

Robert Lindsay

BY ROBERT LINDSAY | SEPTEMBER 1, 2010 · 10:53 PM

Sociopath Versus Psychopath: Differential Diagnosis

I think the author of [this piece](#) is onto something. Hare, the acknowledged expert on antisocial personalities, tends to lump them all into one category called The Psychopath. I have problems with this.

[David Lykken](#), recently deceased, wrote a superb book on antisociality called *The Antisocial Personalities*. You might be able to get it in a library. He broke them up into ~15 or more distinct types.

One major distinction was psychopath versus sociopath.

Psychopaths have damaged brains and are wrong either from birth or from early childhood. They need to have both something wrong with their brains and typically another factor, particularly child abuse of some sort, to complete their full-blown development. The psychopath is incurable, at least with our present tools. Maybe in the future we will find some way to treat them. As their brains are different, it's going to be hard to do. Some psychopaths "burn out" starting in the 40's. They seem to age out of antisocial behavior. They often become depressed and alcoholic.

The same genes and factors that create biological psychopaths work differently in females. In females, it creates a manipulative person, often an addict. In particular, there are high rates of somaticization disorders.

The **sociopath**, by contrast, is usually a biologically more or less normal person who has been raised in a criminogenic environment. He is the product of some sort of incompetent parenting in many cases. He's also the product of a criminal environment such as the gang-ridden neighborhoods of the city I now reside in. These hoods are factories for the production of sociopaths, and they churn out small armies of them every year. As the sociopath is usually biologically normal, he can theoretically be cured. It's possible that many simply age out of it.

Beyond that, there is probably not a whole lot of difference in the antisocial behavior of the sociopath versus the psychopath. They are both antisocial. It's hard to say who's worse.

The article notes that the sociopath is often on the margins of society, lives as a criminal or gang member, often dresses poorly, may be homeless or living marginally, and does not appear to be someone you would be inclined to trust. They look like what I call scumbags. I can drive around my hood and see scores of these idiots.

On the other hand, the psychopath may appear quite normal. He may dress and speak well and may be well educated. He may even have a job, even a high paying job. He may have successfully avoided run-in's with police so far, and may stay out of institutions far into middle age. In contrast to the sociopath, the psychopath often seems like someone you could trust. This makes them much more dangerous because they can fool many more people.

One thing is for sure: the [DSM diagnostic criteria](#) for Antisocial Personality Disorder is all screwed up. It mostly relies on

behavior and probably misses many psychopaths and sociopaths. People have been complaining about it forever now.

It is from David Lykken that I get my pet cause of licensing parents. Lykken was long a proponent of parental licensing. Some people are just so fucked up that they should not be allowed to raise kids at all.



The great psychologist David T. Lykken was a proponent of parental licensing.

Lykken on parental licensing:

If children were born to unlicensed parents, the state would intervene immediately. Licenses would be checked in hospital maternity wards. Unlicensed parents would lose their children permanently. Adoptions would be final and irreversible.

Wow! Heavy stuff.

References

Lykken, D.T. (1995). The Antisocial Personalities. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.

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5 Responses to *Sociopath Versus Psychopath: Differential Diagnosis*

Alpha Unit

September 1, 2010 at 11:06 PM



It seems that in our society, a marriage license kind of functions as parental licensing.

[Reply](#)

ski

September 2, 2010 at 4:54 AM



I agree with this parental licensing idea.

Also, this Lykken guy bears a strong resemblance to Eugene Terre'Blanche.

[Reply](#)

ski

September 2, 2010 at 4:57 AM

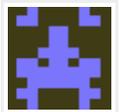


Before I read most of the article and the caption I actually thought it was Terre'Blanche and you were using him as an example of a psychopath... lol

[Reply](#)

Daniel

September 2, 2010 at 7:57 AM



Just for my own curiosity, what neighborhood do you live in in So. Cal.? Don't worry, I'm not a stalker.

Reason: I might move to So. Cal. and I can probably afford to live only in marginal neighborhoods. I want to scope out the best marginal neighborhoods that I can find.

[Reply](#)

Robert Lindsay

September 2, 2010 at 12:41 PM



I live in Central California. It's quite cheap here. Nothing's cheap on So. Cal if you ask me.

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