PREFACE

Most workers are honest, loyal, law-abiding citizens, concerned with making a living, contributing to society, and raising a family in a fair and just world. Others, though, are more selfish, concerned only about themselves with little regard for fairness and equity. Unfortunately, there are some individuals in the business world who allow the responsibilities of leadership and the perks of power to override their moral sense. A rise in the number of reports of abuse in major corporations should not be a surprise, given the increased access to unrestricted power, resources of startling proportions, and the erosion of ethical standards and values.

Some who have faltered may have experienced a weakened moral sense of "right" in the face of excessive temptation and easy access to power.

Others may feel justified in reaping the rewards in proportion to the size of the organization they lead, arguing that their extravagances seem excessive only to those who have little hope of being so rewarded. Still others have embraced the self-serving mantras that "greed is good" and that success at any cost to others is justifiable and even desirable. But another group exists, one whose behaviors and attitudes are potentially much more destructive to the organization and its employees than those noted above who are motivated by greed or big egos. This group, the subject of this book, displays a personality disorder rooted in lying, manipulation, deceit, egocentricity, callousness, and other potentially destructive traits. This personality disorder, one of the first to be described in the psychiatric literature, is psychopathy.

A dozen or so personality disorders have found their way into the psychiatric nomenclature. What makes psychopathy unique is that its defining characteristics and traits often lead to behaviors that conflict with the generally accepted norms and laws of society. Some people with psychopathic personalities are in prison because of their crimes against people and property. Others are in prison for committing economic or white-collar crimes, such as fraud, embezzlement, or stock manipulation. These are crimes against businesses and

institutions, as well as the employees who work in them.

In addition to the problems their abusive behaviors cause to spouses, friends, and family members, individuals with a heavy dose of psychopathic traits are potentially harmful to professional relationships. For example, their grandiosity, sense of entitlement, and lack of personal insight lead to conflict and rivalry with bosses and coworkers, and their impulsivity and "live in the moment" philosophy lead them to keep repeating these and other dysfunctional, antisocial behaviors, despite performance appraisals and training programs. Many experts believed that these traits alone make it difficult for psychopaths to have successful long-term careers in industry. At least that was the conventional wisdom until we did our research.

One might think that conning or bullying traits in a job applicant would be so obvious to employers that such candidates would not be hired for important jobs, especially those where the ability to get along with others is critical. One might also think that abusive, deceitful behavior toward coworkers would eventually lead to disciplinary action and termination. But, based on the cases we have reviewed, this often is not the case.

There are four possible reasons for this. First, some core psychopathic personality traits—we might call them talents—may seem attractive in job applicants, and contribute to their success at being hired. For example, psychopaths can be very charming, able to talk their way past even the most seasoned interviewers. When it is to their advantage, they can display a charisma that can disarm and beguile even the most wary individuals. Just as those who have unwittingly married a psychopath find themselves trapped in a web of deceit, abuse, and pain, so too can a company make a faulty hiring decision and find itself with a serious problem on its hands down the road. Psychopaths are skilled at social manipulation, and the job interview is a perfect place to apply their talents.

Second, some companies quite innocently recruit individuals with psychopathic tendencies because some hiring managers may mistakenly attribute "leadership" labels to what are, in actuality, psychopathic behaviors. For example, taking charge, making decisions, and getting others to do what you want are classic features of leadership and management, yet they can also be well-packaged forms of coercion, domination, and manipulation. Failing to look closely beneath the outer trappings of stereotypical leadership to the inner working of the personality can sometimes lead to a regrettable

hiring decision.

Third, the changing nature of business itself is also a contributing factor to the increase in psychopathic persons being hired. "Bureaucracy" as a business model evolved early in the last century to address the problems inherent in coordinating and optimizing the efforts of large numbers of people who were performing many interrelated job functions. As business competition became more sophisticated, these support systems became more complex, and their supporting infrastructure grew in size. As a result, bureaucracies typically employed a large number of people, had multiple processes and procedures, and were expensive to run. These characteristics earned them a reputation for being almost too big to be effective.

Since then, organizational structures and processes have evolved considerably, with the most dramatic changes taking place during the early 1970s and 1980s, the beginning of what may be called "the organization wars." During this time corporate takeovers, acquisitions, mergers, and breakups led to great social and financial upheaval in the business world. The desire to create sleek, lean, efficient companies was a good one, and long overdue in many industries. Eventually, in order to survive, many companies shed their old-style, bureaucratic policies and structures for a flatter,

more free-form, faster-paced organizational environment. During the 1990s, this new, "transitional" organizational style—fewer layers, simpler systems and controls, more freedom to make decisions—became the norm. In fact, *change* became a matter of business necessity and economic survival. Competing successfully now required the quick generation and movement of new information. Speed and innovation were now more important than keeping track of what was already old news.

With the need to embrace change came a switch from hiring "organization men and women" who would maintain the status quo to hiring individuals who could shake the trees, rattle cages, and get things done quickly. This hiring switch inadvertently led to the selection of some individuals with psychopathic traits and characteristics. Unfortunately, the general state of confusion that change brings to any situation can make psychopathic personality traits—the appearance of confidence, strength, and calm—often look like the answer to the organization's problems. Yet, hiring individuals with these traits seemed like the right thing to do. Egocentricity, callousness, and insensitivity suddenly became acceptable trade-offs in order to get the talents and skills needed to survive in an accelerated, dispassionate business

world.

Fourth, psychopathic individuals, known for ignoring rules and regulations, coupled with a talent for conning and manipulation, found these new, more flexible organization structures *inviting*. The temptation for someone with a psychopathic personality to join a new, fast-paced, competitive, and highly effective "transitional" organization, especially one with few constraints or rules, is too great, and the personal rewards too significant, to be ignored. The effect of these things is that psychopaths are more attracted to work for businesses that offer fast-paced, high-risk, high-profit environments.

It is very important to understand how and why the psychopath so readily manipulates people and organizations, given the increasing financial and social risk to companies wishing to survive in a chaotic business environment filled with uncertainty, constant change, and increasing regulation. In addition to financial harm to a company and its shareholders, there are also personal dangers to coworkers. There is the risk to the careers of those subjected to the emotional or physical abuse of a psychopathic coworker. For example, senior executives may find their authority and security severely compromised by the "high-potential" management candidate moving up

the ranks. Covert attacks and defensive maneuvers waste valuable time and energy that could otherwise be focused on creativity, productivity, and profitability. In addition, bruised leadership egos and lowered morale are much harder to measure but can lead to large declines in organizational performance.

Unfortunately, even an organization with sophisticated hiring and promotion practices would find it challenging to defend itself against these "corporate cons." Even loyal coworkers—firsthand witnesses to much of the psychopath's machinations—do not always understand what is happening. And, when some do raise the red flag, they may find that no one at the top responds to it.

This book evolved out of our growing realization that lack of specific knowledge about what constitutes psychopathic manipulation and deceit among businesspeople was the corporate con's key to success. The scientific literature on the behavior of criminal psychopaths is extensive but geared to the forensic scientist and clinician. We hope to close some of the gaps in the current understanding of psychopaths among the business readers by using nontechnical language and case studies. We want to provide the reader with the experience of working next to a corporate psychopath by presenting the kinds of real-life situations we've encountered in

our work. Because a psychopathic coworker can harm your career in seen and unseen ways, we hope that this knowledge will prepare you to defend yourself in the future.

The premise of this book is that psychopaths do work in modern organizations; they often are successful by most standard measures of career success; and their destructive personality characteristics are invisible to most of the people with whom they interact. They are able to circumvent and sometimes hijack succession planning and performance management systems in order to give legitimacy to their behaviors. They take advantage of communication weaknesses, organizational systems and processes, interpersonal conflicts, and general stressors that plague all companies. They abuse coworkers and, by lowering morale and stirring up conflict, the company itself. Some may even steal and defraud.

This book will help you peel back the layers covering the psychopath's personality. We will approach this task in several ways, leading the reader toward an understanding of what makes psychopaths tick and what behaviors can be observed in the office that might provide clues as to their true nature. We will follow the exploits of "Dave," one of the first corporate psychopaths documented in the scientific literature, as he weaves

his web of deceit. His ability to present himself as a rising star and corporate savior, all the while abusing his coworkers and eventually the company, will be made transparent. We will also explain in some detail what the current thinking is about psychopathic behavior in organizations, illustrating specific traits with examples and short case histories taken from real life. This book will introduce you to the way these "snakes in suits" manipulate others; it will help you see through their games and give you pointers on how to protect yourself, your career, and your company.

We consider it important to caution the reader that, although the topic of this book is psychopathy in the workplace, *not everyone described herein is a psychopath*. The "snakes" we describe are not based on actual persons, and any resemblance to such persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Rather, they are profiles of generic psychopaths based upon composites of psychopathic characteristics derived from published reports, the news media, and our own research about such personalities. While we do at times refer to actual persons, such as in the sidebars, we do so only because the person's behavior is either consistent with the concept of psychopathy or illustrates a key trait or behavior that is typical of the disorder. While these individuals may or may not be

psychopaths, their reported behavior provides a useful vehicle for elaborating the various traits and behaviors that define psychopathy. *The reader should not assume that an individual is a psychopath simply because of the context in which he or she is portrayed in this book.*

2

Who *Are* These People?

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 Dr. No or Hannibal Lecter. Reality, unfortunately, provides some support for this view, but the picture is somewhat more complex than this.

Years of research on prison populations bear out the criminality and violence implied by the term *psychopath*. We now know that both male and female psychopaths commit a greater number and variety of crimes than do other criminals. Their crimes tend to be more violent than those of other

criminals, and their general behavior more controlling, aggressive, threatening, and abusive. Further, their aggression and violence tend to be predatory in nature—cold-blooded and devoid of the intense emotional upheaval that typically accompanies the violent acts of most people. This sort of aggression and violence is *instrumental*, simply a means to an end, and seldom followed by anything even approaching normal concern for the pain and suffering inflicted on others. On the other hand, much of the violence of other criminals tends to be *reactive*—a typical response to threats or situations that generate an intense emotional state. This type of violence, which includes what is often described as a crime of passion, typically is followed by feelings of remorse and guilt for the harm done to others.

Perhaps most dangerous of all from a public safety point of view, psychopathic criminals *recidivate* at a much higher rate, and do so much earlier, than do other criminals. The recidivism rate refers to the percentage of offenders that commit a new crime subsequent to release into the community. Psychopaths make up about 15 percent of the prison population. Many of the remaining 85 percent of individuals in prison might be described as sociopaths or as having antisocial personality disorder, similar, but different disorders often

confused with psychopathy (see sidebar). Although the prevalence of psychopathy in the general population is relatively small—only about 1 percent—the social, economic, physical, and psychological damage done by individuals with this disorder is far out of proportion to their numbers. They are responsible for at least half of the persistent serious and violent crimes committed in North America. Yet, as we shall see, not all psychopaths turn to a life of crime, and not all criminals are psychopaths.

Psychopathy, Sociopathy, and Antisocial Personality Disorder

Many people are confused about the differences among psychopathy, sociopathy, and antisocial personality disorder. Although the terms frequently are treated as if they are interchangeable—by the general public and professionals alike—they refer to related but not identical conditions.

Psychopathy is a personality disorder described by the personality traits and behaviors that form the basis of this book. Psychopaths are

without conscience and incapable of empathy, guilt, or loyalty to anyone but themselves.

Sociopathy is not a formal psychiatric condition. It refers to patterns of attitudes and behaviors that are considered antisocial and criminal by society at large, but are seen as normal or necessary by the subculture or social environment in which they developed. Sociopaths may have a well-developed conscience and a normal capacity for empathy, guilt, and loyalty, but their sense of right and wrong is based on the norms and expectations of their subculture or group. Many criminals might be described as sociopaths.

Antisocial personality disorder (APD) is a broad diagnostic category found in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition (DSM-IV). Antisocial and criminal behaviors play a major role in its definition and, in this sense, APD is similar to sociopathy. Some of those with APD are psychopaths, but many are not. The difference between psychopathy and antisocial personality disorder is that the former includes personality traits such as lack of empathy, grandiosity, and shallow emotion that are not necessary for a diagnosis of APD. APD is three or four times more common than

psychopathy in the general population and in prisons. The prevalence of those we would describe as sociopathic is unknown but likely is considerably higher than that of APD.

One may argue that psychopaths who live freely in society simply have not yet been caught committing a crime or engaging in socially destructive behavior. Given the psychopaths' personality features, and their inclination for breaking the rules and pushing the envelope of acceptable human behavior, there is some merit to this argument. Still, just having a psychopathic personality disorder does not make one a criminal. Some psychopaths live in society and do not technically break the law—although they may come close, with behavior that usually is very unpleasant for those around them. Some may lead seemingly normal lives, not hurting people in ways that attract attention, but causing problems nonetheless in hidden economic, psychological, and emotionally abusive ways. They do not make warm and loving parents, children, or family members. They do not make reliable friends or coworkers. Many psychopaths adopt a parasitic existence, living off the generosity or gullibility of others by taking

advantage of and often abusing the trust and support of friends and family. They may move from place to place and from one source of support to another. You probably know one. You could work for, work with, or be married to someone with a psychopathic personality and not know that there is a formal psychological term for the individual who causes you so much pain and distress. He or she can be a neighbor, friend, or family member whose behavior you may find fascinating, confusing, and repelling.

So how do psychologists and psychiatrists accurately decide whether someone has a psychopathic personality? In the early days of research on psychopathy, there was no widely acceptable standard of measurement. The psychiatric criteria for use in diagnoses were vague, sometimes confusing, and could vary depending on the personal experiences of the researcher or diagnostician. This dark and murky past has cleared up considerably over the last fifty years as psychopathy has grown into one of the most researched and well-understood psychopathological variables.

A pioneer in the early years of this field was Hervey Cleckley, M.D., working as a psychiatrist in

a psychiatric facility in the late 1930s. Offenders and patients were sent to psychiatric hospitals for treatment if they were believed to have some form of mental illness. Cleckley had the opportunity to study his patients carefully, and he realized that many of them did not display the usual symptoms of mental illness, but instead seemed "normal" under most conditions. He watched them charm, manipulate, and take advantage of other patients, family members, and even hospital staff. To Cleckley's trained eyes, these individuals were psychopaths.

Cleckley eventually wrote what has become a classic textbook on psychopathy, *The Mask of Sanity*. Originally published in 1941, this definitive book is now in its fifth edition (1976), and was one of the first books to present a clear picture of psychopathy. Despite having normal intelligence, Cleckley's patients often made poor life judgments and didn't learn much from their personal experiences, causing them to repeat dysfunctional or unfruitful behaviors. They lacked insight concerning themselves and the impact of their behavior on others, but this seemed not to concern them at all. They did not understand and cared little about the feelings of others, lacking both remorse and shame for the harm they did others. They were noticeably unreliable, even about important things

relevant to their current situation, and seemed to have no real life goals or plans. Most obvious of all, these patients were consummate liars, being untruthful about almost everything (even inconsequential things most people wouldn't waste time and energy lying about). They were insincere, although often appearing to be very sincere to those with little experience interacting with them, particularly new staff members.

Reviews of their records showed them to be antisocial and violent for reasons that often seemed random and senseless. They could be egocentric in the extreme, and were seemingly unable to experience deep human emotions, especially love and compassion. They failed to have significant or intimate relationships. Even their sexual relations were superficial and impersonal. In fact, they seemed unable to feel intensely any of the emotions that others experience, except perhaps primitive or proto-emotions such as anger, frustration, and rage. According to Cleckley, psychopaths come across as having a superficial charm and good intelligence. Psychopaths are often entertaining and can tell creative, believable stories. They don't seem to experience delusional or irrational thinking, which often characterizes a mental disorder, and they tend not to be anxious or neurotic. On the surface, then, they appear normal, sane, and in control; in fact,

many are quite likable. As Cleckley put it, "[the] psychopath presents a technical appearance of sanity, often one of high intellectual capacities, and not infrequently succeeds in business or professional activities."

The title of his book, *The Mask of Sanity*, reflected Cleckley's belief that, although psychopaths do not exhibit the obvious symptoms of mental illness, they suffer from a profound underlying disorder in which the language and emotional components of thought are not properly integrated, a condition he called *semantic aphasia*. It is tempting to try to decide if someone is a psychopath simply by watching or listening to him or her and checking off the characteristics that match Cleckley's list. Cleckley, however, never intended his list of observations to be a formal checklist for diagnosis, and had never tested his model statistically. As a clinician with many years of exposure to psychopaths, he reported those traits that seemed to him to characterize the syndrome.

Confirmation of his observations and the development of scientific methods for assessment, therefore, was left to others, one in particular being Hare, the second author of this book. He describes these efforts, outlined in his book, *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, as follows:

I worked in a maximum-security penitentiary early in my career as a psychologist in order to help finance my graduate school education. While there, I took an interest in the behavior of psychopaths, whom I occasionally met as part of my work. My initial interest was in finding out if there were any physiological differences between psychopathic and nonpsychopathic offenders. Cleckley had noted that psychopaths used language somewhat differently from most other people; their sentence structure, choice of words and tempo (or beat) were different. Others and I also had noted that psychopaths have difficulty understanding the emotional content of words that add color and interest to communication. They would often describe their most atrocious crimes with dispassion and disinterest, showing no emotion at all. Just hearing these matter-of-fact descriptions sent chills down the spines of many criminal investigators, even though they typically were hardened by years of work with criminals. Could there be something different going on in the psychopath's brain that might explain these differences?

I wanted to look deeper into the brain for

some answers. In these early experiments, I would present psychopathic and nonpsychopathic offenders with words differing in emotional content and measured their physiological responses. High emotional content words might include "rape," "blood," or "knife," while low emotional content words might include "tree," "house," and "rock." Trained as an experimental psychologist, I knew that high-emotion words trigger physiological responses in subjects that could be measured using sensitive laboratory equipment; would the same be true of psychopaths?

The first obstacle was defining psychopathy. There was no standard and reliable assessment instrument available to researchers to measure the disorder. The diagnostic skills of the investigator, on which accuracy relied, could not be assured. Some researchers might use Cleckley's definition, others the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual *(DSM), then a newly published guidebook for psychiatrists, and still others might rely on their own clinical impressions. Without a consensus, how could a researcher in Canada be sure that a researcher somewhere else in the world could reproduce his research results? What if they didn't agree on*

which subjects were really psychopaths, and which subjects were not?

I needed to create a research-worthy measure of psychopathy, and this new instrument had to be valid, reliable, and psychologically sound. Cleckley's list of behavioral descriptors, although a good starting point, was incomplete. Collecting a large number of known descriptors of psychopathic traits and behaviors, and using statistical analysis techniques, I set out to resolve what were the most common and specific traits and behaviors that distinguish a psychopath from a nonpsychopath.

The result of this work is the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised, or PCL-R, a list of twenty interpersonal, emotional, and lifestyle traits and behaviors. "True" psychopaths have most or all the PCL-R traits, while individuals who have only a few of these traits are not psychopaths. For twenty years now, statistical studies on many criminal populations all over the world have consistently shown the PCL-R to be the gold standard for measuring psychopathy.

Nature? Nurture? Both!

Are psychopathic features the product of nature or nurture? As with most other things human, the answer is that both are involved. A better question is "To what extent do nature and nurture influence the development of the traits and behaviors that define psychopathy?" The answer to this question is becoming much clearer with the application of behavioral genetics to the study of personality traits and behavioral dispositions.

Several recent twin studies provide convincing evidence that genetic factors play at least as important a role in the development of the core features of psychopathy as do environmental factors and forces. Researchers Blonigen, Carlson, Krueger & Patrick stated that the results of their study of 271 adult twin pairs provided "substantial evidence of genetic contributions to variance in the personality construct of psychopathy." Subsequently, researchers Larrson, Andershed & Lichstenstien arrived at a similar conclusion in their study of 1090 adolescent twin pairs: "A genetic factor explains most of the variation in the psychopathic personality." Viding, Blair, Moffitt & Plomin studied 3687

seven-year-old twin pairs and also concluded that "the core symptoms of psychopathy are strongly genetically determined." They reported that the genetic contribution was highest when callous-unemotional traits were combined with antisocial behaviors.

Evidence of this sort does not mean that the pathways to adult psychopathy are fixed and immutable, but it does indicate that the social environment will have a tough time in overcoming what nature has provided. As noted in *Without Conscience*, the elements needed for the development of psychopathy—such as a profound inability to experience empathy and the complete range of emotions, including fear—are provided in part by nature and possibly by some unknown biological influences on the developing fetus and neonate. As a result, the capacity for developing internal controls and conscience and for making emotional "connections" with others is greatly reduced.

To use a simple analogy, the potter is instrumental in molding pottery from clay (nurture), but the characteristics of the pottery also depend on the sort of clay available (nature).

The most reliable, valid, and widely used instrument for the assessment of psychopathy is the Hare Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (PCL-R). The PCL-R is a clinical rating scale, not a self-report test. The person who is being evaluated does not answer questions, as is the case with other psychological tests. Rather, a qualified psychologist or psychiatrist familiar with the evaluation procedure completes the assessment based on an in-depth interview and a review of information contained in the person's records. Then, for each trait or characteristic, the psychologist or psychiatrist must make a judgment as to whether or not each applies to the person being assessed. For each trait, several criteria and tests must be applied. A technical manual contains extensive definitions and behavioral examples for each of the twenty psychopathic characteristics.

If the rater judges that a person clearly has a given trait, then 2 points are added to the total score; if a trait applies only partially or sometimes, then only 1 point is added to the total. And if a trait just doesn't apply to the person, nothing is added to the total. Because there are twenty traits on the PCL-R, someone can receive a total score from 0 (meaning no psychopathy) to a high of 40 (a perfect

match to the prototypical psychopath).

The availability of the PCL-R and the shorter PCL: Screenings Version has allowed people to conduct extensive research on all aspects of psychopathy, including its neurological bases. As noted earlier, a particular area of interest has been the manner in which psychopaths process emotional material, including emotional words and pictures. The results of several brain scan experiments (using functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI) indicate that psychopaths do *not* show the same patterns of brain responses to verbal and visual emotional material as do nonpsychopathic individuals. Whereas normal people showed a different brain response to emotional words and pictures than to neutral material, psychopaths responded the *same* to each type of material. Psychopaths processed what should be emotional material as if it were neutral in content.

Sometimes answering one question raises others. Why don't psychopaths respond the way others do? Are their brains wired differently? Is their obvious emotional poverty the result of their upbringing? It will take several more years of research to answer some of these questions, but significant improvements in the sophistication of laboratory equipment is helping us move toward a deeper understanding of the psychopath. Many researchers

will continue their work well into the twenty-first century.

Since the initial studies on the PCL-R, a large number of researchers have used the instrument to assess criminal psychopaths in many countries and settings. The items have withstood the test of time and scientific scrutiny. Although the PCL-R was developed with offender populations, it also has been used with other groups, including psychiatric patients and the general population. For the latter, however, a more suitable instrument is a derivative of the PCL-R, the Psychopathy Checklist: Screening Version (PCL: SV), developed by Hare and his colleagues. The items in the PCL: SV are listed below, and are scored in the same way as the PCL-R is scored. Total scores on the twelve-item PCL: SV can range from 0 to 24.

We can break down the psychopath's personality into a model made up of four key factors or *domains*. The *interpersonal domain* describes how psychopaths present themselves to others, the *affective domain* includes what they feel or don't feel emotionally, the *lifestyle domain* describes how they live in society, and the *antisocial domain* describes their propensity for antisocial behaviors. *Note that scoring each item requires professional qualifications, adherence to the scoring instructions in the PCL: SV Manual, and access to*

extensive interview and collateral information. More extensive descriptions are provided in the book *Without Conscience*.

Domains and Traits of the Psychopath

[from the PCL: SV]

Interpersonal	Affective
The person is:	The person:
• Superficial	• Lacks remorse
• Grandiose	• Lacks empathy
• Deceitful	• Doesn't accept responsibility

Lifestyle	Antisocial
The person:	The person has a history of:
• Is impulsive	• Poor behavioral controls

• Lacks goals	• Adolescent antisocial behavior
• Is irresponsible	• Adult antisocial behavior

What is a high enough PCL-R score to warrant a diagnosis of psychopathy? Most people in the general population would score less than 5 on the PCL-R, whereas the average score for male and female criminals is about 22 and 19, respectively. A cut score of 30 typically is used to identify psychopaths, although some investigators and clinicians use a score of 25 or above for research purposes. About 15 percent of male offenders and about 10 percent of female offenders obtain a score of at least 30.

The PCL: SV has fewer items than the PCL-R, but scores on these two instruments have the same theoretical and practical meaning. Most people in the general population would score less than 3 on the PCL: SV, while the average score for criminals is around 13. A cut score of 18 is typically used for a diagnosis of psychopathy.

Whatever cut score is used, individuals who meet

or exceed the score clearly are different from those with lower scores. Whether this difference is in kind or in degree is yet to be firmly established, although the most recent scientific evidence is that the latter is the more likely.

Am I a Psychopath?

A list of psychopathic features frequently evokes concern or a superficial flash of insight. "My God, John is impulsive and irresponsible. Maybe he's a psychopath!" Or, "I'm a risk taker and I sleep around a lot. Holy shit, I'm a psychopath!" Perhaps so, but *only* if a lot more of the relevant characteristics are present.

Think of psychopathy as a multidimensional continuum, much like blood pressure, which can range from dangerously low to dangerously high. We might refer to individuals with really low or high systolic and diastolic blood pressure as hypotensive and hypertensive, respectively. In between these two extremes there is a range of pressures, some considered normal and others reflecting varying degrees of concern, but not yet pathological.

Similarly, the number and severity (density) of psychopathic features ranges from near zero, perhaps sliding into sainthood, to abnormally high, rising into big trouble. We refer to those at the

upper end as psychopaths; they have an extremely heavy dose of the interpersonal, affective, lifestyle, and antisocial features that define psychopathy.

Most people fall in between these extremes, but primarily toward the lower end. Those in the midrange have a significant number of psychopathic features but they are not psychopaths in the strict sense of the term. Their behavior would depend on the particular mix of features they have. Certainly, many will not be model citizens or very nice people, but others may variously be described as hard-driving, fun-loving, entitled, aggressively ambitious, seriously pragmatic, or difficult.

for the most egregious corporate entities, it is apparent that they had in mind corporations in general. The short excerpt from the interview with Hare did not convey his view that although the attitudes, philosophies, and behaviors of a *given corporation (as a legal entity)* might be considered psychopathic, at least as an academic exercise, such a "diagnosis" hardly would apply to all, or even most, corporations.

To refer to *the* corporation as psychopathic because of the behaviors of a carefully selected group of companies is like using the traits and behaviors of the most serious high-risk criminals to conclude that *the* criminal (that is, every criminal) is a psychopath. If the PCL-R, its derivative, the PCL: SV, or the B-Scan *were* to be applied to a random set of corporations, some might qualify for a diagnosis of psychopathy, but most would not.

We doubt that psychopathic individuals would be very successful in a highly structured traditional bureaucracy, for several important reasons. First, psychopaths are generalized rule breakers; rules and regulations mean little to them. The sheer number of policies, procedures, and laws governing

how companies must act, as well as the fact that managers and supervisors are charged with enforcing them, makes them inhospitable to those prone to psychopathic behavior. They would not last long in a traditional, textbook bureaucracy. It is unlikely that they would even consider working for one, unless they knew the boss and could get away with getting a paycheck without actually producing any work.

Second, we know that psychopaths are not team players. They are far too selfish to work with others toward common goals. Recall that psychopaths manipulate individuals by presenting a mask custom-tailored to the occasion. Successful manipulation relies on three important conditions: (1) the psychopath needs one-on-one access to the individual, (2) the relationship that is fostered must be kept private, and (3) there can be no means to bring deviant behavior to the attention of management. In bureaucratic organizations, where much of the work is done in teams, it would be difficult to gain such restricted access to useful individuals and for clandestine manipulation and serious counterproductive behavior to go unnoticed. All employees are *expected* to be productive and focused on achieving objectives while on the job. All are expected to be honest, decent employees and not be abusive toward their colleagues. Given that

prosocial behaviors and attitudes are *required* in most employment situations but difficult for those with a psychopathic personality to maintain in any consistent way, how could they survive?

Third, psychopaths have little genuine interest in the short-or long-term goals and objectives of the organization. Any suggestion that their efforts should take into account the good of the company would be foreign to them. They are much more likely to be motivated and guided by relatively immediate needs and gratifications—a quick score—than by the possibility of uncertain future goals and rewards, particularly if they require dedication, hard work, and personal sacrifice.

Fourth, traditional business organizations do not offer an easy means to hide. Counterproductive work behaviors that are visible to others and reported to management are often dealt with through human resource policies, such as codes of conduct and rules and procedures to handle complaints about sexual harassment, bullying, and other forms of unacceptable behavior. Internal auditors typically investigate suspicions of fraud, theft, or other forms of deceit. If proven true, these may eventually lead to legal action by the organization against the employee. Often, termination and a negative employment reference result.

Finally, psychopaths don't share the same work ethic of most other workers, who typically believe in an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, who take pride in doing a good job, and who value long-term employment. It is difficult to imagine that a psychopath would work diligently from 9 to 5 in the hope of becoming manager in five or six years. This is not to suggest that psychopaths never work in routine, dead-end jobs or in trades or professions that would seem to require training and experience. Many do, but it is very likely that their qualifications are questionable; their performance self-serving, unreliable, and untrustworthy; and their actions even illegal. Think of high-pressure sales representatives, predatory repair people, "pump and dump" stock promoters, Internet scamsters, fraudulent counselors, and shady professionals of all sorts, to name but a few.

But what about the so-called *corporate* psychopath? How does he or she survive and thrive in a big company? The fact is that many organizations are prime feeding grounds for psychopaths with an entrepreneurial bent and the requisite personal attributes and social skills to fool many people. Like all predators, psychopaths go where the action is, which to them means positions, occupations, professions, and organizations that afford them the opportunity to obtain power,

control, status, and possessions, and to engage in exploitative interpersonal relationships.

Despite the problems and challenges associated with joining a large business, there is much to be gained, and psychopaths, like most of us, assess the risks against the potential reward. There is the opportunity to make a lot of money, to gain status and power, and all the perquisites that go with them. The psychopaths' ability to take advantage of a company—commit fraud, steal, abuse coworkers, make a big salary—while being in its employ, requires more sophistication than the simple social manipulation they present out in public. For the corporate psychopath, this is the ultimate challenge.

We know that individuals with psychopathic personalities are prone to lying, rule breaking, and deceit. To be successful in an organization, they would have to operate covertly, that is, *under the radar*, cognizant of the policies, rules, regulations, and official codes of conduct, but able to circumvent them for a significant amount of time. They would have to manipulate many coworkers and managers into believing their lies, while *neutralizing* the negative impact of any coworkers who discovered (and threatened to uncover) their lies and deceit. To manipulate coworkers, compliance systems, and management observations consistently would be very difficult, possibly beyond the ability of all but

the most talented and persistent. Few psychopaths would have the wherewithal to try it, and those who did would fail quickly. *Or so it once was thought.*

Organizational Manipulation

To understand the success of the corporate psychopath, we must realize that textbook bureaucracies rarely exist and in modern times seldom survive. Instead, organizational structures, processes, and culture are always evolving and developing toward an ideal whose picture is, at best, unclear and ever changing. This constant change and uncertainty causes stress for most employees and managers, but opens the door for the psychopath.

Babiak has shown that psychopaths may have little difficulty influencing others even on the job, where their manipulations may attract more attention. This is best understood in the context of a case. During a long-term consulting assignment, many years ago, Babiak had the experience of working with a psychopath without knowing it at the time.

I was asked to work with a project team that was experiencing a decline in its overall

productivity and a significant increase in conflict. Some team members had even asked to be transferred to other projects, despite the prestige associated with working on this high-performing team. When questioned by management, the team leader and some members said they did not know what was causing the difficulty. A team-building program was launched for the team members in an attempt to isolate the problems and help the team regain its previous high-performance levels.

Interviews with team members, observations from coworkers in other departments and other management, and review of relevant human resources documents provided a preliminary picture of what was happening. Many members of the team felt that one of its members was the primary cause of its problems, but were afraid to come forward. They reported to me, privately, that this individual circumvented team processes and procedures, caused conflict, acted rudely in meetings, and did more to derail progress than to promote it. He often showed up late to meetings, and when he finally would arrive, he hadn't completed the tasks he was assigned, routinely blaming others for his failures. Some suggested that he bullied, even threatened, team

members who did not agree with him. At every turn, he undercut the leader's role on the team, who also happened to be his boss.

Some other members of the team felt differently, though. They told me that he was a solid performer whose ideas were both creative and innovative. This group of supporters said that he was a true leader and contributed toward the team's objectives. A few members of the management committee even commented that they thought this person had the potential for promotion into a management position someday. Depending on whom you were speaking with, you would get a different picture of this person. It was as if these groups of coworkers were describing two different people instead of one. The behaviors of this individual and the different reactions of the various team members—that is, the split between supporters and detractors—suggested that something more than mere office politics and interpersonal conflict was going on behind the scenes. But what?

A subsequent review of this person's record by the personnel department revealed that he had lied on his résumé and did not have the essential experience or education that he claimed to have. The security department also discovered that he

routinely took home company supplies of significant monetary value for personal use; the auditing department also found several suspicious inconsistencies in his expense account. The division between the supporters' view and the detractors' view became even wider as more and more information was forthcoming.

Local management reviewed much of this information, but, unfortunately, before any action could be taken, senior management reorganized the departments involved, and the team was disbanded. The team leader was moved to another location and the individual who was at the center of the controversy was given a promotion—into his boss's job—and a leadership role in the department.

I considered this case for a long time after the business relationship ended but was unable to satisfactorily explain all the discrepancies (only some examples reported here). One day, while rereading a copy of Cleckley's book, I realized that the controversial team member might have a psychopathic personality. My field notes and documents were filled with examples of behaviors similar to those mentioned by Cleckley and studied by Hare. Perhaps psychopathy would explain most of the conflicting observations made by so many people so close to

the individual. Using the information available, I completed the Psychopathy Checklist: Screening Version (PCL: SV) on this person, just as an experiment. The results were startling.

This individual came out very close to the PCL: SV cut score for psychopathy—a score much higher than that expected even for most serious offenders. The PCL: SV also yields four subscores that reflect psychopathic features in four areas: Interpersonal, Affective, Lifestyle, and Antisocial. Known criminal psychopaths tend to score high on all four, while those like the reader score low on each one. The individual who caused such controversy on the team scored high on the first two factors and moderately on the other two. This profile indicated that he was grandiose, manipulative, deceptive, and lacking in empathy and concern for others, but also that he was less impulsive or overtly antisocial than most psychopaths. He had not broken the law or seriously victimized others, at least as far as we knew.

During the next few years, several individuals working in other businesses were brought to my attention by employees who felt that they had been victimized by coworkers. Business executives and human resources professionals, following public speaking engagements and

education sessions about psychopathy, also shared war stories about individuals whose behaviors had caused some difficulties at their companies. In some cases, I had enough information to complete the PCL: SV on them. Some exhibited the same profile as the individual noted above, but some did not—they were merely problematic employees engaged in counterproductive or deviant work behavior for reasons unrelated to psychopathic personality.

Female Psychopaths

"Why aren't there any female psychopaths," an interviewer asked one of the authors. The fact that she could ask such a question reflects a curious wrinkle on sexism: the view, held by many people, that relatively few female psychopaths exist in society—or even prisons—and that those who do exist differ in fundamental ways from their male counterparts.

The issue is clouded by sex-role biases in the diagnosis of the disorder. Thus, when a female and a male each exhibit a psychopathic pattern of core personality traits—grandiose, egocentric,