

Debunking pseudoscience and studying psychopathy

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Scott Lilienfeld is both a researcher of and advocate for psychological science. His clinical work has primarily focused on psychopathy; he developed the Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI-R), a 154-item personality test developed to be taken by general, rather than clinical, populations. The PPI-R provides an indication of traits associated with psychopathy without linking them to specific behaviors. Additionally, Lilienfeld has devoted much of his work to correcting the widely misunderstood nature of psychopathy, which is still commonly — but falsely — believed to be a signifier of violent tendencies and psychotic disorders. He has expanded this pursuit to include debunking pseudoscience and common psychological myths of all kinds, such as the idea that “opposites attract” or that people only use 10% of their brain, in addition to providing guidance for people so they can recognize a bogus psychological claim when they see one. Lilienfeld has also examined the related issue of why the general public often views psychological research as an unscientific pursuit, and he has made recommendations for how individuals and institutions can convey the scientific rigor of psychology to general as well as clinical populations.