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From Theoretical to Empirical: Considering Reflections of Psychopathy Across the Thin Blue Line

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The majority of psychopathy research has focused on negative outcomes in criminal populations. However, psychopathy encompasses a variety of traits, and recent research suggests that certain features of psychopathy, such as a fearless temperament, may be related to psychological resiliency, "successful" functioning, and even heroic behavior (Hall & Benning, 2006; Lykken, 1995). Despite anecdotal discussion, little is known about the possible "successful" or adaptive reflections of psychopathic personality traits in ostensible heroes. This study expands on the knowledge of "successful" psychopathy by considering police recruits; we examined the degree to which these aspiring first responders share traits with psychopathic individuals. When compared with a student sample and the community and offender samples in the Psychopathic Personality Inventory–Revised manual (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005), the police recruits reported higher Fearless Dominance and Coldheartedness scores and lower Self-Centered Impulsivity scores. Fearless dominance traits were positively correlated with narcissism, and self-centered impulsivity traits were positively associated with covert narcissism. These findings suggest that although our police recruit sample is not classically psychopathic, the dominance and coldheartedness associated with psychopathy may be common among those beginning a police career. Further, our results imply that certain features of psychopathy may be reflected across the thin blue line in those on the verge of entering their police careers.

Keywords: psychopathy, police recruits, Psychopathic Personality Inventory–Revised (PPI-R), first responders, successful psychopathy

How might one describe a person who personifies traits such as superficial charm, callousness, coldness, grandiosity, and calculated behavior; indulges in substance abuse and adventure-seeking to stave off boredom; conceals evidence and lies to the police; and is marked by detachment from others and a narcissistic display of intellect? A psychologist might respond that he or she is a psychopath—an individual with a personality disorder marked by dissocial tendencies, a lack of deep social emotions, and disinterest in interpersonal attachments (Cleckley, 1941/1988). In contrast, a layman or an ethicist might oscillate between hero or villain. More often than not, the descriptor of "psychopath" is largely synonymous with "villain"—individuals are quick to merge a psychological disposition with a moral characterization, thereby conflating the continuum of personality with the dimension of morality. However, in this case, the conflation of these labels is anything but *elementary*, as the aforementioned description applies directly to one of the greatest heroes of all time: Sherlock Holmes.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's infamous consulting detective is renowned for his cold, calculating abilities; indeed, these very characteristics often allowed Holmes to aid law enforcement in so many cases. Since his earliest portrayal, Sherlock Holmes displayed a number of likely psychopathic traits (Nicol, 2013). In the BBC's adaptation, *Sherlock*, Holmes' coldness, narcissism, and proneness to boredom are amplified; he even self-identifies as a "high-functioning sociopath." Some psychologists might quibble over terminology and maintain that Holmes actually demonstrates "successful psychopathy," a variant of the disorder that captures the interpersonal and affective components without much of the antisocial behavior (Lilienfeld, Watts, & Smith, 2015). Nonetheless, Holmes offers an elucidating (albeit fictional) example of a psychopathic individual who does not become a criminal; instead, he puts his talents to use by pursuing criminals and assisting law enforcement. In this sense, Sherlock Holmes is such a successful hero for some of the same reasons his counterparts are such successful villains. This provocative notion that the same traits that beget villainy might also beget heroism was introduced in the psychological literature by Lykken (1995). Since then, however, little research has examined whether heroes and villains—societal

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protectors and criminals—share similar psychological traits, including those pertinent to psychopathy.

Successful Psychopathy

Adaptive Traits?

Cleckley (1941/1988) defined psychopathy as a personality construct marked by interpersonal, affective, cognitive, and behavioral deficits including superficial charm, glibness, grandiosity, and deficient anxiety and empathy. Psychopathy is often understood as the conjunction of two or three distinct, but intersecting, phenotypic dimensions (Cooke & Michie, 2001). On measures such as the Psychopathic Personality Inventory–Revised (PPI-R; Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005), the dimensions are represented by the Fearless Dominance factor (FD; fearlessness, stress immunity, and social influence), the Self-Centered Impulsivity factor (SCI; Machiavellian egocentricity, rebellious nonconformity, blame externalization, and carefree nonplanfulness), and the Coldheartedness factor (lack of emotions, guilt, empathy, and attachment to others).

AQ: 2

A recent debate has emerged concerning the relevance of FD to psychopathy, with some authors arguing that FD is not part-and-parcel of psychopathy, even though it can moderate its behavioral expression (Miller & Lynam, 2012). If individuals are characterized predominantly by social dominance, fearlessness, and low anxiety, they may be able to use these qualities to attain success in some aspects of society (Hall & Benning, 2006). These ideas are consistent with Cleckley's conceptualization that the psychopath "is likely to suggest desirable and superior human qualities, a robust mental health" (p. 339). In fact, FD traits are correlated with outcomes such as higher income, positive affect, and resilience against internalizing problems (Del Gaizo & Falkenbach, 2008; Edens, Poythress, Lilienfeld, Patrick, & Test, 2008; Howe, Falkenbach, & Massey, 2014; Lilienfeld, Waldman, et al., 2012; Patrick, Edens, Poythress, Lilienfeld, & Benning, 2006). This discussion has elicited controversy over whether such "successful" psychopathy traits fall within the nomological network of psychopathy. For Miller and Lynam (2012), psychological well-being does not belong in the descriptive criteria for any pathology. Although conceding that FD is not sufficient, Lilienfeld, Patrick, et al. (2012) argued that to disregard the psychologically adaptive functions of psychopathic traits neglects the paradoxical nature of the disorder and "effectively reduces psychopathy to ASPD" (p. 331). More broadly, critics have argued that the concept of successful psychopathy is scientifically implausible, given that global psychopathy is linked to maladaptive functioning across multiple life domains (DeLisi, 2016).

AQ: 3

At the same time, high levels of certain psychopathic traits, such as physical fearlessness, may be tied to short-term success but long-term failure; moreover, individuals with high levels of successful psychopathy may be buffered from chronic failure by virtue of moderating variables (Lilienfeld et al., 2015). In addition to hampering a comprehensive understanding of the construct of psychopathy, an exclusive focus on pathology suggests that personality traits are dichotomous in their manifestations—either psychologically adaptive or maladaptive. Rather than a traditional syndrome marked by covering indicators, psychopathy may be more of an "impact condition" (Lykken, 1991), wherein the conjunction of two or more dimensions creates the clinical picture and distinct impression of a psychopath (Lilienfeld, 2013). In this sense, perhaps individuals who have the "dials" turned up on FD and Coldheartedness could use these traits for adaptive purposes (at least in the short term); indeed, Sherlock Holmes might fit this configuration. However, individuals with high SCI and Coldheartedness (or all three dimensions) might be more likely to engage in antisocial and criminal activities.

Another potential explanation for successful psychopathy can be seen in Lykken's (1995) fearlessness hypothesis. He argued that fearless children are at risk for developing traits associated with psychopathy. Lykken hypothesized that most people initially form close bonds with others (e.g., family, friends) out of a desire for security. However, the psychopath, who is less disposed to anxieties about security, is much less relationally needy. In this view, all psychopathic individuals share the same underlying fearless disposition; fearlessness serves as the "source trait" (Cattell, 1957) for psychopathy. The degree of adequate socialization may influence whether this disposition is channeled into prosocial or antisocial outcomes. Therefore, psychopathic individuals may make successful character adaptations. In fact, Lilienfeld, Waldman, et al. (2012) retrospectively considered psychopathic traits in U.S. presidents by using historical experts who rated the president's preoffice personality traits. The study revealed that FD, but not SCI, was postdictive of presidential success and performance, raising the possibility that it confers an advantage in occupations characterized by social or physical risk.

Psychopathy and Heroism

AQ: 4

Given the ostensible link with fearlessness, Lykken (1995) suggested that, "The hero and the psychopath might be twigs on the same genetic branch" (p. 118). Smith, Lilienfeld, Coffey, and Dabbs (2013) found that FD was positively related to self-reported heroism, sensation-seeking, and altruism toward strangers in three nonforensic samples as well as war heroism in U.S. presidents (as rated by experts). Although the authors concluded that their results may provide initial support to Lykken's famous statement, they noted that future research investigating the relationship between heroism and psychopathy would benefit from examinations of samples "with higher levels of heroism, such as police officers" (p. 644).

Hallmarks of the law enforcement profession, such as heroism, risk-taking, and authority/power (Leftkowitz, 1975), make it conceivable that certain psychopathic traits predispose individuals to pursue profession. For example, some individuals may be drawn to such a career as a means of seeking adventure or status (Conti, 2006). Many may even exhibit high levels of traits associated with FD. Police officers, as a group, are marked by elevated scores on excitement-seeking (Gomá-i-Freixanet & Wismeijer, 2002; Próchniak, 2012; Salters-Pedneault, Ruef, & Orr, 2010), boldness (Harper, Evans, Thornton, Sullenberger, & Kelly, 1999), narcissism (Lorinskas & Kulis, 1986), interpersonal detachment, and emotional resilience (Kop & Euwema, 2001). Mitchell and Bray (1990) described emergency service workers as action-oriented, social individuals who are easily bored. In fact, stress immunity, dominance, narcissism, extraversion (Lau, Hem, Berg, Ekeberg, & Torgersen, 2006; Newman & Rucker-Reed, 2004), and emotional stability (Eber, 1991; Gomá-i-Freixanet & Wismeijer, 2002; Lorr & Strack, 1994) are considered ideal police personality traits and are linked to job success (Bannish & Ruiz, 2003). Indeed, low anxiety (Eber, 1991) is especially marked in police trainees and can be helpful for situations requiring calm in the face of emer-

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gencies. Accordingly, successful police officers are less anxious than unsuccessful officers.

Traits associated with coldheartedness, such as detachment (i.e., callous attitude toward others; Maslach, 1993) and inhibited emotional reactions (Laguna, Linn, Ward, & Rupslaukyte, 2010), are apparent in police officers (Kop & Euwema, 2001). An emotional reaction in adverse situations in which snap judgments are required could compromise safety, whereas a compartmentalized response may be more adaptive (Bakker & Heuven, 2006). Officers who demonstrate higher emotional distance from victims perform more effectively than those who have more emotional empathy (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Burke, 1994).

Although a recent case study demonstrated some potential career paths for police officers with high psychopathic traits (Falkenbach, McKinley, & Larson, ~~in press),~~ no direct investigation of psychopathic traits in law enforcement exists, and little is known about the possible "successful" expressions of psychopathic traits in those pursuing a police career. Although they may share some features with psychopathic individuals, few are likely to display traditional psychopathy. Indeed, most police officers engage in far more prosocial than antisocial behaviors; the fact that some may exhibit elevated levels of certain psychopathic traits yet refrain from committing antisocial acts implies high levels of impulse control. Such findings may shed light on potential protective factors that buffer individuals with FD traits from engaging in antisocial actions.

Current Study

Recent misconduct among police officers has been the focus of extensive media attention. The purpose of the current study is not to impugn the personalities of law enforcement officials, nor to a priori assume the adaptive nature of certain psychopathic traits. Rather, our objective is to investigate the presence and levels of these traits and examine their implications in police recruits. Since Lykken's (1995) speculation that heroes and psychopaths may be dark reflections of one another, continued debate and conjecture have characterized the literature. We aim to advance this conversation from an empirical vantage point by determining if these traits exist in this hope-to-be "heroic" population. This information may provide valuable clues about which traits distinguish police recruits from their criminal and community counterparts.

To evaluate the construct of psychopathy in this police recruit sample, data from the PPI-R were used to address the following three broad questions: (a) What is the distribution of psychopathic traits in police recruits? (b) What is the level of psychopathic traits and how does it compare with those of other samples? (c) Is convergent and discriminant validity demonstrated between the PPI-R and narcissism subdimensions[1]? Research indicating that police officers tend to (a) possess adaptive traits analogous with FD, (b) possess somewhat lower levels of empathy, and (c) depersonalize their interactions, but (d) do not generally act in impulsive or antisocial ways, led us to hypothesize that participants would obtain elevated scores on PPI-R FD and PPI-R Coldheartedness but low scores on PPI-R SCI. Based on previous findings (Claes et al., 2009; Falkenbach, Howe, & Falki, 2013) considering narcissism subdimensions, we expected positive correlations between overt narcissism and ~~PPI-I~~ and between covert narcissism and ~~PPI-II~~.

Method

Participants and Procedure

This study drew on a convenience sample of police recruits from a large metropolitan police force. All institutional review board-approved procedures were followed. Participants were recruited from a training program, and 73% of those present agreed to complete the study. The administration of the randomized self-report measures took approximately 90 min to complete. Upon completion, participants were compensated with a meal.

The current study focused exclusively on men, as the construct of psychopathy is poorly understood in women[2] (Falkenbach, 2008; Miller, Watts, & Jones, 2011). The research had no impact on participant's jobs and their supervisors had no knowledge of their participation. Participants with invalid profiles according to the PPI-R manual (40 participants scored a 17 or greater on the Inconsistent Responding scale; Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005) were removed before analysis. A sample of 679 police recruits comprised the final participant pool. The ages ranged from 21 to 40 years (M = 26.08, SD = 3.75). The participants were 61.9% (n = 420) Caucasian, 19.6% (n = 133) Hispanic/Latino, 9.0% (n = 61) African American, 8.0% (n = 54) Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.0% (n = 7) other, and 0.60% did not indicate their race (n = 4).

Three other samples were used for comparison purposes. Ninety-six local male undergraduates (18–46) from the same metropolitan city participated in exchange for partial course credit. The sample was 20.8% Caucasian (n = 20), 15.8% African American (n = 7), 35.4% Hispanic (n = 34), 21.9% Asian (n = 21), and 13.5% other (n = 13; one unreported race). A comparative sample of 172 age-matched men (21–40 years) from the PPI-R sample was drawn from (a) students enrolled in introductory psychology classes in three universities (received partial course credit) and (b) community adults recruited via newspaper advertisements, Internet postings, and community agencies (received $10). The community sample was matched to U.S. Census proportions for race/ethnicity and educational level (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005). A third sample of 98 age-matched men (21–40 years) from the PPI-R manual offender sample was collected as part of a routine intake assessment procedure at a northeastern prerelease facility (not compensated for participation; Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005). The sample was 19.4% Caucasian (n = 19), 68.4% African American (n = 67), 9.2% Hispanic/Latino (n = 9), 1% Asian American (n = 1), and 2% other-identified (n = 2).

Measures

The PPI-R (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005) is a 154-item, self-report measure of psychopathic traits. Items are rated on a 4-point scale (1 = *false* to 4 = *true*) and make up the following eight subscales: Machiavellian Egocentricity (ME), Rebellious Nonconformity, Blame Externalization (BE), Carefree Nonplanfulness (CN), Social Influence (SOI), Fearlessness, Stress Immunity (STI), and Coldheartedness. Summed scores on Fearlessness, STI, and

[1] Of the various terms used to describe the subtypes of narcissism, overt and covert are used for consistency.

[2] Adding the 113 women resulted in the same effect sizes and statistical significance. ~~Sex~~ analyses are available in the online supplemental material.

SOI are FD, and summed scores on ME, Rebellious Nonconformity, BE, and CN are SCI. Coldheartedness is a standalone scale[3] (Benning, Patrick, Hicks, Blonigen, & Krueger, 2003). Cronbach's alphas for this sample were .85 for PPI-R, .86 for FD, .91 for SCI, and .75 for Coldheartedness.

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) is composed of 40 items measuring narcissistic personality traits. The NPI consists of seven subscales comprising the following two higher-order dimensions: Overt (NPI-O; Authority, Exhibitionism, Superiority, Self-Sufficiency, and Vanity) and Covert (NPI-C; Entitlement and Exploitativeness; Emmons, 1987). Cronbach's alphas for the current sample were .73 for NPI-O and .52 for NPI-C.

Results

~~Psychopathic Traits: Sample Comparisons~~

The distribution of PPI-R scores in the police recruit sample ranged from 216 to 378 ($M = 281.31$, $SD = 26.73$), FD scores ranged from 77 to 171 ($M = 129.53$, $SD = 15.72$), SCI scores ranged from 73 to 237 ($M = 114.85$, $SD = 21.56$), and Coldheartedness scores ranged from 16 to 57 ($M = 36.73$, $SD = 7.00$). As shown in Table 1, the PPI-R total, subscales, and factor raw score means of the police recruit sample were compared with a male student sample as well as the representative community and offender samples as reported by Lilienfeld and Widows (2005). One-way between-group analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of the group on PPI-R scores and post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test were used. Compared with the male student, community, and offender samples, the male police recruit sample was significantly lower on SCI (and all subscales) and significantly higher on FD (SOI and STI). The police recruit sample scored significantly higher than the offender sample on Fearlessness and Coldheartedness. The police recruit sample scored significantly lower on PPI-R Total than the community and male student sample; however, there was no significant difference between recruit and offender samples.

The PPI-R raw scores were converted to t scores (standardized scores with a M of 50 and a SD of 10), using the community and offender sample conversion tables in the manual (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005) to compare participants' responses with those of the two manual groups. T scores greater than 65 are typically considered to fall in the elevated range, with about 6% of the sample expected to be above 1.5 SD from the mean. Table 2 displays the average t scores and the percentage of the current sample scoring above 65 on each scale. Compared with the community and offender samples, a lower percentage of police recruits demonstrated t scores greater than 65 on the PPI-R and SCI. In contrast, a larger proportion of the recruits scored above $t = 65$ on FD and Coldheartedness.

Zero-order correlations were computed to ascertain relations between the NPI and the PPI-R factors. The FD scale demonstrated small-to-moderate significant correlations with the NPI-O ($r = .49/.38$)[4] and NPI-C ($r = .34/.12$). The SCI significantly correlated with NPI-C ($r = .21/.21$), and Coldheartedness demonstrated a small-but-significant positive correlation with NPI-O ($r = .16$) and NPI-C ($r = .16$).[5]

Discussion

Several researchers and theorists have speculated that the traits associated with the FD dimension of psychopathy can often be adaptive and predispose individuals to leadership and heroism (Lykken, 1995). Nevertheless, research has yet to directly examine the distribution and characteristics of psychopathic traits in a sample that is explicitly charged with protecting our society's citizens and upholding our laws. The current study attempted to explore the nature of these traits in a sample of metropolitan police recruits who have successfully garnered employment in the law enforcement field. The psychopathic personality traits in police recruits were similar to those in comparative populations, except notably in the largely behavioral features of the disorder. When examining the levels of general psychopathic traits in this police recruit sample compared with the samples from the PPI-R manual (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005), only 1.4% (using the community sample metric) or 5.5% (using the offender sample metric), compared with the expected 6%, scored in the elevated range of psychopathic traits. These differences were particularly noted when considering SCI. Only 0.05% (using the community sample metric) or 1.7% (using the offender sample metric) of the current sample demonstrated elevated scores. In conjunction with lower mean scores on SCI, ME, CN, and BE than the current male student sample, manual samples (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005), other student samples (López, Poy, Patrick, & Moltó, 2013), and other offender samples (Uzieblo, Verschuere, & Crombez, 2007), our results strongly suggest that typical police recruits do *not* manifest the full complement of traits associated with classical (Cleckley, 1941/1988) psychopathy, especially the largely maladaptive traits.

At the same time, our findings suggest that police recruits display higher levels of the potentially adaptive traits of psychopathy. A larger percentage of the recruits scored in the elevated range on FD and reported higher mean scores on FD than did the student, community, and offender samples (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005), as well as other college samples (Lopez et al., 2012). They demonstrated elevated levels of FD traits hypothesized adaptive in the law enforcement field—specifically, STI and SOI. Police recruits displayed higher levels of fearlessness than did the offender sample; however, recruits' scores were not significantly different from those of community and student samples. Any potential extreme risk-takers may have been eliminated naturally through the required police qualifications. Given that data collection took place during a hands-on role-playing training regarding potentially dangerous situations, these scores could reflect their realistic fears of the potential danger associated with this profession. Indeed, police training has been described as heightening the perceived likelihood of violence and danger (Conti, 2011) and is typically structured in emphasizing dangerous situations (such as the use of deadly force) for recruits to learn how to perform under stress (Buerger, 1998; Chappell & Lanza-Kaduc, 2010; Wortley & Homel, 1995); being exposed to a fear-inducing manipulation

[3] Not all studies have confirmed this structure (Neumann, Malterer, & Newman, 2008).

[4] Due to a small overlap in the PPI-R FD and SCI factors, $r = -.14$, $p < .01$, partial correlations are reported.

[5] Results were similar when sex was controlled for.

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Table 1
Psychopathic Personality Inventory–Revised (PPI-R) Factor and Subscale Comparisons Between Samples

	Police recruits		Students		PPI-R community[1]			PPI-R offender[1]		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	η^2	*F*
PPI-R-Total	281.11[a]	26.73	299.69[b]	34.90	300.65[b]	32.83	283.89[a]	28.29	.08	$F(3, 1041) = 8.58^{**}$
FD	129.53	15.72	117.22[**]	18.74	121.65[**]	18.26	118.43[**]	12.60	.09	$F(3, 1041) = 3.18^{**}$
PPI-R-SOI	52.55[a]	7.74	47.05[b]	9.93	47.12[b]	8.58	49.03[b]	7.44	.08	$F(3, 1041) = .98^{**}$
PPI-R-STI	42.06[a]	5.70	35.36[b]	6.77	37.71[b,c]	6.51	37.99[c]	6.80	.13	$F(3, 1041) = 5.72^{**}$
PPI-R-F	34.92[a]	8.20	34.80[a]	7.70	37.74[a]	6.88	30.72[b]	7.66	.05	$F(3, 1041) = 6.52^{**}$
SCI	114.84	21.56	145.91[**]	26.24	141.29[**]	24.25	132.97[**]	25.17	.23	$F(2, 1041) = 03.79^{**}$
PPI-R-RN	26.56[a]	6.60	34.38[b]	7.25	34.18[b]	10.16	27.87[a]	7.00	.17	$F(3, 1041) = 69.71^{**}$
PPI-R-BE	23.92[a]	6.32	32.23[b,c]	8.34	29.79[b]	8.67	34.04[c]	8.07	.22	$F(3, 1041) = 99.09^{**}$
PPI-R-CN	29.85[a]	7.18	35.60[b,c]	8.80	37.56[b]	6.74	33.32[c]	8.33	.15	$F(3, 1041) = 60.28^{**}$
PPI-R-ME	34.50[a]	7.72	43.71[b]	9.77	42.91[b,c]	10.10	38.62[c]	9.84	.16	$F(3, 1041) = 67.37^{**}$
PPI-R-C	36.73[a]	7.00	36.56[a]	7.64	34.65[a,b]	6.48	32.30[b]	7.49	.04	$F(3, 1041) = 13.81^{**}$

Note. FD = Fearless Dominance; PPI-R-SOI = Social Influence; PPI-R-STI = Stress Immunity; PPI-R-F = Fearlessness; SCI = Self-Centered Impulsivity; PPI-R-RN = Rebellious Nonconformity; PPI-R-BE = Blame Externalization; PPI-R-CN = Carefree Nonplanfulness; PPI-R-ME = Machiavellian Egocentricity; PPI-R-C = Coldheartedness.
[1] Raw scores from community (male; ages 21–40; $n = 172$) and offender (male; ages 21–40; $n = 98$) samples found in PPI-R manual (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005). The FD and SCI *M* and *SD* scores for the community sample were provided by the author by personal correspondence.
[*] Indicates significance difference between current samples at the .01 level. [**] Indicates significance difference between current samples at the .001 level.

leads individuals to overestimate risk in future scenarios (Fischhoff, Gonzalez, Lerner, & Small, 2012; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003). These recruits may understandably have high-risk, dangerous situations at the forefront of their minds at the outset of their careers. Furthermore, the socialization process of police recruits, which emphasizes appraisal of risk, may produce changes in their attitudes over time (Catlin & Maupin, 2004; Chappell & Lanza-Kaduc, 2010; Conti, 2011; Stradling, Crowe, & Tuohy, 1993; Van Maanen, 1975). To disentangle the complexities of fear and psychopathy in the police, future research should compare recruits in training with veteran officers or follow recruits longitudinally in their career.[6]

Our findings may also reflect a difference between fear and *courage* (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005; Shelp, 1984). Próchniak (2012) described courageous police officers as those who deal successfully with dangerous situations despite fear. As in Lykken's (1995) low fear hypothesis, in Pallone and Hennessy's (1998) heroic rescue fantasy model, prosocial courageous behavior and antisocial behavior share a common psychological etiology, but differential manifestations are enacted with the interaction of such traits as narcissism or psychopathy Factor 2 characteristics. The levels of fear in our sample, coupled with elevated STI, suggest that, although these police recruits in training may indeed experience fear, they may cope with it effectively. A combination of traits (STI, low anxiety, positive affect, and social dominance) may assist in coping with fear or interact in a way that combats the fear new recruits face, which allows them to demonstrate the courage needed to deal with occupational hazards.

We also found high levels of Coldheartedness among our police recruits, relative to offenders, reflecting a lack of guilt, empathy, and attachment to others (Lilienfeld & Widows, 2005). In subsidiary analyses (see Table S1 in the online supplemental materials), the Coldheartedness scale was significantly negatively associated with aggression and with affective responses. These results suggest that emotional sobriety might facilitate detached and deliberate behaviors, rather than physical disinhibition or reactivity. Interestingly, Greitemeyer, Osswald, Fischer, and Frey (2007) found that empathy is not required for displays of civil courage (i.e., bravery to enforce societal and ethical norms). This concept may be applicable to police, whose job may require them to interact with others during times of intense distress. Moderate doses of Coldheartedness may be adaptive in police work; low levels of empathy and attachment to others may help officers to readily and flexibly engage in courageous behavior, deal with criminals, and maintain composure in emotionally challenging situations. From a policing perspective, recruits learn through training that effective tactical performance during dangerous and life-threatening situations requires them to exert a high degree of emotional control. Given that participants completed the measures in the context of job training, they may endorse more items on the Coldheartedness scale due to recent tactical training that reinforces suppression of emotions.

Of note, the narcissism findings suggest the distinctiveness of our finding to psychopathy as opposed to other forms of personality pathology. In these police recruits, boldness may embody the healthy sense of self characteristic of overt narcissism, as well as grandiosity and a need for admiration that accompanies covert narcissism (Kernberg, 1975; Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). Along

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for T Scores of Psychopathic Personality Inventory–Revised (PPI-R) Total and Factor Scales

	Community				Offender			
	M	*SD*	%>65T	*n*	*M*	*SD*	%>65T	*N*
PPI-R-Total	45.51	8.64	1.4	10	49.54	9.39	5.5	38
FD	54.79	8.73	11.1	77	58.38	11.10	27.7	193
SCI	38.59	9.67	0.5	4	43.24	8.91	1.7	12
PPI-R-C	55.53	10.83	17.9	125	54.70	8.55	9.9	69

Note. FD = Fearless Dominance; SCI = Self-Centered Impulsivity; PPI-R-C = Coldheartedness.

[6] These police are currently being followed in a longitudinal study.

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these lines, Pallone and Hennessy's (1998) heroic rescue fantasy theory suggests that narcissism contributes to prosocial or antisocial behavior.

Limitations and Future Research

Although these findings provide preliminary evidence for a distinctive pattern of psychopathic traits in police recruits, several limitations must be considered. All of the measures used in this research were self-report, potentially contributing to monomethod bias. Ideally, in future research, self-report measures should be supplemented with collateral information and behavioral indicators. The current study was also limited to new recruits from a large metropolitan force, who have not actively worked as officers or demonstrated a history of success or heroism. Although all participants were preliminarily hired by the department, engaged in job training, and expected to become police officers, a percentage of these recruits will not graduate from the police academy and some may not become successful police officers. It is unknown whether these results will generalize to police officers more broadly (i.e., those in smaller police departments, higher ranks) or heroes specifically. Our future longitudinal examination of these traits may provide insight into which traits are reinforced, associated with effective performance and career success, and developed as part of police culture.

Another limitation was our reliance on law enforcement, as a profession, as a proxy for success. Although police recruits may be considered prosocial relative to criminal offenders, it would be an overgeneralization to equate a virtuous profession with virtuous behavior. Future research should focus on how FD traits may assist in predicting success and resilience in law enforcement officers. For now, perhaps rather than the term "successful" psychopathy, "socially stable" psychopathy might afford a more accurate description of individuals whose psychopathic traits allow them to be gainfully integrated into society.

Additionally, the PPI-R has been criticized by some authors on the grounds that it overemphasizes the adaptive features of psychopathy, especially those relevant to FD (Miller & Lynam, 2012). Indeed, this emphasis may account in part for the potentially anomalous finding that overall PPI-R scores were slightly lower in offenders than in the student and community samples (see also Chapman, Gremore, & Farmer, 2003, for data on the PPI). In future work, it will be helpful to extend our results to well-validated measures of psychopathy that place less of a focus on adaptive traits, such as the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (Hare, 1982/1991) and the Levenson Primary and Secondary Psychopathy Scales (Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995). A common resolution to this issue in nonforensic samples is a multidimensional consideration of psychopathy using model-based cluster analysis of various measures of a breadth of traits within the nomological network (Falkenbach, 2004; Poythress et al., 2010).

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Summary and Conclusions

Although the understanding of heroes and villains, police and criminals, cops and robbers, saints and sinners, and the like has traditionally been viewed as a duality, our findings raise the intriguing possibility that the commonalities between these seeming antipodes outweigh their differences. This concept has been captured by idioms such as "it takes a thief to catch a thief," "sinners and saints," and the "thin line that separates society from criminals *and* criminals from protectors." One of the most famous real-world instances is the rivalry between master criminal Neil McCauley and detective Chuck Adamson in 1960s Chicago, Illionois. These two men, pitted on opposite sides of the law, shared a professional fascination with one another and even once met and discussed their parallel traits, including their longstanding detachment from others (Rybin, 2007). This cat-and-mouse relationship is probably most familiar, as depicted by Robert De Niro (McCauley) and Al Pacino (Adamson) in the 1995 film *Heat*.

The current work contributes to our understanding of "successful" psychopathy and is an initial step toward elucidating the role of psychopathic traits in police recruits. There is often confusion and misapprehension regarding psychopathy stemming from the media's depictions and the public's beliefs of all psychopaths as violent criminals. As a consequence of these stereotypes (Berg et al., 2013), there is understandable concern about the attribution of these labels to law enforcement officers. The current focus was on potentially positive attributes of these traits, rather than on individuals who use these traits to violate their positions of power and trust. Although we found elevated levels of FD among police recruits, as other researchers have observed, FD tends to capture traits that may be beneficial depending on the context (Lilienfeld, Waldman et al., 2012), and recruits are presumably expressing these traits in a manner that differs from the prototypical correctional member. The understanding of psychopathic traits, particularly the adaptive nature of FD traits in prosocial situations, is important for adequately appreciating the dynamic potential of these characteristics. For example, police officers, especially those who are high-functioning, may be able to flexibly draw on several such traits in differing work contexts to achieve success. In particular, at least a modicum of emotional detachment may be helpful when dealing with crime victims, and at least a modicum of emotional resilience and venturesomeness may be helpful when pursuing dangerous criminal suspects. Indeed, these nuances highlight the notion that some of these traits may not be adaptive across the board but may instead become adaptive in interaction with situational context.

Here again, we offer a throat-clearing and clarification that our goal is not to diagnose law enforcement officers as psychopathic. To the contrary, our findings suggest that such a conclusion would be a gross mischaracterization, as our recruits displayed low levels of the disinhibition traits classically regarded as central to psychopathy. Furthermore, there is a growing consensus that psychopathy as a personality construct is dimensional rather than taxonic, so the question of how many recruits in our sample were "psychopathic" is almost certainly moot.

Our research sheds provisional light on Lykken's (1995) conjecture that heroes and psychopaths are "twigs on the same genetic branch" (p. 118). Although our findings did not provide support for the fearless temperament theory, they provisionally point to other characteristics that may play a role in psychopathy and heroism alike. Further investigation is warranted into which combinations of individual traits and environmental variables set the stage for prosocial outcomes in individuals with pronounced psychopathic traits. The finding of at least some "successful" psychopathy traits in these police recruits may bear important implications. To garner a better understanding of the adaptive features

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of FD, and psychopathic traits in general, cross-sectional analysis comparing recruits with officers with job experience is necessary. Moreover, understanding what leads an individual with these traits to pursue a prosocial career or to become a "hero"—as opposed to a criminal—may provide important insights into risk and protective factors for antisocial and criminal behaviors among predisposed individuals. Additionally, several studies have underscored the importance of personality traits in police officers for predicting successful hiring (police, firefighters; Sellbom, Fischler, & Ben-Porath, 2007; Weiss, Johnson, Serafino, & Serafino, 2001; Weiss & Weiss, 2010), strategic placement, and preventing stress and facilitating coping (Lau et al., 2006). This empirical support for the previously purely theoretical concept of successful psychopathy is a first step in evaluating the possibility that the same traits that give rise to psychopathy may also be reflected across the thin blue line.

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