

# **The role of affect and cognitive schemata in the assessment of psychopathy**

**by**

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of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis examined psychopathy, cognitive schemata and affect in forensic and community populations. This was to identify whether cognitive schemata and affect would assist in the assessment of psychopathy. Study one was conducted on 38 male high secure hospital patients and 38 male prisoners. It focused on the assessment of psychopathy and cognitive schemata. It was predicted that psychopathy would be positively related to negative schemata and early maladaptive schemata and negatively related to positive schemata. This prediction was supported with the exception of Early Maladaptive Schemata. Study two was conducted on 38 male high secure hospital patients and 38 male prisoners and also examined psychopathy and affect. It further explored positive schemata that was significant in study one. It was predicted that psychopathy would be positively related to errors on affective word sentence completion with slower response times. These predictions were not supported. The third study included 101 male prisoners and 108 male university students. An assessment of cognitive schema and affect was also developed. A further core prediction was that psychopathy would have a positive relationship with detached affect and results supported this. Contrary to prediction, it was found that psychopathy was higher in the student group compared to the prisoner group. Study four further explored the core predictions and included an examination of psychopathy, cognitive schema, affect and the 'Big Five' in 174 prisoners and 200 male students. The predictions were supported that psychopathy would be negatively related to positive cognitive schemata and positively related to negative cognitive schemata, in both groups. The predictions that detached affect would be significant to psychopathy was again supported. Contrary to prediction psychopathy was found to be higher in the student group. The current research indicates that cognitive schemata and affect are related to psychopathy. It also shows that similar cognitive profiles of psychopathy are demonstrated in prison and student groups that relate to affect. Further, it highlights the neglected role of positive schemata in psychopathy. Future research could consider the role of positive schemata and refine the cognitive profile in psychopathy, it could also examine the newly proposed cognitive behavioural model of psychopathy .

## **Student Declaration**

### **Concurrent registration for two or more academic awards**

I declare that while registered for the research degree, I was not enrolled for any other awards.

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### **Material submitted for another award**

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award and is solely my own work.

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Doctor of Philosophy \_\_\_\_\_

### **School**

Psychology \_\_\_\_\_

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