INTRODUCTION

There is an extensive, compulsive and fascinating literature on the psychopaths among us. Films have made people think psychopaths are all deranged axe-murderers and serial killers. But they are also convicts and mercenaries; con-artists and corporate executives. This chapter will look at what Hare (1999) called “White Collar” psychopaths and what are now often referred to as successful psychopaths.

The term psychopath or sociopath was used to describe anti-social personality types whose behavior is amoral or asocial, impulsive and lacking in remorse and shame. Once called “moral insanity”, it is found more commonly among lower socio-economic groups, no doubt because of the “downward drift” of these types.

In his famous book called *The Mask of Insanity*, Cleckley (1941) first set out 10 criteria: superficial charm and intelligence; absence of anxiety in stressful situations; insincerity and lack of truthfulness; lack of remorse and shame; inability to experience love or genuine emotion; unreliability and irresponsibility; impulsivity and disregard for socially acceptable behavior; clear-headedness with an absence of delusions or irrational thinking; inability to profit from experience; and lack of insight. The book is indeed a classic in psychology and psychiatry because of its insight. Cleckley noted the slick but callous business person, the smooth-talking and manipulative lawyer and the arrogant and deceptive politicians as psychopaths.

Cleckley identified 16 personality traits that, through his work with such individuals, he believed captured the essence of the psychopathic personality. The following are Cleckley’s 16 traits:

1. superficial charm and good “intelligence”
2. absence of delusions and other signs of irrational thinking
3. absence of “nervousness” or psychoneurotic manifestations
4. unreliability
5. untruthfulness and insincerity
6. lack of remorse or shame
7. inadequately motivated anti-social behavior
8. poor judgement and failure to learn by experience
9. pathologic egocentricity and incapacity for love
10. general poverty in major affective reactions
11. specific loss of insight
12. unresponsiveness in general interpersonal relations
13. fantastic and uninviting behavior with drink and sometimes without
14. suicide rarely carried out
15. sex life impersonal, trivial, and poorly integrated
16. failure to follow any life plan.

Cleckley stressed the personality dimensions of this disorder, and clearly believed that most psychopaths are not violent. Whilst he acknowledged that a substantial proportion of incarcerated individuals exhibit psychopathic traits, he asserted that the majority of psychopaths are not incarcerated. According to Cleckley, the psychopath:

- is not likely to commit major crimes that result in long prison terms.
- He is also distinguished by his ability to escape ordinary legal punishments and restraints. Though he regularly makes trouble for society, as well as for himself, and frequently is handled by the police, his characteristic behaviour does not usually include committing felonies which would bring about permanent or adequate restrictions of his activities. He is often arrested, perhaps one hundred times or more. But he nearly always regains his freedom and returns to his old patterns of maladjustment.

(p. 19)

**DEFINITION**

As with all psychiatric illnesses there have been discussions and debates about definitions and terms. Babiak and Hare (2006) clarified the distinction between three overlapping terms:

Psychopathy is a personality disorder described by the personality traits and behaviours. Psychopaths are without conscience