

Early Maladaptive Schemas and Cognitive Distortions
in
Psychopathy and Narcissism

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**I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original
research and contains acknowledgment of all non-original work**

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ABSTRACT

Personality disorders have traditionally been considered refractory to psychological interventions. Two of the most common, and potentially harmful personality disorders are antisocial personality disorder / psychopathy, and narcissism. Although a great deal of conceptual overlap exists between psychopathy and narcissism, the empirical study of these constructs has proceeded largely independently of one another. Further complicating the discrimination of these constructs is the identification of the bi-factorial nature of psychopathy - conceptualised as primary and secondary psychopathy - as well as the identification of two distinct forms of narcissism, overt and covert. The recent resurgence of interest in the sub-clinical manifestations of these two constructs has led to the development of a number of easily administered instruments to measure each of the psychopathy and narcissism constructs, as dimensional traits, within normal populations. This has provided empirically validated and reliable instruments to further explicate these two overlapping constructs. The first of the two studies reported sought to discriminate between psychopathy and narcissism through the recharacterisation of these constructs in terms of the early maladaptive schemas outlined in Young's early maladaptive schema theory (Young, 1999). Two hundred and ninety one participants completed questionnaires measuring primary and secondary psychopathy, overt and covert narcissism, and early maladaptive schemas. Findings are consistent with the hypothesis that psychopathy and narcissism are discriminable in cognitive-interpersonal terms, as operationalised by early maladaptive schemas. Findings also call into question the earlier observed hierarchical structure of the Young Schema Questionnaire. The current analysis identified a two-factor structure to the schema questionnaire, rather than the previously stated 5-factors. Having demonstrated the usefulness of understanding

psychopathy and narcissism in cognitive-interpersonal terms, the second study sought to further clarify the association between psychopathy and narcissism through the reconceptualisation of these constructs in cognitive terms, through the identification of the cognitive distortions operative in each disorder. One hundred and thirty two participants completed a cognitive distortions questionnaire developed by the author, along with the same measures of primary and secondary psychopathy, and overt and covert narcissism, as those administered in study 1. Findings were interpreted as providing support for the notion of psychopathy representing a sub-category of narcissism. Findings also provide further supportive evidence for the validity of the primary / secondary psychopathy, and overt / covert narcissism distinctions. The further clarification of the factor structure of the Young Schema Questionnaire, and the replication of the reliability and construct validity of the measure of cognitive distortions developed for this research are highlighted as areas for future research.

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