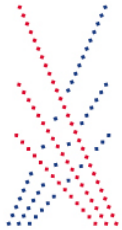

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Epitome of Success or Embodiment of Failure?

The Particular Paradoxes of Psychopathic Leadership

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One of the key challenges of building and sustaining high performance organisations in uncertain times is identifying which leaders represent the best resource for groups to utilise towards achieving their ambitions. Leaders who are of integrity and therefore trustworthy, are needed but they should also have good judgement, a profound understanding of the organisation they are to lead and a vision of an achievable future for that organisation to work towards. This paper examines the viewpoint that psychopathic leadership presents paradoxical elements of leadership attainment and leadership research in terms of perceived levels of integrity, judgement, vision and other relevant factors. One paradox is that psychopathic leadership is pervasive, highly important and of great impact on followers and yet those who have not directly experienced it doubt its existence. Despite this scepticism, psychopathic leadership is invisibly consequential to everyone while also being discernibly relevant to a large minority of employees. This paper examines these paradoxes.

Introduction

It has been recognised that leadership style influences management performance but the influence of leadership traits on style, and how this interacts with performance is under-examined.

Aided by using Lewis's paradox framework as a lens for some of this investigation (Lewis, 2000) the current paper examines the literature from 1941 to 2018 on corporate psychopaths, psychopathic management and leadership and uncovers multiple paradoxes and contradictions. A paradox is taken to consist of contradictory but interrelated components that exist simultaneously and endure over time (Sparr, 2018). In this case workplace psychopathy is described as paradoxical because, for example, it concurrently encompasses the illusion of efficiency from those above with the reality of ineffectiveness in the workplace as experienced by those below the corporate psychopath. This current review enables the drawing of some conclusions concerning the paradoxical academic neglect of this area of research, in the disciplines of leadership and management, relative to its importance to most employees.

Successful psychopathy can be characterised as a variant where more adaptive traits such as charm and poise are to the forefront, masking the malignant aspects of psychopathy from initial observation (Lilienfeld et al., 2015). A successful, sub-clinical or corporate psychopath can be defined as someone who embodies the core elements of psychopathy but nevertheless achieves an element of personal and material success in life. Such psychopaths may be intelligent enough to realize that overt anti-social behaviour will not serve them well in their quest for money, power and prestige and they enter the corporate sphere in pursuit of these objectives. Further, the relative immunity of psychopaths from anxiety may confer an advantage on them relative to normal people (Ray and Ray, 1982) and their political skills, including deceit and manipulation, can help them in their quest for advancement (Schuette et al., 2015). They can come across as being likeable, alert, confidence-inspiring and seductive when first met, where their self-confidence is impressive, and this can make them look like natural leaders.

Increasingly, it is recognized that, particularly larger organizations have many employees who present with corporate psychopathy and are problematic (Cheang and Appelbaum, 2015b, Cheang and Appelbaum, 2015a, de Vries, 2016). Some commentators go so far as to recommend that teaching employees how to tackle psychopathy and its associated bullying (Boddy and Taplin, 2017, Valentine et al., 2016) should be a necessary competency in leadership development because of the prevalence of the problems generated (de Silva, 2014).

The presence of corporate psychopaths may be particularly important if they influence the whole organization to become underperforming or systemically psychopathic through their ability to ascend to senior positions and thereby impact the behaviour of many of those below them (Boddy, 2017). Such institutionalized psychopathy, which Levenson defined as being psychopathy at a corporate level, can readily be envisaged as being more destructive than the individual variety (Levenson, 1992). Psychopaths can appear to be emotionally genuine people (Book et al., 2014) and this subterfuge helps them get ahead in the corporate sphere (Boddy, 2017, Furnham, 2014). Their presence in senior management and leadership positions increases their influence over other employees, and on society because top managers have an influence on the development of corporate social responsibility (Maon et al., 2008). Psychopathy in managers impacts organizational responsibility decisions such as whether to illegally dump toxic waste (Ray and Jones, 2011) and therefore they can have a significant impact on employees, corporations and the general public.

Discussion

The following part of this paper discusses what is currently known versus unknown in the literature about corporate psychopaths. Whilst the study of the psychology of individual leaders is placed at the centre of many disciplines such as government and history (Bostock, 2010) it is lacking in management and leadership research, despite what has been described as a crisis of trust in leadership (Boddy, 2017). The first section of this discussion deals with the rejection or acceptance of this area of research by the adult population, relative to the academy.

Acceptance – Rejection

Psychopathy researchers report that everyone is "highly likely" to encounter a psychopath (p.2) as a colleague or in some other area of life (Clarke, 2005a). However, typically, in mature audiences at public talks on corporate psychopaths, around 30% to 40% of people report that they may have worked closely enough with a corporate psychopath to recognise their behavioural characteristics (Boddy, 2005b). For example, in an Australian study, 32.1% of people reported that they had ever worked with a person whose traits marked them as a corporate psychopath (Boddy, 2011c). A large minority of people, or of such an audience, therefore accepts the importance of the arguments presented in the public lectures, while a small majority typically does not. However, this acceptance varies by occupational group and employee seniority. For example, senior managers such as HR Directors and Auditors are more likely (circa 70% and 69% respectively) than others to realise that they have come across the traits associated with corporate psychopaths.

This is typically in relation to aspects of their jobs that are to do with conflict resolution, bullying or attempted financial misrepresentation and fraud (Boddy et al., 2015, Jeppesen et al., 2016). In other words, those with relevant experience of toxic management or leadership which may be psychopathic can accept the importance of this area of research while those who have no such experience find it more difficult to do so. In academic terms this tends to mean that of two referees for any paper on corporate psychopaths one tends to be very positive and one very incredulous. This may result in relevant papers on corporate psychopaths being rejected by academic journals. Meanwhile eminent psychologists report that in some areas of business, psychopaths may actually be the norm (Furnham, 2011). The following section of this paper discusses one aspect of the paradoxical nature of corporate psychopathy research which is in terms of whether corporate psychopaths are accomplished leaders or dismal failures.

Accomplishment – Failure

Corporate psychopaths, masters of upward impression management, portray a facade of accomplishment to those above them while demonstrating manifest failure to those below them. This dichotomy was theoretically expected but has also been empirically demonstrated. One manifestation of this is increased staff exit behaviour. For example, Clarke reported (p. 7) that 75% of staff in one department left the company in a 1.5 year period under a psychopathic manager (Clarke, 2005a). Furthermore, Boddy reported 120% staff turnover in a three-year period under similar circumstances at a UK charity (Boddy, 2015a) and 100% within a marketing department in a similar time frame (Boddy and Croft, 2016). It appears from case study evidence that under a corporate psychopath, everyone exists within two to three years.

Corporate psychopaths plausibly explain this high staff turnover to their superiors by claiming that they demand a lot from their employees and that some employees can't stand the pressure to perform and leave. Meanwhile quantitative research also shows that employees engage in various forms of withdrawal behaviour, such as arriving late to work, when working under a corporate psychopath manager (Boddy and Taplin, 2016, Boddy, 2011c, Mathieu and Babiak, 2015). The paradoxical nature of corporate psychopathy research in terms of whether the effects of corporate psychopaths are consequential and therefore worthy of investigation, or unimportant and therefore worthy of neglect, is discussed below.

Consequence – Unimportance

Those who have read or heard about, or directly experienced the effects of psychopaths in organisations and society tend to regard the subject as one of immense consequence, while those who have not had this personal experience tend to evaluate the subject as something of unimportant minority interest. For example, some authors claim that the study of workplace psychopath is inconsequential because psychopaths are so few in number (Caponecchia et al., 2011) whereas psychopathy researchers claim that everyone will come across a psychopath at some point in their lives (p. xii) whether they realise it or not (Hare, 1993). Research based estimates are that every large organisation will probably contain psychopaths but that only 5.75% to 10.9% of employees recognise the traits of psychopathy in a colleague or superior at any one time, while about 30% to 40% may work closely enough to recognise the traits over some part of their entire career (Boddy, 2017).

Employees who are more removed, geographically or interpersonally, from the psychopath, may feel their effects in terms of managerial decisions which are incongruent with organizational aims and objectives. These employees may attribute these irregular decisions to things like incompetence or "derailing" rather than to a manager with psychopathic personality traits. This paradoxical situation in which corporate psychopaths are demonstrably influential on organizational outcomes but commonly gauged to be an unimportant subject for investigation has arguably resulted in the situation where they are insufficiently studied relative to their impact. According to anecdotal evidence, when one psychopathy researcher started giving presentations on this subject in 2005, some academics used to openly laugh at the term "corporate psychopath". The juxtaposition of the two terms appeared to be absurd to them. One possible explanation for this apparent absurdity is that post-Cleckley, all of the first studies of psychopaths were in prison or similar institutional populations, with the result that criminality and psychopathy became extremely confounded in the popular imagination and in the assessments of psychologists (Mullins-Sweatt et al., 2010). Elements of criminality (e.g. recidivism, juvenile delinquency) were even embedded in the earliest and most influential measure of psychopathy, reinforcing the paradigmatic viewpoint that psychopathy and criminality co-exist. The firmly established view of psychopaths as criminals meant that the idea of psychopaths working in corporations was an "un-thought of possibility, a blind spot in oppositional thinking" (from Ybema, 1996 as reported in (Lewis, 2000)).

This led to calls for studies of non-incarcerated psychopaths to be made by those few researchers like Widom, who did grasp the possibility of non-criminal psychopaths (Kirkman, 2002, Lesha and Lesha, 2012, Widom, 1977). Another paradox in corporate psychopathy research is that of apparent leader control but actual follower chaos via extreme subjugation.

Control – Chaos

Corporate psychopaths, like most psychopaths, have a desire for power over and control of their environment and over the people inhabiting that environment (p.151) (Clarke, 2005a). This includes the need to control their image and reputation to those above them in an organisation and they are very adept at this upward impression management. Thus, those above the corporate psychopath tend to think of the corporate psychopath as someone pro-active, productive and in effective control of their department or other area of responsibility.

On the other hand, those below the corporate psychopath tend to think of themselves as being subjugated to the capricious, incompetent and unethical will of the corporate psychopath, experienced as chaos, confusion, bullying, yelling, humiliation, denial of voice and abuse (Boddy, 2006, Malovany, 2014). This diametrically opposed difference in evaluation is inherently contradictory. Corporate psychopaths give the appearance of congruent management to those above them but of management which is incongruent with organizational aims and objectives, to those below them. Further, some of the abused employees seek revenge and retribution by engaging in counter productive work behaviour against their ill-treatment but which is misdirected at their organization (Boddy, 2014).

Two further paradoxes with corporate psychopaths are that they claim to be experienced, qualified and competent but are perceived as being incompetent and lacking in relevant experience by those below them. They are eventually seen as being unworthy of following (Boddy, 2015a). Additionally, psychopaths have a great emotional poverty, yet they generate a large emotional response in those they lead and work with.

Judgement Competence – Incompetence

Corporate psychopaths are careerists (Chiaburu et al., 2013) and people who are interested in pursuing commercial occupations (Andrews, 2015). They dress well to create a physically attractive veneer (Holtzman and Strube, 2013) and can appear as good potential leaders, which helps them ascend (Babiak et al., 2010, Andrews et al., 2009, Babiak and Hare, 2006). Additionally, corporate psychopaths claim competencies they do not have and qualifications they have not earned. This all aids their promotion to positions of power and influence and researchers have found significant psychopathic traits in samples of senior managers (Board and Fritzon, 2005) where they are more commonly found at the top of organizations than the bottom (Babiak et al., 2010, Babiak and O'Toole, 2012). However, Clarke describes them as parasitic as they live off the hard work of others (Clarke, 2005a). This is born-out by empirical research involving fraud and misrepresentation. As one example, the corporate psychopath in one case study, who was eventually imprisoned for fraud, was found to have claimed a Harvard MBA on his CV which was a fraudulent claim of competence (Boddy et al., 2015).

In fact, this corporate psychopath had started, but never finished, a tradesman's qualification and this was the actual height of academic achievement. The kudos given to this manager by superiors who admired the "achievement" of a Harvard MBA despite a disadvantaged background was therefore entirely misplaced. Similarly, Clarke (p.79) reports that those above a corporate psychopath will usually give them good performance ratings on things like effectiveness while those below them will give them negative ratings on the same aspects of workplace behaviour (Clarke, 2005a).

Emotionless – Emotional

The emotional poverty of psychopaths, as evidence by their neurological connectivity and chemistry irregularities in the areas of the brain associated with emotional processing and with their lack of responsiveness to emotional stimuli (Blair et al., 2005), appears to underlie their lack of empathy and conscience. Their highly unemotional and uncaring attitude towards their colleagues appears to underpin their uncaring ruthlessness. This, in turn, creates a highly emotional and distraught response among those who work closely with the corporate psychopath. When superiors come across this situation in the workplace they tend to assess the rational, unemotional psychopath as balanced and dependable and their distressed victim as unreliable. Indeed, it can be argued that the "rational economic man" so discussed in economic theory (Henrich et al., 2001, Yamagishi et al., 2014) only exists in the person of the cold, emotionless psychopath, who makes entirely rational but totally ruthless decisions in their own interests and regardless of the consequences of this for those around them.

Healthy – Toxic

Wall-Street evaluated “Chainsaw Al Dunlap” as healthy - a cost-cutting, staff-reducing champion of shareholder capitalism, while Dunlap somewhat narcissistically christened himself, ‘America’s No. 1 CEO’, and wrote a book about his ruthless business methods called ‘Mean Business’ (Rowley, 2009). The book became a best seller. However, those who were intimately connected to him via work regarded Dunlap as toxic as discussed below and he is mentioned as potentially psychopathic by several commentators (Deutschman, 2005, Ronson, 2011, Boddy, 2017). In terms of other evaluations of Dunlap, former employees who had been victims of his legendary cost-cutting ‘saw’, were reported to have almost danced in the streets of Coshatta, where Dunlap closed a factory, reported David Friedson, CEO of a competitor of Sunbeam. Friedson clearly evaluated Dunlap as toxic; "He is the logical extreme of an executive who has no values, no honour, no loyalty, and no ethics. And yet he was held up as a corporate god in our culture. It greatly bothered me" (Byrne, 1998).

Leading authorities on toxic leadership also state that Dunlap was a toxic leader (Lipman-Blumen, 2004). Further, and as was the case under other corporate psychopaths (English, 2017, Boddy, 2017, Comber and Boddy, 2017), working for Dunlap was described as an exercise in misery. His ability to instil fear into his executive team, and the ordinary employees of the organizations he ran, ensured no one had the courage to defy him. Dunlap was reportedly a master at using coercive power and forcing people to bend to his will (Rowley, 2009).

Trustworthy - Mendacious

Researchers have demonstrated a strong relationship between integrity scores and scores of psychopathy (Connelly et al., 2006) while in qualitative research corporate psychopaths display no integrity at all. For example, in the UK the head of a National Health Service Trust was given an honour by the Queen while simultaneously running a VIP patient queuing scam (Boddy, 2017). In the USA senior administrators at the Department of Veteran Affairs awarded themselves millions of dollars in bonuses for reaching performance milestones (patient wait time reduction targets) that were falsified from top to bottom within the organization in a scheme which other researchers have called leadership psychosis (Rodriguez et al., 2016) but which had all the hallmarks of being a systemically psychopathic organization. Successful psychopaths can be regarded as being such people as financial leaders or holders of high political office who are willing to be untrustworthy, unfair and dishonest in pursuit of their ambitions (Levenson, 1992).

For example, corporate psychopaths will lie to clients to get their business by claiming to be able to provide goods and services which cannot actually be delivered on time or even at all (p.9) (Clarke, 2005a). Corporate psychopaths will also lie to their bosses by taking the credit for the hard work that their juniors have done and claiming it as their own (p.80) (Clarke, 2005a). Subsequent investigation confirms Clarke's case-based reports that corporate psychopaths are untruthful and highly manipulative. Others have also found that perceived corporate psychopathy negatively influences perceived trust in the CEO (Albrecht et al., 2016).

Their untruthfulness also makes corporate psychopaths a risk for fraud and they have always been associated with fraud (Epstein and Ramamoorti, 2016, Malamed, 2012, Ramamoorti and Epstein, 2016) and as being possible perpetrators of other forms of white collar crime (Lesha and Lesha, 2012, Merzagora et al., 2014) .

Honoured – Dishonourable

In case study research leaders displaying all the traits of being corporate psychopaths have won awards for ethics, financial performance and societal contribution while simultaneously delivering unethical practices, deteriorating performance and societal harm, according to those who work for them. Examples of this include that in the UK the head of a marketing function was awarded corporate prizes for ethics and performance by head office while his subordinates looked on in shocked disbelief (Boddy and Croft, 2016). In the USA, Fastow, Enron's finance director won awards as best CFO of the year in the years prior to Enron's collapse when massive accounting fraud was finally disclosed (Boddy, 2017). Enron has been identified as a systemically psychopathic corporation (Boddy, 2015b, Boddy, 2017).

Importance – Insignificance

For some researchers the significant explanatory power of corporate psychopathy theory leads them to claim that this subject represents an important new direction that leadership research should take and that corporate psychopaths represent the biggest threat to business ethics that the World currently faces (Gudmundsson and Southey, 2011, Marshall et al., 2014).

Such researchers recognise that psychopaths in leadership can deliver negative change through their manipulation of organizational resources (Daneke, 1985). Further, that three political psychopaths in 20th Century Germany, Goering, Hess and Hitler, diagnosed as psychopaths in 1933, 1941 and 1946 respectively, created a systemically psychopathic government (Lavik, 1989, Gilbert, 1948, Boddy, 2017) can be taken by some, of evidence of the negative and unethical cultural influence that corporate psychopaths can have on an entire organization. However, other researchers are not persuaded of the importance of this subject. For example, an assistant dean at a UK leading business school, recently referred to corporate psychopathy research as a "small area" of research. Other researchers (Caponecchia et al., 2011) have also questioned whether corporate psychopathy is worthy of management investigation. Indeed, editorial "desk rejections" of corporate psychopathy papers were initially (2005-2008) so swift (sometimes within hours) that authors doubted whether any reading beyond the title "Corporate Psychopaths" had actually taken place. This viewpoint was reinforced by comments made in 2009 by two editors-in-chief at a UK conference. The editors were forced by circumstances (they were presenting next) to sit through a presentation on corporate psychopaths and ethics. Afterwards one of them was heard to say to the psychopathy presenter that after reading the title of the presentation they expected complete nonsense and were surprised to find the opposite. Both editors almost immediately began publishing papers on corporate psychopaths in their respective journals and were among the first to do so in business and management. Using the lens of paradoxes this about-face can be explained by the surprise of revealing illuminating findings uncovered by the use an unfamiliar concept – psychopathy – in an unfamiliar setting, that of the organization rather than the prison.

It can be argued that the idea of their being resistance to or repression of the paradox via reinforcing cycles where actors filter experiences through extant cognitive frames (Lewis, 2000) is very like Kuhn's idea of scientific paradigms being defended by the members of the scientific status quo before their entrenched and outdated ideas are finally overthrown by the new paradigm which, in turn, becomes accepted wisdom (Kuhn, 1962). Indeed, Lewis recognises that paradoxes may offer "frame breaking" experiences (2000) and in a later paper recommends a multi-paradigmatic approach to research to help investigate and understand paradoxes (Lewis and Kelemen, 2002). It may have been that the idea of a psychopath in a corporate setting, as first put forward in 1995 within an academic paper (Babiak, 1995) was too much of a tension inducing and paradigm overturning idea to be readily accepted by many academic editors and reviewers, and apart from a very small article in 2004 (Morse, 2004) the next full paper that was overtly on corporate psychopaths did not emerge until ten years later in 2005 (Boddy, 2005a).

Lauded – Condemned

Leaders like Albert Dunlap who ruthlessly laid off thousands of workers, closed entire manufacturing factories and thereby impoverished whole small-town communities in the USA were lauded by Wall Street at the time, as heroes of shareholder capitalism and champions of downsizing (Byrne, 1998). On the other hand, Dunlap has been described as a ruthless and ultimately disastrous leader whose leadership of people and organizations was destructive (p. 221) (Nicholson, 2013) and psychopathic in character (Deutschman, 2005, Boddy, 2017). As is characteristic of corporate psychopaths, Dunlap publicly humiliated his subordinates, fired board members and changed the culture of the organizations he ran (p.126) (Nicholson, 2013).

These actions must have left him with no one capable of opposing his decisions and led ultimately to destructiveness. His ruthless pruning of employees, ostensibly to boost shareholder value, had disastrous results for Sunbeam (p.132) (Nicholson, 2013). Sunbeam went bankrupt, with shareholders losing everything (Norris, 2005). Senior managers who have worked with such people, as well as their former employees, have nothing good to say about them, other than to wonder why they are not in jail (Ronson, 2011, Jacobs, 2005).

Prosperous – Impoverished

Typically, corporate psychopaths or those who display many of the traits of psychopathy such as Dunlap, walk away from their CEO positions with hundreds of millions in salary and "golden parachute" payments. For example in little more than four years, Dunlap made more than US$100 million, ran two well-known public corporations, wrote a best-selling, vainglorious autobiography, and fired some 18,000 employees (Byrne, 1998). Other stakeholders such as pensioners and pension fund holders (Mirror Group, Enron), investors (Mirror Group, Enron, Sunbeam) and employees (Sunbeam, Enron) are left impoverished, unemployed and unrewarded for their investments of time, money and effort (Boddy, 2015b, Boddy, 2016b).

Success – Failure

The paradox of psychopathic leadership extends to the evaluations made of them by psychopathy researchers. As one example, Dutton's work emphasises the ability of psychopaths to fearlessly push them-selves forward towards attaining hierarchical advancement and individual success.

Other individuals need to develop their psychopathic traits so that they can turn them up or down or on and off when needed to achieve similar levels of success, reports Dutton (2013). This viewpoint has led to the equating of psychopathy with success and to headlines such as “Every Business Needs a Psychopath (Crush, 2014)” and “Why the best bosses may be psychopaths” (Lynn, 2005). According to Lynn the lack of emotion in psychopaths, means that they make good bosses because they can manage with a cold and calculating lack of sentiment and that most successful companies are better run by functional psychopaths. Reportedly, such psychopaths can fire people as needed and don't find it hard to make decisions that upset people (Lynn, 2005).

On the other hand, in an entirely critical reply to Dutton’s thesis concerning ‘the wisdom of psychopaths’ (Dutton, 2013) another psychopathy researcher, Stout, writes “I can say with a fair degree of certainty that there is no wisdom in psychopathy. There is only an irredeemable emptiness that should not and cannot be served up in doses" (Stout, 2012). Others point out that a main problem faced by successful, growing business is finding and recruiting suitable new talent, rather than “firing” existing staff (Boddy, 2017). Reportedly, Dutton in his book – “The (Good) Psychopath’s Guide to Success”, co-written with former SAS NCO-turned-author Andy McNab (a nom-de-plume) (Dutton and McNab, 2014), claims that HR professionals should hire more psychopaths (Crush, 2014). Corporate banks, before the global financial crisis, were doing just that, reportedly using psychopathy measures to recruit psychopathic employees (Basham, 2011).

Further, it has been found that possessing some psychopathic personality traits can be conducive to advancing professionally in the financial sector (Howe et al., 2014). However, rather than such employees being productively competitive it may be that their ruthless greed, willingness to gamble with other people's money (Jones, 2014) and readiness to exploit perverse incentives may have led to the global crisis of debt that started in 2007 and is arguably still unresolved (Boddy, 2011a, Cohan, 2012, WildfireTelevision, 2015, Torrie, 2014, Bennett, 2014). Like other psychologists and many financial commentators and insiders, Dutton appears to have accepted the argument that corporate psychopaths were instrumental in the events leading up to the global financial crisis because he writes (p.15) "the financial centres of the world …are filled with psychopaths" who have led society into the crisis (Dutton, 2012). However, paradoxically, Dutton claims that it will take the same ruthlessness to lead society out of the crisis. Lilienfeld, another noted psychopathy researcher, is more circumspect than Dutton about linking psychopaths with success but still discusses US Presidents in terms of their level of psychopathy relative to historians' estimations of the relative success of each President (Lilienfeld et al., 2012). This analysis implies, at least to the casual reader, that psychopathy and success are related rather than the antithesis of each other. Cleckley, the founder of modern psychopathy research, points out that psychopaths can have successful careers as doctors, engineers and academics but that they tend to get ahead by appropriating the work of others, for example in their university studies (Cleckley, 1941/1988). They then maintain their careers through their charm, manipulative abilities and by claiming the work of others as their own, rather than relying on their own efforts and work achievements (Clarke, 2005a, Babiak and Hare, 2006, Boddy, 2011c). Further, reports Cleckley, rather than being successful, psychopaths are disruptive and problematic to deal with for everyone around them.

Unlike Dutton; the authors Babiak, Boddy, Clarke, Hare, Mathieu, Marshall, Saneka, Stout, and their colleagues, all appear to have a more negative view of the success of psychopaths e.g. (Stout, 2005a, Stout, 2005b). Clarke for example, writes (p.119-120) that "the simple answer to whether a psychopath can be useful to business is no" (Clarke, 2007). Clarke goes on to report that a great deal of psychological damage is done to the co-workers of a workplace psychopath and that this outweighs any short term benefits the psychopath may bring. As discussed, corporate psychopaths are reported to be unethical, manipulative, bullying and parasitic at work and this creates hurt and distress (p.81-87) (Clarke, 2005a, Boddy, 2013, Boddy et al., 2010).

As mentioned, Babiak was probably the first to investigate a workplace psychopath, whom he called an "industrial psychopath" at the time (Babiak, 1995). This person wheedled his way upwards in a company despite his peers eventually recognising his profound personality irregularities, lack of acumen and unethical approach to his own advancement. This inability of others to thwart the advancement of the corporate psychopath has become a common story in psychopathy research and Clarke details several such cases throughout his book on workplace psychopaths (Clarke, 2005a). Additionally, and in particular, two longitudinal qualitative investigations of firstly, a UK Charity headed by a psychopathic CEO and secondly, a marketing department taken over by a psychopathic main board director, illustrate the serious difficulties that those who work under them experience (Boddy and Croft, 2016, Boddy, 2015a). However, those who attempt to prevent the advance or challenge the rule of corporate psychopaths rarely succeed. Case study research has only found only one case where a corporate psychopath was successfully challenged, and this was one where a million-pound fraud was concerned.

The psychopath was eventually imprisoned but the global main board was initially totally dismissive of the "jealous" claims made by a HR Director against the bullying and abusive behaviour of this colleague. Paradoxically, before the fraud was uncovered by a forensic accountant, the corporate psychopath concerned - already in a senior global position - was admired as a rising star who was marked for further promotion (Boddy et al., 2015). Nonetheless, those who worked under the "star manager" (corporate psychopath) feared the bullying and death-threats made against their family members. In terms of fraud Clarke devotes a chapter (p. 109-129) of his book to describing the types of fraud that corporate psychopaths may get involved in and fraud has long been assumed to co-exist with psychopathy (Clarke, 2005a, Perri and Brody, 2011).

Another negative effect of work-place psychopaths is that job satisfaction suffers. For example subclinical psychopathy in managers was found to have a negative impact on subordinates' job satisfaction (Sanecka, 2013). Corporate psychopaths have a significant impact on job satisfaction (Mathieu and Babiak, 2016) to the extent that it may be the single main determinant of employee job satisfaction through its combined direct impact together with its indirect impact via the other determinants of satisfaction (Boddy and Taplin, 2016). The bullying and abuse (Malovany, 2014, Boddy and Taplin, 2017, Boddy, 2011b, de Silva, 2014, Nelson and Tonks, 2011) that employees suffer under the management of corporate psychopaths means that their well-being suffers (Boddy, 2014, Johnson et al., 2015, Mathieu et al., 2014) and they become distressed (Mathieu et al., 2012) and even suicidal (Malovany, 2014).

Conclusions

Studies of corporate psychopaths have challenged the paradigmatic view of the psychopath as an easily identified and abhorrent criminal. Meanwhile the established paradigm facilitates the ability of the corporate psychopath to hide in plain view, unrecognised by senior managers and management academics alike, as being a worthy subject of investigation. Corporate psychopaths tend to be callous, ruthless, manipulative, emotionally deficient, aggressive, self-promoting, risk-tolerant or even risk-seeking and pursuant of unmitigated self-interest regardless of the extent to which this comes at the expense of their colleagues, their employer and other people. Strangely enough, they can also be charming, seductive, self-confident, composed and exceptionally adept at upward impression management. This Janus-like ability to present two faces enables them to keep or improve their organizational positions, regardless of what those below them report about their effectiveness and behaviour. Further research could take a new direction by examining this phenomenon in more detail by, for example, investigating this among those above the corporate psychopath rather than those below.

Currently these paradoxes, and the psychopath's chameleon-like ability to mislead and disguise their behaviour as something palatable, can lead to situations where these people are less studied – at work by their senior managers when employees report the corporate psychopaths as bullying abusers - and in academic management and leadership research – than they probably should be.

Even in terms of the phrase itself, “corporate psychopaths”; as Lewis points out in the 2000 paper, a paradox can be defined as a contradiction embedded in a statement and the juxtaposition of these two words appears to have been an un-resolvable paradox for early reviewers of academic papers on the subject. The idea of something corporate with its associations of being sensible, logical and ordered being coupled with psychopathic, with its associations of something criminal, disordered and even psychotic (delusional) was perhaps, at least initially, too paradoxical for reviewers to seriously contemplate. By identifying, explaining and illustrating the mechanics of the paradox, this current paper makes an important conceptual contribution. As a result, scholars may better conceptualise research in psychopathic leadership and corporate psychopathy.

Guided by Lewis’s paradox framework, a good but entirely counter-intuitive starting point for finding and researching psychopaths or toxic managers could be by investigating “star managers”; those senior employees who are perceived by those above them as being destined for promotion and advancement because of the seemingly outstanding contribution they make to organizational performance. Closer examination may reveal that with some of these people the opposite is true. Similarly, at the organizational level it may be insightful to investigate those corporations who are winning awards, for signs of individual and systemic psychopathy. For example awards for environmental responsibility may indicate pollution fraud as at VW and awards for financial probity may indicate financial fraud as they did at Enron whereas awards for societal contribution may indicate societal destruction as they did in one NHS case study (Sims and Brinkmann, 2003, Boddy, 2016a, Clarke, 2005b, Boddy, 2017).

The knowledge that according to psychologists, political psychopaths like Goering and Hitler were highly instrumental in bringing about the costliest war in human history, and that according to psychopathy researchers, highly psychopathic managers like Lay, Maxwell and Dunlap were responsible for some of the largest and most unethical frauds in business history must give pause to a re-evaluation of this phenomena. Further, that financial insiders agree that psychopaths in corporate banking were instrumental in the events leading up to the global financial crisis of 2007/2008 reinforces the consequential nature of this area of research (Boddy, 2012). If this is so, then considerably more research is called for in all areas of psychopathic leadership, not least to resolve this peculiar and enduring set of paradoxes.

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