



The Roles of Psychopathy and Egotism in the Prediction of Aggression:

A Comparison of Self- Report Scales

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Introduction

Multiple risk factors have been associated with aggression and delinquency in youth (Borum, 2002; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998). Among these factors, two personality constructs are often linked with violence. First, the presence of psychopathic features has been linked to aggression and violent recidivism in adolescent males (Corrado, Vincent, Hart, & Cohen, 2004; Forth, Kosson, & Hare, 2003; Grettton, Hare, & Catchpole, 2004). Second, narcissistic or egotistical personality traits are affiliated with aggressive behavior and are considered by some as sufficient markers of future violence (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; DaSilva & Moretti, in press).

Given the shared characteristics (e.g., grandiosity, interpersonal exploitativeness, lack of empathy for others) and strong theoretical relationship between psychopathy and egotism, it is important to disentangle the relative contribution of each construct in predicting relevant outcomes such as aggression and delinquency. This study aimed to: (1) investigate the structural and concurrent validity of two self-report scales (the Psychopathy Content Scale [PCS]; Murrie & Cornell, 2000 and the P-16; Salekin, Ziegler, Larrea, Anthony, & Bennett, 2003) recently developed from the Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI; Millon, 1993) to screen for the presence of psychopathic features in adolescents, and (2) to compare these measures with the egotism scale of the MACI in terms of concurrent associations with violence and delinquency. A comparison of the PCS, P-16 and the original egotism scale of the MACI will help to identify the key features of psychopathy and egotism that are implicated in youth aggression and which measure most sensitively taps these dimensions.

Concordant with previous studies on these scales (e.g., Lexcen, Vincent, & Grisso, 2004; Murrie & Cornell, 2002; Murrie, Cornell, Kaplan, McConville, Levy-Elkon, 2004; Salekin et al., 2003), we hypothesized that PCS and P-16 scores would be positively correlated with delinquent and aggressive behavior. We were particularly interested in comparing these scales with the egotism subscale of the MACI and investigating whether specific facets were more strongly related to violence than others.

Method

Participants:

Participants were 173 adolescents (100 male; 73 female) between the ages of 12 and 18 years ($M = 14.49$; $SD = 1.73$) who were referred to a provincial mental health assessment centre in British Columbia, Canada.

Measures:

Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI; Millon, 1993). The MACI is an extensively validated multiscale personality inventory comprised of 160 yes/no items that provide scores on 31 scales describing personality characteristics, clinical syndromes, and personal problems. The egotism subscale is comprised of 39 items that are designed to measure six components of narcissistic personality as it appears in the DSM-IV: admirable self-image, social conceit, confident purposefulness, self-assured independence, empathic indifference, and superiority feelings (McCann, 1997).

Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory Psychopathy Content Scale (PCS; Murrie & Cornell, 2000) & P-16 Scale (Salekin et al., 2003). The PCS was developed by selecting 25 MACI items that were conceptually related to psychopathy and then removing 5 items that decreased the internal consistency of the scale. The resulting single-factor scale had an internal consistency (alpha coefficient) of .87 and correlated .60 with an early adolescent version of the PCL-R. Items for the P-16 were chosen so as to align the scale with a refined conceptualization of psychopathy, one that delineates the interpersonal and affective features of the construct more explicitly (Cooke & Michie, 2001). Salekin et al. (2003) reported an internal consistency of .86 for the P-16, which correlated .39 and .61 with rates of general and violent recidivism, respectively.

Child Behavior Checklist – Youth Self-Report (YSR; Achenbach, 1991). The YSR is an extensively validated, self-report measure consisting of 112 items that youths can endorse as not true, sometimes true, or very true for themselves. This study investigated the Aggressive and Delinquent Behavior scales that can be derived from the YSR. A T-score of 65 was used to dichotomize scores that fell above and below a clinically significant threshold (Achenbach, 1991).

Self-Report of Delinquency (SRD; Elliott & Huizinga, 1989; Piquero, MacIntosh, & Hickman, 2002). The SRD is a widely studied self-report measure of offending in adolescents. It includes 35 items that span over both violent (e.g., assault and weapons charges) and non-violent (e.g., narcotics and property crimes) offenses. The current study looked at three frequency variables included in the SRD (i.e., vandalism, major thefts, and assaults committed in the last year).

Results: Confirmatory Factor Analysis & Logistic Regression

PCS MACI Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
5. I do my very best not to hurt people's feelings *	.45	
9. I always try to do what is proper *	.58	
28. I sometimes scare other kids to get them to do what I want	.79	
42. I see myself as falling far short of what I'd like to be	-.14	
52. I don't see anything wrong with using others to get what I want	.70	
117. I do what I want without worrying about its effects on others	.70	
128. I don't mind pushing people around to show my power	.79	
135. I can charm people into giving me almost anything I want	.34	
40. I used to get so stoned that I did not know what I was doing		.80
62. I enjoy thinking about sex		.48
120. There have been times when I could not get through the day without some pot		.86
150. I often have fun doing certain unlawful things		.90
152. When we're having a good time, my friends and I can get pretty drunk		.84
Model fit indices: CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.04.		
* Indicates items that were reverse scored.		
Note. Factor 1 = Callous/Manipulative; Factor 2 = Substance Use/Impulsivity		

Egotism MACI Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor3
10. I like the way I look	.93		
26. I hate the fact that I don't have the looks or brains I wish I had *	.89		
31. Most people are better looking than I am *	.60		
39. I don't care much what other kids think of me	.40		
68. I think I have a good body	.75		
84. I sometimes feel very unhappy with who I am *	.78		
99. I don't think people see me as an attractive person *	.75		
127. There are times I wish I were someone else *	.80		
131. I am pleased with the way my body has developed	.75		
140. I don't like being the person I've become *	.74		
7. Some people think of me as a bit conceited		.16	
56. I am a dramatic and showy sort of person		.06	
59. I like to flirt a lot		.46	
86. I have talents that other kids wish they had		.84	
94. Sex is enjoyable		.43	
101. Almost anything I try comes easy to me		.83	
103. I like being the centre of attention		.27	
135. I can charm people into giving me almost anything I want		.52	
146. In many ways I feel superior to most people		.36	
1. I would much rather follow someone than be the leader *		.38	
2. I'm pretty sure I know who I am and what I want in life		.44	
34. I often feel as if I'm floating around, sort of lost in life*		.50	
69. I feel left out of things socially *		.76	
115. Other people my age seem more sure than I am of who they are and what they want *		.66	
145. I'm very mature for my age and know what I want to do in life		.53	

Model fit indices: CFI = 0.86, RMSEA = 0.06.

* Indicates items that were reverse scored.

Note. Items with poor threshold parameters were dropped from the model. Factor 1 = Confident; Factor 2 = Exhibitionism/Superiority; Factor 3 = Conceit/Assuredness

Step	Variable	B	Wald	p	OR
0	Intercept				
1	PCS Factor 1 (Callous/Manipulative)				
	Aggressive Behavior	.54	24.69	.00	1.72
	Assault	.44	7.67	.01	1.55
2	Egotism Factor 2 (Exhibitionism/Superiority)				
	Aggressive Behavior	.04	.21	.65	1.04
	Assault	-.33	4.44	.06	.72

* Model results:

χ^2 (2, $n = 158$) = 31.87, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .24$ (Aggressive Behavior).

χ^2 (2, $n = 90$) = 14.18, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .20$ (Assault).

Step	Variable	B	Wald	p	OR
0	Intercept				
1	PCS Factor 1 (Callous/Manipulative)				
	Delinquent Behavior	.66	19.07	.00	1.93
	Vandalism	.24	3.40	.07	1.27
	Major Theft	.39	8.39	.01	1.48
2	Egotism Factor 2 (Exhibitionism/Superiority)				
	Delinquent Behavior	.28	7.60	.01	1.33
	Vandalism	-.14	1.16	.28	.87
	Major Theft	.19	1.99	.16	1.21

* Model results:

χ^2 (2, $n = 158$) = 42.48, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .33$ (Delinquent Behavior).

χ^2 (2, $n = 93$) = 4.83, $p > .05$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .07$ (Vandalism).

χ^2 (2, $n = 93$) = 11.74, $p < .01$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .16$ (Major Theft).

Discussion

Findings show that the PCS evidenced a two-factor structure characterized by personality and behavioral features, similar to the structure of the Hare Psychopathy Checklist, Youth Version (PCL:YV; Forth et al., 2003). In contrast, the three-factor model hypothesized by Salekin and colleagues for the P-16 (i.e., interpersonal, affective, and behavioral psychopathic features) did not hold in the current sample. The egotism subscale of the MACI was best described by a three-factor model. However, it will be necessary to replicate this model in a larger sample due to the large number of items on the EMACI.

Results suggest that egotism does not contribute to the prediction of either violent or non-violent delinquency once the effects of psychopathic personality features are accounted for, and may in fact mitigate the probability of aggressive behavior. Factor 3 scores (Conceit/Assuredness) on the EMACI were *inversely* related to all of the outcome variables (with the exception of vandalism), such that higher scores on this factor led to a decreased odds of scoring above the clinical cut-off for YSR delinquency and aggression, as well as for committing a major theft and assault. These findings are concordant with the notion of "adaptive narcissism" (Stolorow, 1986; Washburn et al., 2004), and highlight the importance of examining egotism as a multidimensional construct with differential relations to aggression and delinquency.

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