

Are you living with a socialised psychopath ?

Over the years, I've had many requests for copies of the articles I've written for various publications about socialised psychopaths — people with Antisocial Personality Disorder who have found a niche in ordinary society in which they can thrive.

Given the level of interest, I've decided to post the raw text of the articles here. If you do reproduce them, please be aware of (a) the fact that these articles are now over a decade old, and may well need updating; (b) the need to recognise copyright.

Article 1: *Focus* Magazine, May 1994

Psychopath: the very word is unsettling, conjuring up visions of axe-wielding maniacs. But such tabloid imagery conceals a far more disturbing reality. Somewhere, at some time in your life, you will have met, worked - perhaps slept with - a psychopath.

The chances are you won't have forgotten it, either. True to their media image, psychopaths frequently ruin the lives of those around them. Yet they wreak such misery not with knives or guns but with shallow charm, bare-faced lies and a total lack of guilt.

Psychiatrists now accept that psychopaths are lurking well beyond the confines of our maximum security prisons. Many have never been in trouble with the law, and have made apparent successes of their lives.

They can be found in executive boardrooms and school classrooms, surgeries and lecture rooms. Ironically, the traits that are the hallmark of psychopaths - ruthlessness, risk-taking, deceit - are increasingly valued in today's "aggressive" world of commerce and industry.

Recognised or not, the corrosive presence of psychopaths is to blame for countless broken marriages and ruined careers. The resulting cost to society makes psychopathic behaviour - or anti-social personality disorder, as psychiatrists call it - one of the greatest challenges facing psychiatrists. Incredibly, however, we still know very little about the cause or treatment of psychopaths. One reason is simply that the characteristics of psychopaths are so repellant that few researchers have been able to stay the course long enough to reach reliable conclusions.

The typical psychopath is belligerent - making dealings with them a trial of

strength. They do not hesitate to lie through their teeth - making assessments of their condition a nightmare. And they are manipulative - and quite capable of fooling the naive into thinking that they have mended their ways.

The experience of an American pioneer of psychopath research, Professor Hervey Cleckley of the Medical College of Georgia, is typical. After studying and working with hundreds of psychopaths over thirty years, he concluded that he had failed to make progress with any of them.

Contrary to popular belief, the typical psychopath is not psychotic - or "mad", to use the common term. Unlike schizophrenics - who often have feeling of persecution and hear voices - psychopaths are quite capable of reasoning clearly and logically.

This lack of obvious insanity raises questions about what is really wrong with them. The few who end up behind bars are often passed from prison to mental hospital and back again, with prison officers saying that they somehow sense there is something mentally wrong with the offender, but the psychiatrists insisting there isn't.

A hundred years ago, researchers were using labels like "moral insanity" to describe the condition. Psychiatrists today dislike such judgmental terms, but admit that terms like "amoral" and "evil" often seems to sum them up most simply.

Take Michael, for example. Until recently he was a department head of a major London-based company, and well-known for his "hard-headed" attitude towards colleagues, and his ruthless ability to fire those he deemed ineffectual. But his aggressive attitude seemed to go beyond just professional matters. He appeared to take a delight in publically humiliating colleagues, especially those regarded as "quiet" by others. When things went wrong, he would not hesitate to blame others - often brazenly embellishing his story to back his argument.

Outside the office Michael's sense of humour often seemed cruel, and his laughter curiously hollow. Some of his colleagues found themselves inwardly tensing whenever he walked into the bar. Outwardly charming and successful, however, he maintained both a marriage and an affair with his secretary. Following a office shake-out Michael was given a payoff - much to the relief of his colleagues. To them Michael was simply an office bully. To psychiatrists, however, Michael is plainly psychopathic.

Research suggests that many people will have had similar experiences - as psychopaths are far from rare. In 1985, a team of British psychiatrists made a disturbing discovery while carrying out research into the prevalence of

personality disorders in the general population.

They took a random sample of 200 people from in and around Nottingham - a demographically normal location - and assessed the psychological profile of each by direct interviews.

As expected, only a small proportion - about 10 per cent - appeared to have any sort of personality disorder. But of these, half emerged as psychopathic. In other words, as many as one in 20 people in the general population may be have psychopathic tendencies.

The finding came as a shock to the researchers. But it has been confirmed by much larger studies in America, Canada and New Zealand. These all suggest that 3 to 5 per cent of the population have psychopathic tendencies, with the rate being about seven times higher among men than women.

What can be wrong with all these millions of outwardly normal, yet undeniably harmful personalities? In the search for answers, researchers have used every technique known to psychiatric science: personality profiling, psychoanalysis, electro-encephalograms, behavioural therapy, brain scanners, drugs and surgery. The results have given little more than glimpses into a fearsomely complex problem.

Like many conditions, the cause of psychopathy appears to be partly biological, and partly environmental.

Studies of the behaviour of the adopted children taken from psychopathic parents suggest that both genes may have some role to play in creating a psychopath. This hints at the possibility that there is something wrong with the mental "hardware" of psychopaths.

There is some tentative support for this. According to Professor Robert Hare at the University of British Columbia, the brain wave patterns of psychopaths have similarities to those of children - as if their brains are somehow "immature". Intriguingly, many of the traits of psychopaths are like those of a spoilt, egocentric child who refuses to grow up.

Tests by Professor Hare have also revealed that psychopaths process information about the world differently from us. Given three words like "warm", "loving" and "cold", psychopaths will tend to put together "warm" and "cold", while the rest of us will link "warm" and "loving". Psychopaths simply don't understand why an emotive phrase like "loving" should have anything to do with "warmth".

But it is events in very early childhood that may be the real key to the psychopath. In trying to understand the underlying cause of the psychopath's many traits, some psychiatrists have focused on one: aggression. Whether they

are violent criminals or malevolent bosses, all psychopaths appear to be waging a war with the rest of us.

The cause of this aggression often seems to be fear - a deep-seated fear triggered by parental rejection. The rejection may have followed a difficult birth or early post-natal problems that prevented genuine emotional bonding between the parent and the child. It may be simply that the child was unwanted, a burden on an already hard-pressed family.

Whatever the cause, such an infant quickly gains an impression of the world as a harsh, unforgiving, even vicious place. In time it comes to believe that it can trust no-one, and must learn to outwit those that would do it harm.

As the child develops, its drive for self-preservation leads it to develop unattractive traits: a belligerent, bullying manner, a growing resentment of authority. And this sets in motion a disastrous - and literal - "vicious circle". Increasingly appalled by the child's behaviour, parents, siblings and the child's own peer group all start to reject it. The child then simply becomes more convinced that the world really is against him. Gradually, a psychopath starts to emerge.

Although lack of affection may be the root cause of much psychopathic behaviour, there is some evidence that smothering indulgence may have a similar effect, this time because the child comes to see the rest of the world as intrinsically less important than itself.

The importance of early emotional bonding in understanding psychopaths was highlighted in a major study by American researchers of almost 700 children born in Hawaii in the early 1970s. These children were followed right through to early adulthood to see what factors affect their psychological well-being. The researchers discovered that children that later developed psychopathic tendencies tended to have a number of factors in common. They included a difficult birth, prolonged separation from mother during the first year, parental illness and chronic family discord - all factors likely to cause bonding problems. The researchers also found that it is possible to spot a potential psychopath by the age of two. Given the problems that adult psychopaths cause society - and themselves - in later life, some researchers now believe that infants should be checked for their risk of becoming psychopathic.

Such a proposal may seem extraordinary, but it is based on the idea that prevention is better than cure - and with psychopaths, that maxim takes on particular significance. For, despite decades of effort, researchers have yet to find a proven, reliable way to cure a psychopath.

In the 1950s, researchers believed that violent psychopaths could be treated by

removing parts of their brain. Although lobotomies and amygdalotomies did seem to make the psychopaths less violent, the research was ambiguous and never followed up. By the 1970s, it had been abandoned.

Electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), where the brains of psychopaths are given jolts of electricity, drugs, psycho-analysis, even wrapping in cold, wet sheets have all been tried. In every case, the results have been, at best, inconclusive. Unlike schizophrenics or depressives, they do not seem to benefit from being treated as if there are problems with their mental "hardware". Unlike those suffering from phobias, **no amount of counselling seems to change them**, either. Whatever the ultimate cause of psychopathic behaviour, it is clearly extremely deep-seated. If, as many researchers believe, psychopathic behaviour stems from viewing the world as hostile, then one explanation for the failure to find a cure may be that psychopaths simply do not want to change.

Much of the research into treatments has been carried out in prisons, where almost 9 in 10 inmates regarded as "troublemakers" are thought to be psychopathic. Some researchers point out that prison is an environment where aggression is both widespread and admired - which hardly gives much motivation for giving it up.

Even outside prison, psychopaths can find many excuses to avoid changing their ways. Why should the aggressive boss stop making his employees lives hell? The company's balance sheets are very healthy, and for every whingeing employee that can't take the heat, there are 10 others eager to take their place. Similarly, why should the bullying, unfaithful lover settle down? His macho attitudes always seem to attract some types of women, perhaps with psychological problems of their own. To him, they are all fair game - as far as he can tell, "there's one born every minute".

Many people unwittingly try to change the behaviour of the psychopaths in their lives. Some even seem to win them over, even to produce some improvements.

Yet, as many psychiatrists have learned, it's almost invariably temporary. The psychopath's promise to mend his ways is usually just another pack of lies.

Within a few months, the same traits will be back as strongly as before.

The sad truth is that, if there is a psychopath in your office, your home or your bed, it will be you that has to change.

END

Article 2: *Sunday Telegraph* Review April 1997

Margaret had no way of knowing what she was letting herself in for when she fell for James. But that is one of the most disturbing traits of people like him - they know exactly how to get to you.

Certainly James knew exactly how to get to Margaret, pursuing her gently but relentlessly, meeting her after work, taking an interest in her life, her work and her desires no-one had shown before.

"He'd targeted me, there's no question of that", recalls Margaret. "He wined and dined me like mad, and if ever I showed signs of losing interest, he'd just look at me with his big blue eyes and that would be that". Just months after their first meeting they were married.

And then the real James started to emerge.

"The charm got turned off pretty soon", says Margaret. "It rapidly became clear that he was **totally self-centred**, and was quite incapable of seeing my way of thinking". It was meals when he wanted, shirts how he liked them, bed when he felt like it.

Like many women of her generation, Margaret took his egocentricity, coldness and insistence on subservience to be simply a characteristic of his sex. After all, wasn't a wife supposed to put meals on tables, shirts on hangers and themselves on beds?

But Margaret found that James wasn't conforming to the social conventions on the mid-1960s. It just happened that social conventions just happened to match his own view of the world.

How many other middle-class husbands did she know who would decide on a whim to sell their wife's car or family silver to someone in a pub? How many men would be quite unfazed when their wife found conclusive proof of an affair with a colleague, cheerfully stringing both wife and mistress along for months? And how many men, when faced with a wife delivering a "Her or me" ultimatum, would walk over to the phone and call his mistress to check she'd got the wine he'd asked for before calmly walking out?

Perhaps it was the sure and certain knowledge that he would be able to do it all over again with many others: friends, relations, business associates - and the three other wives whose lives he has ruined over the last 30 years.

The English language has a number of terms for people like James: "bastards" is perhaps the most polite. But psychiatrists know that this malapropism masks a conundrum of the human mind their profession has singularly failed to solve. In a field that prides itself on describing the ineffable, psychiatry doesn't even have a decent bit of jargon that captures the subtlety of what has gone wrong in the minds of people like James.

They are certainly not psychotic - "mad" in the classic sense of hearing voices, or believing they are Napoleon. That's almost the worst of it : these people seem all too clearly in touch with reality. They know how to woo and how to wound with mental weapons aimed with exquisite accuracy.

What does seem clear is that there is something wrong with their sense of self. Their egocentricity and insouciant selfishness hints a connection with narcissism, a personality disorder characterised by an overweening sense of self-worth and **obsession with wielding power over others.**

But this fails to do justice to the host of other characteristics of these people: their **deceitfulness**, their coldness, irritability and implusiveness, their inability to sustain relationships, and perhaps most damaging of all, their total lack of remorse.

There is a psychiatric disorder that has all of these characteristics: anti-social personality disorder. Those with APD have an altogether more evocative moniker: psychopath.

Yet while the label of narcissism fails to capture the essence of the "bastard", that of psychopath is too rich. In 1991, Professor Robert Hare of the University of British Columbia, doyen of APD researchers, drew up a set of criteria now widely used by psychiatrists to identify psychopathic patients.

But reflecting its origins in studies of criminal psychopaths, Hare's 20 criteria include a number that are totally inappropriate for James and his like: a history of petty criminality when young, criminal versatility, breach of parole conditions.

Even so, enough of Hare's criteria apply to suggest that the bastard can ithe likes of prompt the that the "bastard" is really a psychopaths

BOX: Is there a socialised psychopath in your life ?

While personality disorders such as psychopathy, paranoia and obsession/compulsion all have strictly defined criteria, psychiatrists are still struggling to decide precisely what constitutes a socialised psychopath.

One of the more obvious characteristics of socialised psychopaths is that they do not so much talk to you as "at" you, leaving you with a sense that you are not really making any impression on them.

Prof Jeremy Coid describes it as like being regarded as a cardboard cut-out - a figure there simply to be moved or ignored as the psychopath sees fit. "Even if you are in a sexual relationship with them, you are still just an object for their personal gratification", he says.

With their casual attitude towards deceit, socialised psychopaths are beyond

the reach of self-diagnostic tests widely used in psychiatry. Discussions with leading researchers and interviews with victims of socialised psychopaths does lead to a consistent picture, and the following questionnaire is based on this. Anyone who scores highly on this would be regarded by most psychiatrists to be, at the very least, borderline psychopathic.

For each trait, decide if it applies fully (2 points), partially (1) or not at all (0 points).

1. Do they have trouble sustaining stable relationships, both personally and in business?
2. Do they frequently manipulate others to achieve selfish goals, with no consideration of the effects on those manipulated ?
3. Are they cavalier about the truth, and capable of telling lies to your face ?
4. Do they have an air of **self-importance**, regardless of their true standing in society ?
5. Have they no apparent sense of remorse, shame or guilt ?
6. Is their charm superficial, and capable of being switched on to suit immediate ends ?
7. Are they easily bored, and seem to demand constant stimulation ?
8. Are their displays of human emotion shallow and unconvincing ?
9. Do they enjoy taking risks, and acting on reckless impulse ?
10. Are they **quick to blame others for their mistakes** ?
11. As teenagers, did they resent authority, play truant and/or steal ?
12. Do they have no qualms about parasitically sponging off others ?
13. Are they quick to lose their temper ?
14. Are they sexually promiscuous ?
15. Do they come across as **belligerent** ?
16. Are they unrealistic about their long-term aims ?
17. Do they **lack any ability to empathise with others** - to see themselves in the same situation ?
18. Would you regard them as essentially rash and irresponsible ?

Article 3: For Sunday Telegraph Review, June 1997

Are you married to a psychopath ? It is a question of almost comical portentousness, like those B-movie titles declaring "I was kidnapped by Martians". But over the six weeks since the appearance of my article under this

headline, I have been inundated with letters and phone calls from people whose experiences leave no doubt that they are indeed sharing their lives with socialised psychopaths.

Unlike the raving mad-axemen usually associated with the term, socialised psychopaths are apparently normal people with a profound personality disorder that makes them a serious psychological threat to anyone they encounter. These people are not "mad" in the sense of being detached from reality. Indeed, a recurrent theme in the responses I received is the uncanny sense socialised psychopaths have for what makes the rest of us tick - allowing them to home in on our vulnerabilities to attract or attack as they see fit. Their coldness, egocentricity and deceitfulness corrodes every relationship that they touch, from marriage to business partnership, while their superficial charm, moral flexibility and lack of remorse often allows them to become very successful in today's devil-take-the-hindmost society.

As my article explained, there is a growing realisation among psychiatrists that socialised psychopaths are to blame for a great deal of misery in society. From the office bully to the arrogant, philandering husband, they appear to be causing countless blameless people to quit jobs and relationships, at untold cost.

Yet none of my research or interviews prepared me for the scale and nature of the damage revealed by those who contacted me after the article appeared. Cynics might argue that the article simply provided an excuse for every paranoiac and hysteric to bleat on about their soured relationships. Certainly, some of the responses I received smacked of parents keen to condemn an unsuitable boyfriend or an employee bitter about being ditched just short of retirement.

Most were, however, entirely rational and coherent accounts of how readers had concluded that they were dealing with a social psychopath, followed by often harrowing descriptions of the impact this had had on their lives.

For many, the simple recognition that they had been suffering at the hands of someone with a genuine personality disorder seems to have been cathartic:

"Your article hit me like a bolt through my heart", wrote Vanessa from Surrey. "I've kept brave all these years, but cried like never before at relief on reading your article. I could have written the article myself - it was a picture of my ex-husband".

Vanessa's husband showed the many characteristics of the socialised psychopath. While outwardly charming and apparently highly successful in a job that frequently took him abroad, at home he was cold and **egocentric**,

showing no interest in the lives of his wife or children. Despite a generous salary, his ludicrously expensive tastes frequently led to massive debts - which on one occasion he helped recover by raiding his children's own savings account. An insouciant womaniser, he cheerfully explained the contraceptives in his briefcase by saying that "I never know who I am going to meet during the day".

Like many others, Vanessa endured the coldness, contempt and abuse for many years before giving in, and filing for divorce. Even now, a decade later, she is still scarred by the experience: "I have a recurring dream where I hear his voice with a particular intonation saying 'I'm here to torment you'".

Some of the most disturbing accounts came from former spouses and colleagues of prominent public figures. They give a chilling insight of what lies behind the facade of success projected by some very highly regarded individuals.

I heard from the ex-wife of a highly successful and well-known businessman who kept her a virtual prisoner at home, subjecting her to constant mental and physical abuse. Eventually she escaped, taking her two children with her - only to have him pursue her with private detectives and death-threats.

I learned of a distinguished professor of medicine who wrecked the careers of many scientists before having his psychopathy recognised by colleagues, who succeeded in having him removed from all positions of influence. Then there is the senior figure at a leading public school whose aggression and deceit has forced many colleagues to quit, and whose recklessness now threatens the financial future of the historic school.

Many of those who contacted me were anxious to learn more about the personality disorder whose effects had so blighted their lives. Frustratingly, there was very little more I could say beyond the research detailed in the original article: both the cause and cure for social psychopathy remains a mystery.

Some readers tried to cast more light on the origin of the disorder by detailing what they knew about the background of the social psychopath in their lives: poor maternal bonding was a common feature. Medically-qualified readers who had themselves been in relationships with social psychopaths offered their own insights into its causes. A number drew parallels with autism, the neurobiological disorder which affects social and emotional skills. Autistics have difficulty forming relationships, and appear indifferent to affection. They may also have problems assessing risk - all of which is broadly consistent with the behaviour of social psychopaths. Unfortunately, the parallels do not end there: like psychopathy, both the origin and cure for autism remain unknown.

For most of those who responded, however, such issues are academic. They were either recovering from or still fighting battles with socialised psychopaths, and simply needed to know to whom they could turn for help and advice. This is one front on which, happily, there has been some progress since the article appeared.

Earlier this month, a national charity to combat corporate bullying was unveiled at Staffordshire University. Known as the Andrea Adams Trust - after the late author of a ground-breaking book on the subject in 1992 - the charity's primary aim is to give those targeted by corporate bullies access to psychologists, lawyers and arbitrators.

Lyn Witheridge, chief executive of the trust, says she is convinced that many of the cases are the result of socialised psychopaths being given a free rein in "aggressive" companies. "But following the article in the Sunday Telegraph, we are going to broaden our remit to help those affected by these people outside work as well".

This will be welcome news for all those who until now had no idea that their lives had been blighted by people with a personality disorder. Many respondents expressed their bewilderment at the sheer level of unprovoked mental violence that had been unleashed upon them, which left many with a feeling of guilt that they must have somehow been to blame. "Having read the articles", wrote one young mother from the Midlands, "I felt with a sense of relief as though the pieces of a puzzle had been put together".

But the most important task for the new charity must be to persuade the legal and psychiatric professions to get to grips with this extremely destructive element within society. Many respondents described their attempts to bring socialised psychopaths to book for their actions through the courts - only to see the characteristic superficial charm and barefaced dishonesty triumph yet again. Maintenance payments, child support orders, bankruptcy rulings - all are ignored, or dodged by deception.

Among the most distressing accounts centred on child custody battles, where loving parents find themselves trying to counter a barrage of lies and deceptions created by their all-too-plausible former spouses. "Our case would be so much stronger if we could convince the court that this man really does have a personality disorder", said one parent currently fighting for a child residence order against her ex-husband.

The legal difficulties raised by psychopaths were highlighted earlier this month by the official report into the case of Darren Carr, the live-in babysitter who set fire to the Oxfordshire home of Susan Hearmon, killing her and her two

children, last summer.

Carr had lied to Mrs Hearmon about his background, which included admission to a mental hospital, where he had been diagnosed as a psychopath. Duly released as being beyond treatment in 1993, Carr gradually dropped out of supervision by social services, and set about beginning his avowed career as the "best serial killer ever".

Even for Carr, a criminally violent psychopath, it took the deaths of three people before the law could curtail his actions. For socialised psychopaths, who are usually smart enough to stay on the right side of the law, there is no legal restraint at all.

"The problem is that the mental health framework is not able to cope with psychopaths", says Geneva Richardson, professor of law at Queen Mary Westfield College, London, and chairman of the inquiry panel. "The justification for imposing loss of liberty is based on the notion of compulsory treatment, and if you have no treatment to offer, that justification becomes very slender".

Simply getting a diagnosis of psychopathic personality disorder is hard enough, says Prof Richardson: "It is difficult to get them to consent to psychiatric examination, and then of course there is matter of their deceitfulness".

Whatever the difficulties, it is clearly to the psychiatric profession that society must turn for a strategy for dealing with socialised psychopaths. Only they have the experience in defining and dealing with the subtle defects of mind that lead to personality disorders.

Yet as a field of research, the study of psychopathy is currently at an impasse, with the persistent failure to find either causes or treatments for psychopathy understandably deterring many psychiatrists from entering the field - thus ensuring that progress remains virtually non-existent.

What little research is done focuses almost exclusively on criminal psychopaths - again for the perfectly understandable reason that prisons provide ready access to the large numbers of subjects needed for research. How is one to persuade an egocentric, glacially unfeeling and often highly successful socialised psychopath to help scientists find out what is "wrong" with them? While psychiatrists and lawyers wrestle with such paradoxes, those who fall prey to socialised psychopaths are forced to find solutions within themselves. And as many readers found, this rarely comes without a heavy cost.

"Your article said these cold-hearted predators are incurable - so what are we victims supposed to do?", asked one reader, currently trying to free herself

from the corrosive influence of a psychopathic in-law. "Slam the door in their faces and turn our backs on them ? I find that very hard. In the end I will have to abandon her to her fate, but not without much soul-searching and guilt for me".

And there, in a nutshell, is the essence of relationships with socialised psychopaths: they may not always win, but we always lose.

0 Certain details have been changed to protect readers' identities.

To contact the Andrea Adams Trust, send an A4 envelope with 2 first-class stamps to Shalimar House, 24 Derek Avenue, Hove, East Sussex BN3 4PE.

Article for Sunday Telegraph, June 1997

Almost 1 in 6 men in managerial positions with large British corporations show symptoms of psychopathic behaviour, according to a scientific study commissioned by the Sunday Telegraph.

The results of the study, based on psychometric testing of 1,200 managers at all levels carried out by Oxford Psychologists Press (CORRECT), confirms the growing suspicion of psychiatrists that many people classed as "aggressive go-getters" in business and commerce are psychopaths.

Contrary to the familiar image of the psychopath as a knife-wielding maniac, these people appear outwardly normal, but exhibit characteristics of belligerence, deceit and a complete lack of remorse typical of anti-social personality disorder (APD), the scientific term for psychopathy.

With their aggressive attitude and love of risk, those with APD are often highly successful and well-regarded by their bosses. However, they are often considered to be "office bullies" by underlings, who are often the targets of routine humiliation and abuse.

The results of the study - believed to be the first ever to gauge the extent of APD in the corporate world - suggests that the working lives of tens of thousands of people are being made intolerable by managers with a personality disorder notorious for its destructive effect on others.

According to Dr Robert McHenry, chairman of OPP, the psychometric tests on many managers revealed characteristics such as a history of truancy and a cold disregard for the feelings of others that are classic traits of psychopaths. However, special countermeasures had to be built into the study to combat their deceitfulness and ability to present whatever characteristics best suit their purpose Dr McHenry said: "For example, those with psychopathic tendencies will agree with statements like 'I would do just about anything for a

dare', but they would also claim to agree with statements such as 'I think I am stricter about right and wrong than most people'".

To combat this, the OPP team compared the self-assessment answers with confidential assessments by both senior managers and their peer-group. "When it came to their attitude towards relationships, the results were particularly striking", said Dr McHenry. "We found that senior managers consistently rated these people even higher than they did themselves, while the peer group gave an entirely different picture".

Part of the reason, said Dr McHenry, is that senior managers were out of touch with the day-to-day behaviour of their own staff. "But our research also suggests that we're seeing the effect of the psychopaths' ability to show two personas: effective and obedient as far as their bosses are concerned, but bullying, reckless and **manipulative** towards their underlings".

This two-faced attitude, and the fact that these people are often highly effective in terms of getting results "should be a warning to anyone thinking of complaining about office bullies to more senior managers", said Dr McHenry.

Tony Renton of The Institute of Directors said that the aggressive corporate style of the 1980s may have contributed to the rise of psychopathic managers in the past. "But the emphasis today is very much on the efficiency gains that come from teamwork. A growing number of academic case-studies show that a happy ship is an efficient ship".

Mr Renton admitted, however, that there was very little that junior staff could do if they find themselves working with a psychopathic manager: "You just have to resign - because they won't change".

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