

Triumph of the Nomothetic: Personality Assessment and Forensic Psychology

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Abstract

This study locates personality assessment within the discipline of forensic psychology, examining the forensic relevance of major paradigms of personality assessment -- psychodynamic, interpersonal, personological, multivariate, empirical, and neuroscience -- with a focus on the clinical and forensic assessment of psychopathy. A credible personality paradigm must produce testable hypotheses, have associated assessment measures, and have a supporting empirical research literature (Wiggins, 1973). In the first survey, a systematic literature review of the PsycINFO database revealed that all of the major personality assessment paradigms satisfy criteria for scientific credibility with the exception of the personological. In the second survey, the status of assessment methods in forensic psychological assessment is examined through test usage surveys. Surveys indicate that personological measures of personality assessment are used by a decreasing minority of forensic clinicians if at all. Personality assessment in forensic psychology has witnessed the triumph of the nomothetic, where decontextualized, dispositional constructs have come to predominate. Suggestions for emergent idiographic applications to forensic personality assessment are advanced to strengthen and invigorate contemporary forensic personology.

Introduction: A History of American Personality Assessment

In the United States for over 75 years, personality assessment has been traditionally represented by the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) and the *Journal of Personality Assessment*. The emergence of forensic psychological assessment (Otto & Heilbrun, 2002) in American psychology poses challenges for integrating traditional personality assessment into forensic psychology's positivist paradigm and the institutional positivism of the courts (Dowdle, 1993; Faigman, Blumenthal, Cheng, Mnookin, Murphy, & Saunders, 2011; Grove & Barden, 1999).

Traditional personality assessment makes explicit theoretical commitments that personality is a holistic, superordinate, organizing factor in understanding human beings, which encompasses trait or construct approaches into a combined nomothetic-idiographic model (Meyer et al, 2001).

In this tradition, personality assessment describes the way people perceive, think, feel, and act; it is descriptive, explanatory, phenomenological, and predictive, encompassing the full range of human behavior, with a special interest in first person, subjective experience. Nomothetic research typically studies the

relationship among a limited number of characteristics across a large number of people. Idiographic refers to the intensive study of a single individual. Here, the focus is on how a large number of characteristics fit together uniquely within one person or in the context of a single life (2001, p. 143).

Forensic Psychological Assessment

In contrast to treatment-oriented assessment, forensic psychological assessment is the application of personality assessment to legal and administrative contexts, assessment of criminal and civil competencies, mental state at the time of the offense examinations, competency to stand trial, fitness for duty, extreme hardship, or violence risk assessment (APA, 2013). Otto and Heilbrun (2002) document the explosive emergence of forensic psychology as a discipline reflected in training, practice standards, instrument development (including forensic assessment instruments and forensically relevant instruments), credentialing and certification, publications, and the migration of clinical assessment psychologists to forensic psychology (Otto, 1998). Forensic psychology is nomothetically preoccupied, with heightened concerns about accuracy of classification and relevantly addressing legal standards, according to standards of proof (e.g., reasonable degree of psychological certainty), with a focus on individualized, dispositional decision-making (e.g., Grove & Barden, 1999). Dowdle (1993) describes the primary epistemology of the legal system as “institutional positivism” (p. 305).

Personality Assessment Science

Wiggins (1973) proposed a conceptual scheme for assessing the scientific credibility of personality theories in his seminal chapter, “Personality Theories as Assessment Models.” He offers an empiricist critique of personality theories, noting their lack of clarity and precision. They have little value unless they have been “sufficiently formalized to allow for the generation of hypotheses by formal axiomatic deduction” (p. 447). As personality psychology developed in the 20th century, Wiggins observed the retreat from “grand” integrative theories of personality and “splitting of the whole person into decontextualized disposition constructs...Contemporary personality research is characterized by experimentation and increasingly precise measurement in relatively limited behavioral domains (e.g., anxiety, authoritarianism, need for achievement, etc.)” (p. 446).

Criteria for evaluating the scientific value of a personality theory are the same criteria that are applied to any psychological theory: the formal or structural characteristics, methodology employed in generating hypotheses, and linkage to empirical phenomena. Personality assessment must demonstrate incremental predictive accuracy (Wiggins, 1973). Personality theories likely to be of greatest value “are those whose principal constructs are more directly translatable into concrete testing procedures” (p. 514). In short, a scientifically respectable personality theory should generate testable hypotheses, methods, and a body of scientific literature. In his highly regarded follow-up work, *Paradigms of Personality Assessment* (2003), Wiggins continues in the same empiricist vein:

Conceptions of personality are of little scientific value unless they can be operationalized and translated into concrete measurement procedures. In the present context, assessment may be thought of as the application of measurement procedures that were developed to operationalize personality concepts to newer and broader domains. (2003, p. 2).

Wiggins proposed five predominant paradigms of personality assessment --

psychodynamic, interpersonal, personological, multivariate, and empirical -- stressing the ability of theories to develop measurable constructs and associated measurement methods. Influenced by Kuhn (1962), Wiggins observed that personality assessment paradigms produce a body of knowledge and create diverse scientific communities. Paradigms of personality assessment accordingly demonstrate unique range or foci of convenience” (Kelly, 1955): “the breadth or the scope of personality attributes that may be usefully assessed within that paradigm” (Wiggins, 2003, p. 10).

The psychodynamic paradigm. The focus of convenience for the psychodynamic paradigm is “the manner in which the individual deals with the competing demands of relatively unconscious sexual and aggressive drives and the prohibitions of society against the direct expression” (p. 10). Wiggins locates the origins of the paradigm in the work of Freud, Reich, Erickson, Hartman, Rapaport, Shafer, Fairbairn, Jacobson, Holt, Mayman, Allison, Blatt, Zimet, and Westen. Wiggins identifies the projective hypothesis (Frank, 1939), the Thematic Apperception Test, and the Rorschach Test as primary assessment methods in the psychodynamic paradigm.

The interpersonal paradigm. The interpersonal paradigm focuses on “pattern regularities in the individual’s relations with other persons who may be real, personified, or imagined” (p. 10). The interpersonal paradigm is grounded in the work of Sullivan, Leary, Kiesler, and Wiggins. Evaluation of this paradigm is limited to the interpersonal methods of assessment, lending itself to self-other and collateral assessment models (Achenbach, 2006; Funder, 1995).

The multivariate paradigm. The multivariate paradigm focuses on the “individual’s relative standing on dimensions of individual differences in personality traits that are moderately heritable, and that are relatively stable over the adult lifespan” (p. 10). Exemplars of the multivariate paradigm include Galton, Cattell, Eysenck, Wiggins, Goldberg, McCrae, Costa, and Widiger. The multivariate paradigm is based primarily on factor analytic methodologies (Digman, 1990). The five factor model (FFM) has become a predominant paradigm in personality psychology, and has stimulated a massive output of scholarly research and personality assessment applications.

The empirical paradigm. The empirical paradigm focuses on “the established empirical correlates of the individual’s classification with respect to the traditional categories of psychiatric impairment” (p. 10). Exemplars of the empirical paradigm include Hathaway, McKinley, Dahlstrom, Welsh, Butcher, and Ben-Porath, all exponents of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). Since *Paradigms* was written in 2003, the MMPI has undergone a revision in the MMPI-2-RF (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008/2011). The empirical paradigm also encompasses other self-report measures of personality, including other measures than the MMPI family of measures. Robert Hare’s PCL-R (Hare, 2016) straddles both the interpersonal and multivariate/trait paradigms, combining trait assessments by observers (interpersonal assessment), and a focus on interpersonal behavior.

The personological paradigm. In the personological paradigm, Wiggins focuses on “the psychological life history of the individual” (p. 10). Exemplars of the personological model include Freud, Dollard, Allport, McClelland, Erickson, Murray, Thompkins, and McAdams.

The personality neuroscience paradigm. Although nascent at the time of the publication of *Paradigms of Personality Assessment* in 2003, the personality neuroscience paradigm (DeYoung & Gray, 2009) promises to assume a dominant role in forensic personality assessment. Recent developments have begun linking the five factor model to the emerging field of personality neuroscience (DeYoung & Gray, 2009; DeYoung, Hirsh, Shane, Papademetris,

Rajeevan, & Gray, 2010). Emergence of the neuroscience paradigm has provoked re-examinations of all of the broad dimensions of personality, including temperament, anger, impulsive and predatory aggression, and issues of morality and criminal responsibility.

Method

Psychopathy is perhaps the most widely studied and forensically relevant personality construct (Hare, 2016). In order to assess the forensic relevance of personality assessment paradigms, a systematic literature review was conducted to address the following question: What is the forensic relevance of the six paradigms of personality assessment (psychodynamic, interpersonal, personological, multivariate, empirical, and neuroscience) in the assessment of psychopathy?

The search strategy was conducted according to current best practices for systematic literature reviews: A Measurement Tool to Assess Systematic Reviews (AMSTAR 2; Shea et al, 2017), and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA; Moher, Liberati, & Altman, 2009). The AMSTAR 2 and PRISMA checklists were used to create the review design. The search strategy was established prior to initiating the search. The PsycINFO database was examined using a key word search strategy. Duplicate studies were excluded. The search was limited to English language publications referenced in the PsycINFO database.

The PsycINFO key word search yielded 6732 hits for psychopathy, 1957 hits for psychopathy and assessment, and 1060 hits for psychopathy and personality test.

Table 1

PsycINFO Keyword Search by Personality Assessment Paradigm

Category	Hits
<u>Psychopathy</u>	6732
Psychopathy/assessment	1957
<u>Psychodynamic</u>	
Psychopathy/psychodynamic	49
Psychopathy/psychoanalytic	86
Psychopathy/Rorschach	125
Psychopathy/TAT	0
<u>Interpersonal</u>	
Psychopathy/interpersonal	883
<u>Multivariate</u>	
Psychopathy/trait	440
Psychopathy/personality trait	363
Psychopathy/multivariate	67
<u>Empirical</u>	
Psychopathy/MMPI	186
Psychopathy/self-report	48
<u>Neuroscience</u>	
Psychopathy/neuroscience	570
<u>Personological</u>	

Psychopathy/personology	4
Psychopathy/life story	2
Psychopathy/narrative identity	0

The abstract and body of each study was examined to determine whether it was conducted using a quantitative research design. This included selection of peer-reviewed references identified by author, rationale, objectives, data collection/research design, and empirical conclusions. The application of a quantitative research design was the primary inclusion criterion. Review studies, case studies, and qualitative designs were excluded. The author selected representative studies for reporting to address the research question. In the second study, test usage surveys in forensic psychology (1995-2017) were identified using a key word search strategy of the PsycINFO database, reviewed, and results tabulated to assess the methods used by assessment clinicians in the field.

Results

The psychodynamic paradigm. Within the psychodynamic paradigm proper, the search yielded 49 hits for psychopathy and psychodynamic, 86 hits for psychopathy and psychoanalytic, 125 hits for psychopathy and Rorschach, and three hits for psychopathy and Thematic Apperception Test. A selective review of empirical studies of the psychodynamic paradigm and psychopathy yielded the following findings.

A number of general treatments of psychopathy from the psychoanalytic point of view combine theory and empirical studies (Meloy, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2007; Gacono, Loving, & Bodholt, 2001; Yakeley & Meloy, 2012). The psychodynamic model focuses on the internal experience of psychopathic personalities, including defensive operations, object relations, reality testing, attachment styles and mentalization, aggression, psychopathy in females, and psychopathy's relation to other personality disorders, with a strong representation of the Rorschach Test (Baird, 2009; Brody & Rosenfeld, 2010; Fonagy & Target, 2007; Frodi, Dernevik, Philipson, & Bragesio, 2001; Gacono, 1990; Gacono & Evans, 2008; Gacono & Meloy, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1998; Gacono, Meloy, & Berg, 1992; Gacono, Meloy, & Heaven, 1990; Juni, 2009; Lilienfeld, Nezworski, Garb, Holloway, & Wildemuth, 2010; Rutherford, Alterman, Cacciola, McKay, & Cook, 1996; Taubner, White, Zimmerman, Fonagy, & Nolte, 2013; Van Der Berg, 2009). As these results reveal, the psychodynamic paradigm has stimulated a substantial research literature with a strong interest in ego defenses, affects, reality testing, attachment theory, and object relations theory primarily assessed through the use of the Rorschach Test.

The interpersonal paradigm. The PsycINFO search for keywords interpersonal and psychopathy yielded 883 hits. A selective literature review yielded the following findings: Psychopathy has been examined using the Q-sort (Fowler, Lilienfeld, 2007, 2013; Reise & Oliver, 1994; Reise & Wink, 1995); in twin studies using the Achenbach Child Behavioral Checklist (Forsman, Lichtenstein, Andershed, & Larsson, 2010); locating psychopathy and dark triad traits in interpersonal circumplex models (Dowgillo & Pincus, 2016; Jones & Paulhus, 2011; Kosson, Steuerwald, Forth, & Kirkhart, 1997; Paulhus, 2014; Rauthmann, & Kolar, 2013; Salekin, Leistico, Trobst, Schrum, & Lochman, 2005); self-other assessments of psychopathy (Miller, Pilkonos, & Clifton, 2005; Miller, Jones, & Lynam, 2011); collateral assessments (Iycian, Sommer, Kini, & Babcock, 2015; Vitacco & Kosson, 2010); and collateral assessments using thin slices of behavior (Fowler, Lilienfeld, & Patrick, 2009). The interpersonal paradigm appears to be a productive source of testable hypotheses in the assessment of psychopathy

addressing both interpersonal assessment and behavior in psychopathic personalities.

The multivariate paradigm. A PsycINFO keyword search yielded 440 hits for trait and psychopathy, 383 hits for personality trait and psychopathy, and 67 hits for multivariate and psychopathy. A selective literature review yielded the following findings. Constructs underlying psychopathic personality have been finely detailed utilizing the FFM (Lynam & Widiger, 2007; Miller & Lynam, 2015; Lynam & Miller, 2015). The FFM has been linked to callous-unemotional traits in preschoolers (Assary, Salekin, & Barker, 2015); adolescents (Salekin, Debus, & Barker, 2010); rape perpetrators (Voller & Long, 2010); chimpanzees (King & Figueredo, 1997; Lilienfeld, Gershon, Duke, Marino, & de Waal, 1999); orangutans (Weiss, King, & Perkins, 2006); sub-clinical psychopathy in work settings (Scherer, Baysinger, Zolynsky, & Le Breton, 2013); psychopathy in both men and women (Forth, Brown, Hart, & Hare, 1996; Poy, Segarra, Esteller, Lopez, & Molto, 2014); and linkage between psychopathic personality traits in non-institutionalized settings (Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995; Lilienfeld, S. O., & Andrews, B. P. (1996) and behavior in everyday life (Harpur, Hart, & Hare, 1994; Lilienfeld, Latzman, Watts, Smith, & Dutton, 2014). The FFM has been extended to examination of self and informant reports (Miller, Jones, & Lynam, 2011); triarchic trait models (Drislane, Patrick, & Arsal, 2014; Patrick, Fowles, & Krueger, 2009; Miller, Lamkin, Maples-Keller, & Lynam, 2015); and non-institutionalized samples (Ross, Lutz, & Bailley, 2004). Trait models of psychopathy reveal that psychopathic individuals are able to mask their psychopathy in clinical and forensic assessments (Kelsey, Rogers, & Robinson, 2015). Personality trait theories have been utilized to differentiate personality style, including psychopathy, in chimpanzees (Latzman, Drislane, Hecht, Brislin, Patrick, Lilienfeld, Freeman, Schapiro, & Hopkins, 2015), great apes (Uher & Asendorpf, 2007), and in comparisons between great apes and monkeys (Morton, Lee, Buchanan-Smith, Brosman, Thierry, Panker, de Waal, Widness, Essler, & Weiss, 2013). As this selective review indicates, the multivariate paradigm has been highly successful for the production of forensically-relevant testable hypotheses and applications, and has assumed a major position in the clinical and forensic assessment of psychopathy.

The empirical paradigm. A PsycINFO keyword search for MMPI and psychopathy yielded 186 hits, and self-report and psychopathy yielded 48 hits. The selective literature yielded the following findings. A significant amount of research has been devoted to the validity of self-report in psychopathy on objective personality measures (Ansel, Barry, Gillen, & Herrington, 2015; Berardino, Meloy, Sherman, & Jacobs, 2005; Christian & Sellbom, 2016; Kelsey, Rogers, & Robinson, 2015; Lilienfeld & Fowler, 2006; Morrell & Burton, 2014; Neal & Sellbom, 2012; Poythress, Lilienfeld, Skeem, Douglas, Edens, Epstein, & Patrick, 2010; Watts, Lilienfeld, Edens, Douglas, Skeem, Vershceure, & LoPilato, 2016); use of the MMPI-A to assess adolescent psychopathy (Sullivan, 1994); and a number of recent studies of psychopathy evaluating the triarchic theory using the MMPI-2 and MMPI-2-RF (Grossi, Green, Belfi, McGrath, Griswold, & Schreiber, 2015; Hansen, Stokkeland, Johnsen, Bjorn, Pallesen, & Waage, 2013; Heinz & Vess, 2005; Lilienfeld, 1996, 1999; Marion, Selbom, Salekin, Kucharski, & Duncan, 2013; Phillips, Sellbom, Ben-Porath, & Patrick, 2014; Sellbom, Ben-Porath, Lilienfeld, Patrick, & Graham, 2005; Sellbom, Ben-Porath, & Stafford, 2007; Sellbom, Drislane, Johnson, Goodwin, Phillips, & Patrick, 2015). The empirical paradigm has been highly productive in generating forensically-relevant hypotheses and clinical research applications in the assessment of psychopathy.

The personological paradigm. A PsycINFO keyword search for personology and

psychopathy yielded four hits while life stories and psychopathy generated two hits; psychobiography and psychopathy, and narrative identity and psychopathy yielded no hits. This finding was confirmed by Dan McAdams (personal communication, April 14, 2016). In a rare TAT case study of a psychopathic serial sexual homicide perpetrator (Porcerelli, Abramsky, Hibbard, & Kamoo, 2001), the Social Cognition and Object Relations Scale (Westen, Lohr, Silk, & Kerber, 1989) and Cramer's Defense Mechanism Manual (Cramer, 1991) graphically elucidated the idiodynamics (Rosenzweig, 2003) of psychopathic subjectivity. In comparison to the other paradigms, the personological paradigm yields a dearth of studies examining psychopathy.

The personality neuroscience paradigm. A PsycINFO database search yielded 570 hits for neuroscience and psychopathy. There have been multiple studies of neuroscience and the FFM (Allen & DeYoung, 2015; DeYoung, 2010; DeYoung & Gray, 2009; DeYoung et al., 2010); personality disorders (Pement, 2012; Siever & Weinstein, 2009); the neurobiology of psychopathic personality traits (Blair, 2013a, 2013b); impulsive aggression (Coccaro, McCloskey, Fitzgerald, & Phan, 2007; Coccaro, Sripada, Yanowitch, & Phan, 2011); predatory and affective homicide (Raine, Meloy, Bihrl, Stoddard, LaCasse, & Buchsbaum, 1998); empathic and emotional functioning in psychopaths (Blair, 2007; Davidson, Putnam, & Larson, 2000); morality and psychopathy (Blair, 2007a, 2007b); and neuroimaging and personality neuroscience (Canli, 2009). With increasing accessibility and applications of diagnostic imaging with well-constructed behavior and personality measures, the personality neuroscience paradigm has been highly efficient in stimulating forensically-relevant research of psychopathic personalities.

Personality Assessment Methods in Forensic Psychology: Test Usage Surveys

In order to assess the proposition that a successful personality assessment paradigm should produce robust measures of theoretically-relevant constructs in applied settings, recent test usage surveys in forensic psychology were examined using a keyword search strategy for studies published since 1995. Psychological test usage surveys in forensic psychology permit an assessment of the degree to which personality measures are applied in daily forensic work.

The PsycINFO search yielded 1060 hits for personality test and 1957 hits for assessment. However, only a small number of forensic test usage studies have been conducted since 1995 (Archer, Buffington-Vollum, Stredny, & Handel, 2006; Boccaccini & Brodsky, 1999; Borum & Grisso, 1995; Bow, Gould, Flens, & Greenhut, 2006; Lally, 2003; McLaughlin & Kan, 2014; Neal, T. & Grisso, T., 2014; Piotrowski, 2007; Quinell & Bow, 2001; Ryba, Cooper, & Zapf, 2003; Viljoen, McLachlan, & Vincent, 2010).

Archer, Buffington-Vollum, Stredny, & Handel (2006) surveyed 152 forensic psychologists. They found that multiscale inventories, most notably the MMPI, were most commonly used (70% frequently, almost always, or always). Unstructured personality tests, such as the Rorschach (14%) and TAT (6%), were least commonly used. In their survey of 80 forensic psychologists, Boccaccini and Brodsky (1999) found the MMPI was most frequently used (89%), with the Rorschach intermediate (28%), and the TAT least frequently used (3%) in personal injury evaluations. They argued that Daubert admissibility criteria may play a role in test selection. Bow, Gould, Flens, and Greenhut (2006) surveyed 89 psychologists on their usage of psychological tests in child custody evaluations finding that only 5% of respondents typically used the TAT, with 77% expressing the opinion that the TAT does not meet Daubert evidentiary criteria. In contrast, 90% of respondents used the MMPI-2. Borum and Grisso (1995) found their board certified forensic psychologists used objective personality testing in 96% of cases in

contrast to 42 psychologists who sometimes used projective testing (only 24% almost always or sometimes used projective tests). Lally's 2003 survey of forensic diplomates (N=64) found that significant majorities of practitioners considered the Rorschach and TAT to be "equivocal or unacceptable" for the types of evaluations typically conducted. McLaughlin and Kan (2014) surveyed 102 forensic evaluators finding that a substantial majority of evaluators never used projective tests in four types of forensic assessments (81%, 89%, 81%, and 79%). In the international study of forensic clinicians, Neal and Grisso (2014) found that most forensic clinicians do not use psychological testing; on average, 15% used the MMPI, 4% used the Rorschach, and the TAT was not listed in the top ten measures used. Forensic assessment instruments (FAIs; Otto & Heilbrun, 2002) were most commonly used for specialized forensic assessments. Piotrowski (2007) examined the top ten psychological tests used in surveys from 1996, 1999, 2000, and 2006; depending on the setting the time survey demonstrated a decline in the use of the Rorschach and the TAT, neither of which were listed in the top ten tests used. Quinell and Bow (2001) found in their survey of 198 psychologists conducting custody evaluations, in comparison to previous surveys conducted in 1997 and 1986, that the MMPI/MMPI-2 is most commonly used (94% in 2001, 92% in 1997, and 88% in 1986), the Rorschach used 44% in 2007, 48% in 1997, and 42% in 1986, and the TAT used 24% in 2007, 29% in 1997, and 38% in 1986. Ryba et al (2003) found that objective personality tests were used in 70% of cases, the Rorschach used in 16%, the TAT in 12%, and sentence completion tests in 10% of cases. In their study of violence risk and psychopathy in juveniles and adults, Viljoen and colleagues (2010) found that 83% of clinicians used "mental health and psychopathology tests" for juveniles and 26% for adults. For juvenile risk assessments, 66% used the MMPI-2 or MMPI-A, and 51% used them at least sometimes. The Rorschach was used by 19.5% of practitioners, and 15% used the test at least some of the time. The TAT was not mentioned in the top 15 tests used in these assessments. For adult risk assessments, 53% used the MMPI-2 or MMPI-A; 65% used them at least sometimes. The Rorschach was used by 8% of practitioners, and 10% used the test at least some of the time. The TAT was not mentioned in the top 15 tests used in these assessments. Diplomat forensic psychologists conducting juvenile risk assessments were more likely to use forensic risk assessment tools, interview family members other than parents, and examine school records.

Summary: *Paradigms of Personality Assessment and Psychopathy*

The findings of the systematic literature review are clear. Across the studies examined, research methodologies typically involved identification of theory-driven constructs which were examined through traditional hypothesis testing in the hypothetical-deductive model of clinical science. With the exception of the personological paradigm, all of the personality assessment paradigms demonstrate robust evidence of empiricist criteria for scientific respectability: the ability to generate forensically relevant hypotheses, having associated measures, and supported by research. Wiggins' observation that the field of personality research has focused on decontextualized, individual traits and part-processes is validated by the literature review. Arguably the most idiographic of the paradigms--the personological paradigm--is the least developed in generating testable hypotheses, reflecting the nearly absent forensic relevance of the personological paradigm in the assessment of psychopathy.

Despite variations in sampling, test usage surveys signal the predominance of nomothetic measures and decline or disuse of traditional idiographic personality measures in forensic assessment (e.g., Rorschach, TAT, and sentence completion measures, etc.). Practitioners have

turned away from these methods out of concern for their admissibility in courts of law. This decline has been associated with a critique of the scientific and legal merit of projective and idiographic assessment techniques in forensic psychology (e.g., Garb, Florio, & Grove, 1998; Gould, 2005; Grove & Barden, 1999; Grove, Barden, Garb, & Lilienfeld, 2002; Lilienfeld, Woods, & Garb, 2000). These critiques have not gone unanswered by adherents of the use of idiographic and projective methods (e.g. Erard, 2005, 2012; Erard, Meyer, & Viglione, 2014; Hilsenroth & Stricker, 2004; Ritzler, Erard, & Pettigrew, 2002a, 2002b; Woike & McAdams, 2001). The overall impact of the persistent criticism is reflected in test usage data and weak idiographic research base, and further demonstrates the predominance of objectivist, nomothetic science in forensic personality assessment.

A Call for Idiographic Forensic Personality Assessment

The literature review demonstrated the success of psychodynamic, interpersonal, multivariate, empirical, and the personality neuroscience paradigms in generating testable hypotheses, assessment methods, and robust psychopathy research literatures. In contrast, the personological paradigm produced a dearth of forensically-relevant studies. Further, test usage surveys in forensic settings revealed the decline and disuse of traditional idiographic assessment measures. These findings suggest that personality assessment in forensic psychology has witnessed the triumph of the nomothetic, consistent with Wiggins' observation that "decontextualized, dispositional constructs" have come to predominate personality assessment in forensic psychology. Idiographic methods have lagged behind and fallen into disuse. Critics of traditional personality assessment highlight the limitations of idiographic personality assessment methods. The findings suggest that deficiencies in traditional idiographic assessment methods — which focus on human experience and subjectivity -- deserve reconsideration by assessment psychologists to (re)establish their scientific credibility.

Emergent methods of contemporary idiographic personality research such as experience sampling methods (ESM) have great promise (Conner, Barrett, Tugade, & Tennen, 2007; Conner, Tennen, Fleeson, & Barrett, 2009). ESM refers to any procedure that has three qualities — assessment of experiences in natural settings, in real time (or close to the occurrence of the experience being reported), and on repeated time occasions. Tennen and Affleck (2005) describe a variety of methodologies for understanding lived experience of everyday life. Personality research using ESM focuses on individuals as the unit of analysis and the dynamics of how individuals think, feel, and behave. This approach is exemplified in daily process research, which uses ESMs to examine the dynamic within-person relations between components of personality (cognitions, emotions, situations, and behaviors) in daily life. Daily process research using ESMs assesses how the occurrence of certain cognitions or emotions (e.g., reduced feelings of control) may be followed by certain types of behavior (e.g., seeking social support). This research combines an idiographic–nomothetic approach in which self-report variables are measured longitudinally over time (e.g., feelings of control and social interactions, measured once or multiple times daily). Experience sampling research can focus on personality characteristics as if-then, situation–behavior contingencies: individuals adjust their behavior according to their situation, and they do so consistently and idiosyncratically (Allport, 1937; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1994). Experience sampling investigations illuminate the regularities in a person's momentary experience and reveal intraindividual variations in the structure of emotional experience. These experiential, process approaches focused on subjectivity and experience have yet to be applied to forensic personology.

There is a strong tradition in the field of personality psychology and assessment utilizing indirect methods which has forensic relevance. Originally championed by Gordon Allport (1942) and subsequent generations of personality psychologists, personality documents, photographs, letters, and even works of art have been considered to be valuable and reliable sources of information about people. Allport defined personal documents as “any self-revealing record that intentionally or unintentionally yields information regarding the structure, dynamics, and functioning of the author’s mental life.” Other methods of indirect assessment include behavioral descriptions: observer ratings or cross-informant assessment, including Q-sort methods, computerized text analysis of speech and written products, and analysis of hard drives in forensic investigation. Indirect personality assessment methods are central in case study methodology, based on evidence collected by observing an individual in his or her natural environment, reviewing personal documents, conducting longitudinal studies, researching public archives or medical records, objective or projective tests, or interviews of family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. Information may be obtained from behavioral checklists, various modes of surveillance, and even examination of an individual’s trash (Runyan, 1983). Even the content of hard drives may be used in assessing personality (Pollit, 2003).

Indirect personality assessment methods are firmly grounded in personality psychology’s methodological traditions: biographical/archival, field studies, laboratory methods, naturalistic observation assessment, observer judgments, personality scales and inventories, and projective techniques. The general consensus is that “diagnoses based upon records, whether historical or contemporary, written, visual, or auditory, can be as accurate as diagnoses made by direct examination” (Kroll & Pouncey, 2016, p. 230).

Craik (1986) focused on the fundamental goal of systematically describing the personalities of historical figures. Craik broke down the descriptive process into three analytically distinguishable components: (a) the assembling of source material or information about the subjects; (b) the background and qualifications of the raters, whether informed experts or those relying on the assembled source materials; and (c) the format used in recording descriptions, ranging from free-response descriptions, as in narrative character sketches, to more structured instruments, such as rating scales. More than 40 years of research have demonstrated that informant personality ratings displayed substantial incremental validity beyond self-report, especially with traits that are highly evaluative and unlikely to be reported by target subjects themselves (Lilienfeld, Lynam, & Miller, 2018; Vazire & Carlson, 2011).

Craik provides the most systematic approach to the assessment of persons at a distance. Craik notes that “the rendering of persons is not confined to personality assessors; it is practiced ubiquitously in everyday social life and within many scholarly fields, including history and biography...the more formal efforts of personality description vary in their occasions, intentions, formats, and audiences”(Craik, 1986, p. 198). These include commemorative, didactic, instrumental, scientific, communicative, and applied occasions and intentions. Indirect personality assessment in forensic and operational psychology is instrumental (“to portray accurately”) and applied (“to employ accurate assessment to predict their personalities”) (p. 199).

Craik notes that the function of personality assessment is the description of persons, which are most reliable in consequential situations. He proposes that personality assessments at a distance are most reliable when they involve multiple observers—either existing or created experts--using “an array of techniques that record personality formulations in comparable and quantifiable form” (p. 203). These include “systematic personality descriptions (via trait ratings, adjective checklist descriptions, and Q-sort descriptions” (p. 212). Source materials include

motion pictures, videotapes, audio recordings, autobiographies and memoirs, and personal productions, such as drawings and paintings, poems and stories, speeches, and legislation. Craik and his colleagues at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research have used these methods for “live-in” assessment projects of historical figures (Historical Figures Assessment Collaborative, HFAC, 1977).

Observed behavior is a primary indicator of human motives and intentions. The ‘act frequency model’ (Buss & Craik, 1986) approach to dispositional analysis describes and accounts for regularities in individuals’ actions occurring throughout the natural flow of everyday conduct. Focused on everyday conduct, or the “lived day,” dispositions are “conceptual units that summarize general trends, or act frequencies, in conduct (Buss & Craik, 1986, p. 388). This includes assessment of behavior in settings which link people and environments according to behavioral rules and individual pursuits. Linking personality and the environment as behavior settings, personality traits and dispositions are viewed as facilitating or thwarting the pursuit of behavioral goals in real life situations.

A small number of studies have attempted to implement “non-traditional” idiographic methods in personality assessment which may have direct applications in forensic personality assessment. Idiographic personality assessment is after all an instance of intensive single case design. McAdams and McLean (2013) advocate the importance of life stories in understanding individual motives, self-concept, and subjectivity.

Narrative identity reflects how people convey to themselves and to others who they are now, how they came to be, and where they think their lives may be going in the future. Constructs used in the study of narrative identity include agency, communion, redemption, contamination, meaning making, exploratory narrative processing, and coherent positive resolution (p. 234).

In the UK, Canter and Young (2012) advocated for the exploration of the forms of personal narrative in interviews with criminal offenders. Youngs and Canter’s (2012) application of particular narrative interpretations deriving from the work of McAdams describe specific criminal action patterns. Four narrative themes have been derived from the detailed consideration of offense actions: adventure, irony, quest, and tragedy (p. 290). They were particularly interested in the role of narratives in understanding criminal behavior. Utilizing the Narrative Roles Questionnaire (NRQ), they were able to code a variety of identities in offender narratives: the professional, hero, victim, and revenger. The method permits the narrative integration of affective, cognitive, and defense-specific identity components of offending conduct. Adler, Chin, Kolisetty, and Oltmanns (2012) utilize the Life Story Interview (McAdams, 1993) in distinguishing characteristics of narrative identity in adults with borderline personality disorder. This approach may be particularly fruitful in the study of psychopathic personalities.

In an interesting development of Allport’s interest in the use of personal documents in personality assessment (1942; Runyan, 1983), Ovens (2003) proposed a hermeneutical approach to forensic document review. Ricoeur’s conception of narrative identity (1991) is applied “to analyze and interpret the documentation... a hermeneutic approach to narrative identity assists to identify or frame the context and explore the relationship between the character of the individual, plot, and ethics...” (p. 662). Documents are used to describe the path of the subject’s character, meaning that it maps events in the subject’s life and the subject’s views and those in interactions with others. Pollit (2013) also described the integration of personal life history and interpretive approaches to digital forensic evidence.

Using a document review approach, Petty (2014) examined the lived experience of individuals scoring in the 36-40 range (‘extreme psychopathy’) on the Hare Psychopathy

Checklist Revised (PCL-R). Petty found that Cleckley's 15 case studies in the *Mask of Sanity* (Cleckley, 1988) remains the largest case history collection involving psychopathic individuals, considering each case history as a critical test of Hare's psychopathy construct. Thematic analysis explored similarities and differences within and across case histories. These case histories demonstrate the life course perspectives and individual permutations of the 20 items of the PCL-R.

Hancock, Woodworth, & Porter (2011) examined crime narratives of 14 psychopathic and 38 non-psychopathic homicide offenders, using the PCL-R and two linguistic analysis tools to examine parts of narrative speech and semantic content, and emotional characteristics. They found "Overall, these findings on speech begin to open the window into the mind of the psychopath, allowing us to infer that the psychopath's world view is fundamentally different from the rest of the human species" (p. 11).

Despite the paucity of studies using traditional idiographic personality measures, emergent methods appear to offer promise for highlighting the inner experience of psychopathic personalities. This raises an interesting question: Is human experience forensically-relevant? Experience sampling, computer-content analysis of speech, and narrative identity methods, including the use of new scoring systems for traditional methods like the TAT (e.g., Jenkins, 2008; Stein, Slavin-Mulford, Siefert, Sinclair, Renna, Malone, Bello, & Blais, 2014; Teglassi, 2015), may render the nomothetic-idiographic debate a thing of the past.

Limitations of Investigation

The current investigation relied on a systematic literature review strategy to examine the forensic relevance of personality assessment paradigms in the assessment of psychopathy. In the absence of a more rigorous methodology, conclusions are necessarily tentative. It may be argued that Wiggins's classification is problematic; for example, in differentiating the empirical and the multivariate paradigms. Four of the Wiggins paradigms originate in "grand" background theories of personality. With the retreat from integrative theories, and the shift to dispositional personality constructs across the paradigms, it may be the case that Wiggins' classification of personality assessment paradigms is decreasingly relevant.

The systematic literature review and test usage survey conducted here provide a clear picture of the robust capacity of personality assessment paradigms in producing forensically-relevant testable hypotheses, assessment instruments, research literatures, and scientific communities. The findings illustrate the predominance of nomothetic methods in forensic personality research and assessment, and comparatively weak scientific status of the personological paradigm in forensic personality assessment. The traditional idiographic-nomothetic divide and debate may be increasingly irrelevant given the emergence of new assessment technologies which reclaim the experiential aspects of personality assessment with relevance to forensic psychology.

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