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## Psychopathy and response inhibition

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**Statement of the Problem:** Psychopathy is per definition strongly associated with impulsivity. However, this theoretical association between impulsivity and psychopathy is not reflected in standard assessments such as the go/no-go task.

**Methodology:** The presented experiments examine impulsivity under increased cognitive load using the parametric go/no-go task (PGNG). In this task, cognitive load is parametrically increased by introducing an increasing number of targets and by making the requirement to inhibit prepotent responses dependent on an alternation rule. The first study measures impulsivity in a subclinical sample and utilizes the psychopathic personality inventory-revised. The second study tests the generalizability of the previously obtained findings in a forensic sample, using the psychopathy checklist: screening version 5 (PCL: SV).

**Findings:** In line with previous research, impulsivity was increased in participants scoring highly on one psychopathic sub-trait: blame externalization. Offenders showed a relationship between impulsivity and psychopathic traits, similar to the subclinical sample. However, using PCL: SV, more complicated association between psychopathic trait and impulsive respondings has been uncovered. While offenders scoring highly on the lifestyle facet of the PCL: SV showed the expected increased impulsiveness, offenders scoring highly on the interpersonal aspects of psychopathy showed the opposite. High scores on interpersonal psychopathic traits were associated with reduced impulsivity as measured by the PGNG.

**Conclusion & Significance:** While subclinical and forensic samples both show that increased impulsivity levels are associated with an increased expression of psychopathic traits when cognitive load is increased, the samples differ on the type of association between psychopathic traits and impulsivity. Psychopathic traits in offenders, unlike in subclinical participants, are additionally associated with reduced impulsivity levels when investigating participants scoring highly on interpersonal aspects of psychopathy. This negative relationship between psychopathic traits and impulsivity might reflect a mechanism that enables psychopaths to adequately manipulate their victims and mask their true nature.

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