictional) of which there is an identifiable offender.

1. Crime type (for multiple crimes, check MOST SEVERE)

Homicide (1) Arson (6)
 Assault (non-sexual) (2) Theft (7)
 Sexual assault (3) Fraud (8)
 Substance related (4) Other (9)
 Burglary (5) N/A (888)

2. Violence involved? (Beyond physical force, violence includes immoral or unjust exertion of power, as against human rights, or physical damages incurred as the result of an action or treatment; e.g., death caused by drug injection).

Yes (1) No (2) N/A (888)

3. Violence type

Instrumental: violence which is goal-directed and purposeful (Were there indications of planning or manipulation to achieve some goal?). (1)
 Reactive: violence which is a spontaneous, hostile response to a perceived provocation (Was the behaviour an impulsive reaction, or a spur-of-the-moment offence?). (2)
 Unknown (77)
 N/A (888)

4. Motive apparent?

Yes (1) No (2) Unknown (77) N/A (888)

5. Number of victims _____ Unknown (77) N/A (888)

6. Repeat offender? (Are there reports of offences/convictions PRIOR to index offence/offences)

Yes (1) No (2) Unknown (77)

7. Type of victim injury (for multiple victims, check MOST SEVERE injury)

Mild (no hospitalization required) (1)
 Moderate (hospitalization, with same-day release) (2)

- Severe (prolonged hospital stay) (3)
- Fatal (death of victim) (4)
- Unknown (77)
- N/A (888)

8. Type of victim(s)

- Adult (18 years of age or older) (1)
- Children (2)
- Both (3)
- Unknown (77)
- N/A (888)

9. Significance of violence to the website

- Low significance (not the main theme of the website) (1)
- Medium significance (somewhat related to the website) (2)
- High significance (central to the website) (3)
- N/A (888)

10. Treatment issues (e.g., rehabilitation efforts) referred to?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

11. If 10 is yes, what does the discussion state or imply?

- Treatable (1)
- Not treatable (2)
- Debate (3)
- Unsure (4)

12. Type of offender comments

- Contrition (1)
- Minimization (2)
- Denial (3)
- Indifferent (4)
- None (5)
- N/A (888)

Appendix C

Newspaper Coding Sheet

A) Article Characteristics

1. Newspaper title _____
2. Date of newspaper _____ / _____ / _____ (mm/dd/yyyy)
3. Article title

4. Document type _____
5. Theme of article _____
6. Length of source _____
7. Location of article _____
8. Term _____
9. Major focus? _____
10. Congruence _____
11. Expert opinion? _____
12. Nature of expert _____
13. Sensational content? _____

B) Personal Characteristics of Central Character(s)

1. Gender _____
2. Age _____
3. Race _____
4. PCL-R Traits _____

Additional traits

5. Mental illness? _____

6. Illness type _____

7. Differentiation? _____

C) Violence/Criminal Offending

1. Crime type _____

2. Violence? _____

3. Violence type _____

4. Motive? _____

5. Number of victims _____

6. Repeat offender? _____

7. Victim injury _____

8. Victim type _____

9. Violence significance _____

10. Treatment? _____

11. Treatable? _____

12. Offender comments? _____

Appendix D

Internet Coding Sheet

A) *Website Characteristics*

1. Website uniform resource locator (url)

2. Date of website ____ ____ / ____ ____ / ____ ____ (dd/mm/yyyy)

3. Title of website

4. Website type _____

5. Theme of website _____

6. Length of website _____

7. Rank of website _____

8. Term _____

9. Major focus? _____

10. Expert opinion? _____

11. Nature of expert _____

12. Sensational content? _____

B) *Personal Characteristics of Central Character(s)*

1. Gender _____

2. Age _____

3. Race _____

4. PCL-R Traits _____

Additional traits _____

5. Mental illness? _____

6. Illness type _____

7. Differentiation? _____

C) Violence/Criminal Offending

1. Crime type _____

2. Violence? _____

3. Violence type _____

4. Motive? _____

5. Number of victims _____

6. Repeat offender? _____

7. Victim injury _____

8. Victim type _____

9. Violence significance _____

10. Treatment? _____

11. Treatable? _____

12. Offender comments? _____

Appendix E

Tables Providing Reported PCL-R Traits

Table 8.1

Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported in the Globe and Mail for Central Characters

Trait	Rank	Frequency ($n = 99$)
Criminality	1	68
Shallow affect	2	27
Glibness/superficial charm	3	14
Juvenile delinquency	4	13
Conning/manipulative	5	12
Lying	6	9
Grandiose sense of self worth	6	9
Promiscuous sexual behavior	8	6
Poor behavioral controls	8	6
Need for stimulation/prone to boredom	10	5
Early behavioral problems	11	4
Revocation of release	11	4
Irresponsibility	11	4
Lack of realistic/long term goals	14	3
Impulsivity	14	3
Failure to accept responsibility	14	3
Numerous short-term relationships	14	3
Parasitic lifestyle	18	2

Table 8.2

Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported in the New York Times for Central Characters

Trait	Rank	Frequency ($n = 99$)
Criminality	1	50
Glibness/superficial charm	2	13
Shallow affect	3	12
Lying	4	11
Poor behavioral controls	4	11

Grandiose sense of self worth	6	8
Early behavioral problems	7	4
Juvenile delinquency	7	4
Conning/manipulative	9	3
Parasitic lifestyle	9	3
Failure to accept responsibility	11	2
Numerous short-term relationships	11	2
Promiscuous sexual behavior	13	1
Irresponsibility	13	1
Impulsivity	13	1
Need for stimulation/prone to boredom	16	0
Revocation of release	16	0
Lack of realistic/long term goals	16	0

Table 8.3

Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported in the Times for Central Characters

Trait	Rank	Frequency (<i>n</i> = 83)
Criminality	1	52
Shallow affect	2	14
Glibness/superficial charm	3	12
Grandiose sense of self worth	4	10
Lying	5	9
Poor behavioral controls	5	9
Impulsivity	7	5
Conning/manipulative	7	5
Juvenile delinquency	9	4
Promiscuous sexual behavior	9	4
Irresponsibility	9	4
Parasitic lifestyle	12	3
Failure to accept responsibility	13	2
Numerous short-term relationships	13	2
Early behavioral problems	15	1
Lack of realistic/long term goals	15	1
Need for stimulation/prone to boredom	17	0
Revocation of release	17	0

Table 8.4

Frequency of Psychopathic Traits Reported on Internet Websites

Trait	Rank	Frequency	%
Shallow affect	1	44	93.6
Lying	2	36	76.6
Glibness/superficial charm	3	32	68.1
Criminality	4	31	66.0
Conning/manipulative	5	30	63.8
Irresponsibility	6	25	53.2
Impulsivity	7	24	51.1
Poor behavioral controls	8	23	48.9
Grandiose sense of self worth	9	22	46.8
Need for stimulation/prone to boredom	10	19	40.4
Juvenile delinquency	11	14	29.8
Numerous short-term relationships	11	14	29.8
Early behavioral problems	11	14	29.8
Parasitic lifestyle	14	12	25.5
Lack of realistic/long term goals	14	12	25.5
Failure to accept responsibility	16	11	23.4
Promiscuous sexual behavior	17	9	19.1
Revocation of release	18	5	10.6

Table 8.5

Frequency of the Top Psychopathic Traits Reported for Psychopathic Individuals when Psychopathy is the Central Focus of the Article (n = 38)

Trait	Rank	Frequency	%
Criminality	1	29	76.3
Shallow affect	2	17	45.9
Lying	3	11	29.7
Glibness/superficial charm	4	10	26.3
Grandiose sense of self worth	5	9	23.7
Juvenile delinquency	6	8	21.6
Conning/manipulative	7	7	18.4
Poor behavioral controls	7	7	18.4
Need for stimulation/prone to boredom	9	4	10.8
Irresponsibility	9	4	10.8
Early behavioral problems	9	4	10.8

Appendix F

Tables Providing Selected Variables Within Newspapers and Across Time

Table 9.1

Comparison of Variables for the Globe and Mail Across Time Periods

Variable	1980s	1990s	2000s
<i>Article characteristics – n (%)</i>			
Type			
News article	13 (39.4)	5 (15.2)	7 (21.2)
Arts & Entertainment article	19 (57.5)	20 (60.6)	17 (51.5)
Theme			
Crime theme	17 (51.5)	13 (39.4)	12 (36.4)
Entertainment theme	15 (45.5)	5 (15.2)	16 (48.5)
Business theme	0 (0.0)	5 (15.2)	0 (0.0)
Title contains search term	2 (6.1)	1 (3.0)	5 (15.2)
Search term is major focus	5 (15.2)	5 (15.2)	5 (15.2)
Expert	10 (30.3)	8 (24.2)	5 (15.2)
Doctor/psychiatrist	10 (100.0)	3 (37.5)	4 (57.1)
Academic	0 (0.0)	5 (62.5)	2 (16.7)
Definite sensational content	13 (39.4)	13 (39.4)	19 (57.6)
<i>Personal characteristics – n (%)</i>			
Male gender	27 (93.1)	22 (91.7)	21 (84.0)
Caucasian race	4 (57.1)	5 (55.6)	10 (69.2)
Mean age*	26.3	32.0	39.0
<i>PCL-R traits – n (%)</i>			
Mean PCL traits*	1.7	2.2	2.1
1	2 (6.1)	5 (15.2)	7 (21.2)
2	3 (9.1)	4 (12.1)	2 (6.1)
3	1 (3.0)	2 (6.1)	2 (6.1)
4	0 (0.0)	3 (9.1)	6 (18.2)
5	1 (3.0)	7 (21.2)	4 (12.1)
6	10 (30.3)	9 (27.3)	8 (24.2)
9	0 (0.0)	1 (3.0)	1 (3.0)

10	3 (9.1)	2 (6.1)	1 (3.0)
11	1 (3.0)	4 (12.1)	1 (3.0)
12	1 (3.0)	2 (6.1)	1 (3.0)
13	1 (3.0)	1 (3.0)	1 (3.0)
14	1 (3.0)	1 (3.0)	1 (3.0)
15	0 (0.0)	2 (6.1)	2 (6.1)
16	1 (3.0)	1 (3.0)	1 (3.0)
17	0 (0.0)	2 (6.1)	1 (3.0)
18	6 (18.2)	4 (12.1)	3 (9.1)
19	0 (0.0)	2 (6.1)	2 (6.1)
20	25 (75.8)	19 (57.6)	24 (72.7)
<hr/>			
Mental health – <i>n</i> (%)			
Mental illness theme	15 (45.5)	6 (18.2)	10 (31.3)
Psychotic or insane	8 (57.1)	1 (33.3)	4 (50.0)
No differentiation	12 (85.7)	4 (66.7)	6 (88.9)
Treatment	3 (9.1)	3 (9.1)	2 (6.1)
Untreatable	2 (66.7)	2 (100.0)	2 (100.0)
<hr/>			
Crime Characteristics – <i>n</i> (%)	(<i>n</i> = 16)	(<i>n</i> = 10)	(<i>n</i> = 10)
Homicide (or attempted)	10 (62.5)	9 (90.0)	8 (80.0)
Sexual assault w/out murder	3 (18.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (10.0)
Violence	15 (88.2)	9 (100.0)	8 (80.0)
Instrumental violence	9 (75.0)	7 (100.0)	6 (100.0)
Motive	5 (62.5)	6 (100.0)	2 (100.0)
Repeat offender	8 (88.9)	6 (100.0)	2 (100.0)
Child victim	2 (16.7)	5 (71.4)	6 (75.0)
High violence significance	9 (56.3)	6 (66.7)	8 (100.0)
Offender response ^a	3 (9.1)	2 (100.0)	3 (100.0)
Number of victims*	3.2	3.3	6.7

Note. Statistics based on available, reported data (values coded “unknown” are not part of computed percentages).

* Reported statistics are mean values.

^a Offender response here includes denial, minimization, justification and indifference; not included are contrition or “no comment”.

Table 9.2

Comparison of Variables for the New York Times Across Time Periods

Variable	1980s	1990s	2000s
Article characteristics – <i>n</i> (%)			
Type			
News article	6 (18.2)	6 (17.6)	6 (18.8)
Arts & Entertainment article	26 (78.7)	25 (76.5)	23 (71.9)
Theme			
Crime theme	14 (42.4)	13 (38.2)	17 (53.1)
Entertainment theme	16 (48.5)	17 (50.0)	9 (28.1)
Business theme	0 (0.0)	1 (2.9)	2 (6.3)
Title contains search term	0 (0.0)	2 (5.9)	1 (3.1)
Search term is major focus	2 (6.1)	1 (2.9)	2 (6.3)
Expert			
Doctor/psychiatrist	4 (12.1)	4 (11.8)	3 (9.4)
Academic	1 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	0 (0.0)	4 (100.0)	2 (75.0)
Definite sensational content	7 (21.2)	12 (35.3)	2 (6.3)
Personal characteristics – <i>n</i> (%)			
Male gender	20 (87.0)	26 (96.3)	21 (95.5)
Caucasian race	3 (75.0)	6 (60.0)	4 (80.0)
Mean age*	21.1	26.3	21.5
PCL-R traits – <i>n</i> (%)			
Mean PCL traits*	1.0	1.3	1.6
1	3 (9.1)	1 (2.9)	9 (28.1)
2	2 (6.1)	3 (8.8)	3 (9.4)
3	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
4	2 (6.1)	4 (11.8)	5 (15.6)
5	1 (3.0)	2 (5.9)	0 (0.0)
7	3 (9.1)	5 (14.7)	4 (12.5)
9	0 (0.0)	2 (5.9)	1 (3.1)
10	3 (9.1)	2 (5.9)	6 (18.8)
11	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.1)
12	1 (3.0)	1 (2.9)	2 (6.3)
13	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
14	0 (0.0)	1 (2.9)	0 (0.0)
15	0 (0.0)	1 (2.9)	0 (0.0)

16	0 (0.0)	1 (2.9)	1 (3.1)
17	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.1)
18	1 (3.0)	1 (2.9)	2 (6.3)
19	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
20	15 (45.0)	20 (58.8)	15 (46.9)
<hr/>			
Mental health – <i>n</i> (%)			
Mental illness theme	10 (30.3)	6 (17.6)	5 (15.6)
Psychotic or insane	7 (87.5)	5 (83.3)	4 (80.0)
No differentiation	9 (90.0)	4 (66.7)	4 (80.0)
Treatment	1 (3.0)	1 (2.9)	1 (3.1)
Untreatable	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0) ^a
<hr/>			
Crime Characteristics – <i>n</i> (%)	(<i>n</i> = 14)	(<i>n</i> = 8)	(<i>n</i> = 7)
Homicide (or attempted)	10 (71.4)	6 (75.0)	7 (100.0)
Sexual assault w/out murder	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Violence	12 (85.7)	7 (100.0)	7 (100.0)
Instrumental violence	10 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	5 (83.3)
Motive	3 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	2 (66.7)
Repeat offender	7 (100.0)	4 (66.7)	4 (80.0)
Severe or fatal victim injury	9 (90.0)	6 (100.0)	7 (100.0)
Child victim	4 (40.0)	5 (100.0)	2 (28.6)
High violence significance	3 (25.0)	6 (85.7)	5 (71.4)
Offender response ^b	2 (100.0)	3 (75.0)	2 (66.6)
Number of victims*	2.2	19.1	2.0
<hr/>			

Note. Statistics based on available, reported data (values coded “unknown” are not part of computed percentage).

* Reported statistics are mean values.

^a No indication regarding how psychopaths respond to treatment.

^b Offender response here includes denial, minimization, justification and indifference; not included are contrition or “no comment”.

Table 9.3

Comparison of Variables for the Times Across Time Periods

Variable	1980s	1990s	2000s
<i>Article characteristics – n (%)</i>			
<i>Type</i>			
News article	4 (23.5)	16 (48.5)	12 (36.4)
Arts & Entertainment article	10 (58.8)	10 (30.3)	12 (36.4)
<i>Theme</i>			
Crime theme	6 (35.3)	16 (48.5)	15 (45.5)
Entertainment theme	8 (47.1)	8 (24.2)	10 (30.3)
Business theme	0 (0.0)	1 (3.0)	2 (6.1)
Mental health theme	1 (5.9)	6 (18.2)	6 (18.2)
Title contains search term	1 (5.9)	3 (9.1)	4 (12.1)
Search term is major focus	4 (23.5)	6 (18.2)	8 (24.2)
Expert	3 (17.6)	9 (27.3)	15 (45.5)
Doctor/psychiatrist	2 (66.7)	3 (30.0)	8 (46.7)
Academic	1 (33.3)	4 (40.0)	6 (33.3)
Definite sensational content	2 (11.8)	4 (12.1)	5 (15.2)
<i>Personal characteristics – n (%)</i>			
Male gender	11 (100.0)	23 (82.1)	20 (95.2)
Caucasian race	2 (100.0)	5 (62.5)	4 (80.0)
Mean age*	23.0	32.2	33.0
<i>PCL-R traits – n (%)</i>			
Mean PCL traits*	1.7	0.9	2.5
1	2 (11.8)	1 (3.0)	9 (27.3)
2	2 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	8 (24.2)
3	1 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	4 (12.5)
4	1 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	7 (21.9)
5	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (15.2)
7	2 (11.8)	1 (3.0)	11 (34.4)
9	0 (0.0)	1 (3.0)	2 (6.1)
10	3 (17.6)	2 (6.1)	4 (12.1)
11	0 (0.0)	3 (9.1)	1 (3.0)
12	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.1)
13	0 (0.0)	1 (3.0)	0 (0.0)

14	3 (17.6)	0 (0.0)	2 (6.3)
15	1 (5.9)	1 (3.0)	2 (6.3)
16	2 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
17	1 (5.9)	1 (3.0)	0 (0.0)
18	1 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	3 (9.4)
19	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
20	10 (58.8)	19 (57.6)	23 (69.7)

Mental health – *n* (%)

Mental illness theme	6 (35.3)	11 (33.3)	9 (27.3)
Psychotic or insane	1 (16.7)	6 (66.7)	6 (66.7)
No differentiation	6 (100.0)	5 (83.3)	4 (44.4)
Treatment	1 (5.9)	2 (6.1)	6 (18.2)
Untreatable	0 (0.0) ^a	1 (50.0)	2 (83.3)

Crime Characteristics – *n* (%)

	(<i>n</i> = 5)	(<i>n</i> = 13)	(<i>n</i> = 15)
Homicide (or attempted)	3 (60.0)	8 (61.5)	15 (100.0)
Sexual assault w/out murder	1 (20.0)	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)
Violence	5 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	15 (100.0)
Instrumental violence	3 (100.0)	8 (88.9)	10 (90.9)
Motive	1 (50.0)	2 (66.7)	3 (75.0)
Repeat offender	3 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	9 (100.0)
Severe or fatal victim injury	4 (100.0)	9 (75.0)	15 (100.0)
Child victim	0 (0.0)	3 (27.3)	2 (18.2)
High violence significance	5 (100.0)	9 (69.2)	13 (86.7)
Offender reaction ^b	0 (0.0)	2 (100.0)	6 (85.7)
Mean number of victims*	6.0	2.5	8.2

Note. Statistics based on available, reported data (values coded “unknown” are not part of computed percentage).

* Reported statistics are mean values.

^a No indication regarding how psychopaths respond to treatment.

^b Offender response here includes denial, minimization, justification and indifference; not included are contrition or “no comment”.

Table 9.4

Comparison of Variables for all Newspapers Across Time Periods

Variable	1980s (<i>N</i> = 83)	1990s (<i>N</i> = 100)	2000s (<i>N</i> = 98)
Article characteristics – <i>n</i> (%)			
Type			
News article	23 (27.7)	27 (27.0)	25 (25.2)
Arts & Entertainment article	55 (66.2)	56 (56.0)	52 (53.0)
Theme			
Crime theme	37 (44.6)	40 (40.0)	44 (44.9)
Entertainment theme	39 (47.0)	38 (38.0)	36 (36.7)
Business theme	0 (0.0)	7 (7.0)	7 (7.1)
Mental health theme	3 (3.6)	4 (4.0)	7 (7.1)
Title contains search term	3 (3.6)	6 (6.0)	10 (10.2)
Search term is major focus	11 (13.3)	12 (12.0)	15 (15.3)
Expert	17 (20.5)	21 (21.0)	23 (23.5)
Doctor/psychiatrist	13 (66.7)	6 (27.3)	12 (50.0)
Academic	1 (5.9)	13 (59.1)	9 (37.5)
Definite sensational content	22 (26.5)	28 (28.6)	25 (26.0)
Personal characteristics – <i>n</i> (%)			
Male gender	58 (92.1)	71 (89.9)	63 (91.3)
Caucasian race	9 (69.2)	16 (59.2)	17 (73.9)
Mean age*	23.8	30.0	33.7
PCL-R traits – <i>n</i> (%)			
Mean PCL traits*	1.4	1.5	2.1
1	7 (8.4)	7 (3.0)	25 (25.5)
2	7 (8.4)	7 (7.0)	13 (13.3)
3	2 (2.4)	2 (2.0)	6 (6.2)
4	3 (3.6)	8 (8.0)	18 (18.6)
5	2 (2.4)	9 (9.0)	9 (9.2)
7	15 (18.1)	15 (15.0)	23 (23.7)
9	0 (0.0)	4 (4.0)	4 (4.1)
10	9 (10.8)	6 (6.0)	11 (11.2)
11	1 (1.2)	7 (7.0)	3 (3.1)
12	2 (2.4)	3 (3.0)	4 (4.1)

13	1 (1.2)	2 (2.0)	1 (1.0)
14	4 (4.8)	2 (2.0)	3 (3.1)
15	1 (1.2)	4 (4.0)	4 (4.1)
16	3 (3.6)	2 (2.0)	2 (2.1)
17	2 (2.4)	3 (3.0)	2 (2.1)
18	8 (9.6)	5 (5.0)	8 (8.2)
19	0 (0.0)	2 (2.0)	2 (2.1)
20	50 (60.2)	58 (58.0)	62 (63.3)

Mental health – *n* (%)

Mental illness theme	17 (20.5)	23 (23.0)	24 (24.7)
Psychotic or insane	16 (57.1)	10 (66.7)	14 (63.6)
No differentiation	27 (90.0)	13 (72.2)	14 (60.9)
Treatment	5 (6.0)	6 (6.0)	9 (9.2)
Untreatable	3 (80.0)	4 (80.0)	4 (44.4)

Crime Characteristics – *n* (%)

	(<i>n</i> = 35)	(<i>n</i> = 31)	(<i>n</i> = 32)
Homicide (or attempted)	23 (65.7)	8 (61.5)	30 (93.8)
Sexual assault w/out murder	5 (14.3)	1 (1.0)	1 (96.9)
Violence	32 (88.9)	26 (100.0)	30 (93.8)
Instrumental violence	22 (88.0)	20 (95.2)	21 (91.3)
Motive	9 (69.2)	12 (92.3)	7 (77.8)
Repeat offender	18 (94.7)	15 (88.2)	15 (93.8)
Severe or fatal victim injury	25 (96.2)	24 (88.9)	30 (100.0)
Child victim	6 (22.2)	13 (56.5)	10 (38.5)
High violence significance	17 (51.5)	21 (72.4)	26 (86.7)
Offender reaction ^a	5 (83.3)	7 (87.5)	11 (84.7)
Mean number of victims*	3.3	7.2	6.4

Note. Statistics based on available, reported data (values coded “unknown” are not part of computed percentage).

* Reported statistics are mean values.

^a Offender response here includes denial, minimization, justification and indifference; not included are contrition or “no comment”.

Appendix G

Table 10.1

Comparison of Internet and Newspaper Content

Variable	Internet (<i>N</i> = 47)	Newspapers (<i>N</i> = 281)
Article characteristics – <i>n</i> (%)		
Type		
News article	6 (12.8)	75 (26.7)
Arts & Entertainment article	8 (17.0)	163 (58.0)
Theme		
Crime theme	7 (14.9)	121 (43.1)
Entertainment theme	3 (6.4)	113 (40.2)
Business theme	4 (8.5)	14 (5.0)
Mental health theme	24 (51.1)	14 (5.0)
Title contains search term	42 (89.4)	19 (6.8)
Search term is major focus	44 (93.6)	38 (13.5)
Expert	27 (57.4)	61 (21.7)
Doctor/psychiatrist	0 (0.0) ^a	31 (50.8)
Academic	27 (100.0)	23 (37.7)
Definite sensational content	16 (34.0)	75 (26.7)
PCL-R traits – <i>n</i> (%)		
Mean PCL traits*	8.5	1.7
1	32 (68.1)	39 (13.9)
2	22 (46.8)	27 (9.6)
3	19 (40.4)	10 (3.6)
4	36 (76.6)	29 (10.3)
5	30 (63.8)	20 (7.1)
6	44 (93.6)	53 (18.9)
9	12 (25.5)	8 (2.8)
10	23 (48.9)	26 (9.3)
11	9 (19.1)	11 (3.9)
12	14 (29.8)	9 (3.2)
13	12 (25.5)	4 (1.4)
14	24 (51.1)	9 (3.2)
15	25 (53.2)	9 (3.2)
16	11 (23.4)	7 (2.5)

17	14 (29.8)	7 (2.5)
18	14 (29.8)	21 (7.5)
19	5 (10.6)	4 (1.4)
20	31 (66.0)	170 (60.5)

Mental health – *n* (%)

Mental illness theme	19 (40.4)	64 (22.8)
Psychotic or insane	6 (31.6)	40 (62.5)
No differentiation	10 (55.6)	54 (84.4)
Treatment	21 (44.7)	20 (7.1)
Untreatable	16 (80.0)	11 (55.0)

* Reported statistics are mean values.

^a One website used experts from both the medical and academic fields, however no medical experts were relied on in isolation from academic professionals.