Psychopathy – Fact or Fiction? - KEY

Instructor Directions: Have students read the following statements alone or in groups and indicate if they believe that it is fact or fiction. Discuss the answers using the additional information provided from the book *The Psychopath Whisperer: The Science of those Without Conscious* by Kent A. Kiehl, Ph.D.

1. **FICTION** Almost all individual currently being held in maximum-security prisons meet the criteria for psychopathy.
   One in four maximum-security inmates is a psychopath.

2. **FACT** There are over 29,000,000 psychopaths worldwide and a psychopath is born every 47 seconds.
   Slightly less than 1 percent of the general population or about 1 in 150 people will meet the criteria for psychopathy. However, studies indicate that between 15-35% of prison inmates worldwide meet the criteria for the diagnosis because psychopaths tend to violate laws.

3. **FICTION** Psychopaths are less likely to commit new crimes after being released from prison than other inmates due to their unusually high intellect.
   Psychopaths are six times more likely than other criminals to commit new crimes following release from prison. The cost of crime is $3.2 trillion per year – an amount greater than the expenditures for all health care in the United States.

4. **FICTION** Psychosis and psychopathy are similar conditions.
   Psychosis is characterized by a split from reality often in the form of hallucinations, delusions, and disordered thoughts and is present in conditions such as schizophrenia and major depression. These psychotic symptoms are rarely present in psychopaths. Interestingly it is the absence of psychotic symptoms that initially differentiated psychopaths from other patients in mental hospitals.

5. **FACT** There are approximately 500,000 adult male psychopaths in the United States.
   The overwhelming majority of psychopaths are males. According to the author, there is a lack of research on female psychopaths, but experts estimate that there is one female psychopath for every ten male psychopaths. Female psychopaths are also likely to end up in prison, and the rate of psychopathy for women prisoners is about 10-20 percent which is the same ratio in males. However, women make up only about 10 percent of the total prison population.

6. **FACT** Some forms of group therapy may make psychopaths more likely to commit new crimes following release from prison than no treatment at all.

7. **FACT** The FBI estimates there are as many as fifty active serial killers in the United States. According to the author serial killers are usually motivated by sexual dominance or sexual sadism but frequently also meet the criteria for psychopathy. A serial kill like Ted Bundy would likely have a sexual-based disorder like sexual sadism and psychopathy. The desire to kill is the result of the sadism and the lack of guilt, emotion, and empathy are the result of the psychopathy. The combination, of course, results in an extremely dangerous individual.

*The Psychopath Whisperer: The Science of Those Without Conscience*
Author: Kent A. Kiehl, PhD
http://booksforpsychologyclass.weebly.com/
8. **FACT** Incarceration in a maximum-security juvenile prison can cost $514,00 per year per youth.

_The Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) in Wisconsin pioneered a program for difficult to control juvenile offenders. Boys sent to MJTC if the other two juvenile correctional facilities in the state were unable to manage them and were the most violent youth offenders in Wisconsin. The majority of these young men scored in the most severe level of psychopathy according to the Youth Psychopathy Checklist. The philosophy developed by MJTC was called the Decompression Model after how a scuba diver's gradual ascent from the pressures of the deep ocean. The model was designed to “decompress” these offenders by building prosocial bonds. The results of the decompression model showed that 98% of the inmates who did not receive the treatment were arrested for a new crime within four years of release from juvenile prison, but only 64% of the inmates who received decompression therapy were arrested for a new crime during the same period. The treatment at MJTC also led those individuals to be 50% less likely to be convicted of a violent crime than non-MJTC juvenile offenders. The results of the decompression model at MJTC were published in peer-reviewed academic journals subject to scientific scrutiny._

Psychologists at the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center created an intensive, cognitive behavioral therapy method that is effective in treating youths with elevated psychopathic traits. The treatment at MJTC, however, is more than two times the cost of treatment in traditional juvenile prisons. However, the program led to reduced institutional infractions which typically lead to longer sentences at a greater expense. MJTC youth were likely to be released from prison earlier due to fewer institutional infractions and because they did not commit as many crimes upon release which also leads to a reduction in overall correctional department costs in the long run. In a detailed economic analysis, it was found that for every $10,000 that the state of Wisconsin spent on MJTC they received a cost savings of $70,000 over a four-year period.

9. **FICTION** Psychopaths frequently also have a diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

_According to the author and expert on psychopathy, he has never met a psychopath who also had OCD, and he does not believe this can exist. Unlike individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder or other anxiety disorders psychopaths do not experience worry. Obsessive-compulsiveness according to the author is completely foreign to psychopaths, and they are unlikely to ruminate on anything. Additionally, a hallmark of psychopathy is an inability to experience grief, honesty, sadness, or intense joy._

10. **FICTION** The terms psychopath and sociopath are both used today to describe the same diagnosis.

_“What is the difference between a psychopath, a sociopath, and an individual with antisocial personality disorder?” The term psychopath was first used by the German psychiatrist J.L.A. Koch (1841-1908) to describe individuals who exhibited a wide range of antisocial traits throughout their entire life and across most areas of their lives. Koch used the term to differentiate these individuals from others who were merely criminals. Koch’s use of the term psychopath was based on biological causes. His purely biological explanation for psychopathology soon was criticized by the growing influence of Behaviorism. If individuals were blank slates at birth, then the traits described by Koch would have environmental causes. The term sociopathy was first used in the 1930’s and was created to describe individuals with the same traits as psychopaths but whose cause was environmental and not physiological. The simple answer then is that psychopaths are created by “nature” and sociopaths are created by “nurture.” For the author, the terms sociopathy and psychopathy are very different. Sociopathy would involve a very wide range of individuals who behave in antisocial ways as a result of negative environmental influences whereas psychopathy is a concept based on genetics and biology with measurable brain differences._

_Today, psychopathy is diagnosed based on the 20 items of the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, the clinical rating tool considered the gold standard for the assessment of psychopathy._