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## How Psychopaths And Sociopaths Are Dealt With By The Canadian Law

When society thinks of a psychopath or a sociopath, the first thought that comes to mind is a crazy person who is a serial killer or a sadistic violent individual. Some experts say that there is hardly a difference between psychopaths and sociopaths. However as researchers learn more about the two types of psychological thinking processes, experts have come to realize that psychopathy and sociopathy are two different mental disorders. Many people think that they have a working knowledge of psychopaths and sociopaths from watching television shows such as Criminal Minds, C.S.I., and The Following. Even though these shows have some truth to them, the reality is these shows are fictional and are based in America, with American laws. Actual accounts of psychopaths and sociopaths in Canada are dealt with specific laws pertaining to each psychological disorders.

### What is the Difference between Psychopaths and Sociopaths?

Psychopaths and sociopaths are considered to be people who are helpless and cannot be fixed of their psychological disorders. Society generally considers them to be outsiders, crazy, sadistic, violent people that should be banished from the population forever. When people think of psychopaths and sociopaths, they think of people who are brutally violent, sadistic serial killers. Oftentimes, we think of the terms psychopath and sociopath as being used interchangeably to describe people who have no conscience and act with no regard to others; in fact, the terms were once fairly interchangeable. However, the latest research about psychopaths and sociopaths has shown that the above statements about the disorders are far from the truth. Both psychopaths and sociopaths have their characteristic features that make each other two different psychological disorders. The following characteristics are the differences that make psychopaths and sociopaths different from each other.

Some characteristics that differentiate between psychopaths and sociopaths are hereditary vs environment, temperamental differences, violent tendencies, feeling remorse or not, social relations, career and boredom. 1 There are three major differences between psychopaths and sociopaths which are hereditary vs environmental and social relationships.

Psychopaths are born having temperamental distinctions that cause the behavior of risk pursuing, recklessness, boldness as well as inability to socialize in an ordinary manner. There is a lack of guilt or remorse, an absence of anxiety, and a failure to learn by experience.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand sociopaths are born having normal temperaments, and their condition is a consequence of the negative environmental experiences that influence autonomic nervous system and neurological growth which may result in physiological responses like those which psychopaths present. Usual factors are poverty, permissive or neglectful parenting, and direct exposure to violence, peers, other environmental factors and their intelligence level. Another distinguishing element between psychopathy and sociopathy is the presentation. He/she will con and manipulate with charm and intimidation, has the ability to present himself/herself as normal to society.

The psychopath is organized in his/her thoughts and behavior, he/she maintains good physical

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and emotional control while committing a crime, demonstrating little to no emotional even under situations of overt pressure or that are threatening to his/her existence. On the other hand, the sociopath is less organized, he/she might be quick to display anger, anxiety, and distress. A sociopath is likely to impulsively act out in unsuitable manner, snap out in rage, without thinking about the consequences. Sociopaths are characterized by a disregard for social obligation and a lack of concern for the feelings of others. They display pathological egocentricity, shallow emotions, lack of insight, poor control of impulsiveness (including a low tolerance for frustration and a low threshold for discharge of aggression), irresponsibility, a lack of empathy for other human beings and of remorse, anxiety or guilt in relation to his/her antisocial behavior.<sup>3</sup>

## **How Psychopaths and Sociopaths see the World**

How people may see the world normally is totally different for psychopaths and sociopaths. What might seem to be good and healthy for our society may be the cause of why psychopaths and sociopaths way they are. The psychopath's world is a strikingly skewed one in which the normal laws of human emotion and interaction do not apply, yet it serves as reality for a sizable portion of humanity. Despite this emotional deficiency, most psychopaths and sociopaths learn to mimic the appearance of normal emotion well enough to fit into ordinary society, not unlike the way that the hearing impaired or illiterate learn to use other cues to compensate for their disabilities. Trying to understand these people is difficult because we can't read minds. With regards to their personality, psychopaths are known for being glib and charming, traits they use to manipulate and deceive other people. They are most often the 'life of the party' and appear to get along well with other people, easily making "friends" and getting others to trust them. Once they gain a person's trust, they have no problem using that relationship in order to take advantage of the other person.<sup>4</sup>

How we learn about the minds of a psychopath and a sociopath is by studying how they talk to people and watching their body language in a public environment. Individuals' language is one of the best ways to glean insight into their thoughts and general outlook. Recent advances in technology make it possible to examine more closely the language of various clinical populations through automatic linguistic analysis programs. These applications can differentiate between a variety of individual and personality factors.<sup>5</sup>

## **History of Psychopaths and Sociopaths**

Psychopaths and sociopaths have been around for quite a while but they were not recognized as mental disorders. They were more known as crazy people who were delusional. "Well into the eighteenth century, medicine recognized only three broad classes of mental illness: melancholy (depression) psychosis and delusions, and the psychopath fit into none of these. Even the bible of diagnostics psychiatry- the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) does not formally recognize psychopathy, nut uses instead the largely subsuming diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder (ASPD)." <sup>6</sup> The concept of the psychopath is only the latest and most refined in a long string of attempts to account for a certain pattern of conduct. In the 19th century, German psychiatric clinicians began to notice patients in their care who fit no known diagnosis, but who nevertheless displayed strange and disturbing behaviors.<sup>7</sup>

By the turn of the century 'psychopathic inferiority' referred to the type of mental disorder that

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might now be termed personality disorder, along with a wide variety of other conditions now otherwise classified. Through the early 20th century this and other terms such as 'constitutional (inborn) psychopaths' or 'psychopathic personalities', were used very broadly to cover anyone who violated legal or moral expectations or was considered inherently socially undesirable in some way.

The term sociopathy was popularized from 1929/30 by an American psychologist, originally intended as an alternative term to indicate that the defining feature was a pervasive failure to adhere to societal norms in a way that could harm others.<sup>8</sup> The term psychopathy also gradually narrowed to the latter sense, based on interpretations of the work of a Scottish psychiatrist and especially checklists popularized by an American psychiatrist and later a Canadian psychologist, Dr. Robert Hare.<sup>9</sup> Psychopathy became defined in these quarters as a constellation of personality traits allegedly associated with immorality, criminality, or in some cases socioeconomic success. Official psychiatric diagnostic manuals adopted a mixture of approaches, eventually going by the term Antisocial or Dissocial Personality Disorder.

### **Canadian Case: Robert Pickton**

Robert Pickton is believed to be one of Canada's worst serial killers. He was a local pig farmer in Port Coquitlam, a town outside of Vancouver. Many of his victims were prostitutes and drug users that lived downtown Vancouver. Pickton was convicted of the second-degree murder of six women in December 2007, initially was on trial for 26 counts of first-degree murder. He once bragged to a cellmate that he intended to kill 50 women. Details provided in court revealed brutal and heinous murders that often included torture, degradation, and dismemberment of the victims. <sup>10</sup>

Dating back to the early 1980's women began disappearing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. At least sixty women were missing and most all were poor, disadvantaged drug addicts or prostitutes. A task force consisting of Royal Canadian Mounted Police and members from the Vancouver Police Department working together following leads and trying to solve the mystery of the vanishing women.

The Downtown Eastside of Vancouver is the oldest part of Vancouver and is known for its high volume of poverty, crime, drugs, and for the center of the cities sex trade. The areas urban decay made it the ideal hunting ground for a serial killer looking for victims who wouldn't be missed.<sup>11</sup>

One name kept reoccurring during the investigation and suspicions began falling on a local pig farmer named Robert Pickton. On February 5th, 2002 police acquired a search warrant to look for supposed illegal firearms that had been reported to police and Robert was arrested on firearms charges but later released. A second warrant was issued and when personal items belonging to some of the known missing women surfaced and the task force arrested Pickton on February 22nd, 2002 and charged him with murder.<sup>12</sup>

The Pickton property was subjected to extreme excavation by forensic anthropologists and heavy equipment, including a fifty-foot conveyor belt and soil sifters to help identify human remains on the property. Identifying the remains was made more difficult because of decomposition and the fact that many of the bodies may have been fed to the farms pigs.

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Enough evidence and DNA was able to be collected to positively identify at least six different victims and allow the task force to make a case for at least six murders. Pickton freely bragged about committing forty-nine murders and was disappointed that due to sloppiness he would not be able to reach his goal of fifty victims. 13

## **How the Canadian Law deals with Psychopaths and Sociopaths**

In general, people with high levels of psychopathic traits come into contact with the law at a younger age compared to their non-psychopathic counterparts are more violent during the commission of their crime more prone to predatory, instrumental violence and more difficult to treat and rehabilitate. Researchers found that psychopaths and sociopaths were more likely than other offenders to neglect major details of their offences and to minimize the instrumentality of their crimes by amplifying the extent to which their crimes were reactive. Psychopaths and sociopaths were also more likely to shift the blame of the crimes to external forces and to focus on making themselves look like they did not commit the crime.14

As to why psychopaths are so dangerous, Hare stated, “They commit more than twice as many violent and aggressive acts, both in and out of prison, as do other criminals....For them (psychopaths), violence and threats are handy tools to be used when they are angered, defied, or frustrated, and they give little thought to the pain and humiliation experienced by the victims. Their violence is callous and instrumental-used to satisfy a simple need, such as sex, or to obtain something he or she wants-and the psychopath’s reactions to the event are much more likely to be indifference, a sense of power, pleasure, or smug satisfaction than regret at the damage done.” 15

Treatment outcomes for psychopaths have been a controversial topic, with many researchers finding evidence both in support of and against the effectiveness of treatment. Researchers found that psychopaths responded better to treatment when relapse prevention techniques were integrated into a cognitive behavioural program that focused on taking personal responsibility. These researchers suggested that efforts should be made to emphasize that psychopaths are alone responsible for their own behaviour and to teach more pro-social ways of using their abilities to satisfy their wants and needs. They found that conventional insight and empathy building programs were not effective in reducing recidivism.16

In conclusion, Psychopaths and Sociopaths are more complex than what people may think. They function in our society without us knowing who they really are and what they are capable of doing. People may think they know how to spot a psychopath or a sociopath, but in reality they could be living next door. This is why Robert Pickton was able to abduct and murder so many people for so long because he was in plain sight and nobody would have expected him to complete such crimes.