Abstract

Psychopathy is typically associated with criminal behavior but is common in organizations. While psychopathy is estimated to be present in one per cent of the general population, it may be present in up to four percent of senior managers. Psychopaths in organizations are believed to cause considerable individual and organizational harm. Psychopathic behavior has been suggested as a cause behind the Enron collapse and the Global Financial Crisis. Despite the attention in other research areas, psychopathy has only one reference in information systems (IS) research. This paper proposes psychopathy as a phenomenon of interest for IS. The paper examines the research literature concerning psychopaths in organizations and then relates this to IS implementation failure. The difficulties of researching psychopathy and future research are also discussed.

Keywords: psychopaths, corporate psychopaths; information systems research; information systems implementation
1 Introduction

After an extensive literature search, the words *psychopath* or *psychopathy* appear in the one conference paper (Landry, 2008) related to information systems (IS). Yet, ‘*corporate psychopaths*’ are believed to be the cause of significant individual and organizational harm (Babiak and Hare, 2006; Boddy, 2006). While we tend to think of psychopaths as criminal they are common throughout society (Cleckley, 1976; Hare, 1993) and preliminary research indicates they are four-times more likely to be present in populations of senior business leaders and managers (Cangemi and Pföhl, 2009; Babiak, Neumann et al., 2010).

This paper is a conceptual paper. The paper is not based in an empirical study but on the research from another field that has relevance to the IS domain. Assessing the contribution of conceptual papers requires a different mindset (Hirschheim, 2008). Hirschheim (2008) refers to claims, grounds and warrants as criteria for assessing a conceptual paper.

In this paper, the claim is that the personality disorder of psychopathy ought to be a phenomenon of interest for IS and one worthy of further research.

The grounds are the research and writing from experienced psychopathy researchers based in psychiatry and psychology. Robert Hare, arguably the world’s best known psychopathy researcher, has written and spoken extensively of the impact psychopaths have in organisations (Babiak and Hare, 2006; Babiak, Neumann et al., 2010). Yet, only twice have psychopathy and other personality disorders been considered as possible explanations for the results obtained in IS research. Vickers (1999) suggests personality is precluded from consideration because of the predominantly positivist hegemony of IS research and its concern with processes and models. These issues are not limited to IS research. Kets de Vries (2004) argues much of management scholarship looks only at the superficial phenomenon so as to provide the appearance of rationality. Research should seek deeper explanations which may lie in the psychodynamics of individuals and organisations (Gabriel and Carr, 2002; Kets de Vries, 2004; Mitroff, 2007).

Warrants are the assumptions or presuppositions underlying the argument. In this paper, the assumptions are that IS researchers are interested in phenomena not yet considered in IS research and they are interested in a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Corley and Gioia (2011) suggest conceptual papers be evaluated on the basis of their prescience. Prescience is defined as “*as the process of discerning or anticipating what we need to know and, equally important, of influencing the intellectual framing and dialogue about what we need to know*” (Corley and Gioia, 2011, p.13). This paper is suggesting psychopathy as a phenomenon of interest for IS research because of its potential to explain what happens in IS in practice.

The paper is in two parts. The first two sections describe the characteristics of psychopaths, why they are successful in organizations and their impact on organizations and individuals. The next two sections discuss psychopathy and IS and looks at how psychopathy might impact IS implementation. Preliminary data from a study of a failed implementation is provided as a vignette. The paper concludes with a discussion of the difficulties of researching the topic and some suggestions for future research.

2 Characteristics of Psychopaths

Psychopaths are hard to spot because they appear normal (Delbecq, 2001; Babiak, Neumann et al., 2010). They are masters of impression management. What makes psychopaths abnormal is their normal behaviors are exaggerated (Board and Fritzon, 2005; Pech and Slade, 2007; Khoo and Burch, 2008; Gao and Raine, 2010). For example, most people lie occasionally whereas psychopaths lie all the time, sometimes just for effect (Hare, 1993).
Hare and colleagues have defined and classified the traits that distinguish psychopathy and these are generally accepted to be definitive (Hare, Clark et al., 2000; Hare and Neumann, 2008). These traits are classified into four dimensions: interpersonal, affective, lifestyle and anti-social. The traits include glib and superficial charm, grandiose self-worth, need for stimulation/prone to boredom, pathological lying, conning and manipulativeness, lack of guilt or remorse, shallow affect, lack of empathy, parasitic lifestyle, poor behavioral controls, impulsivity, failure to accept responsibility for own actions and many short term relationships (Hare and Neumann, 2008).

In more general terms, psychopaths are persuasive and charismatic while lacking any sense of morality. They will cheat, steal, con, scam, manipulate, cajole, bully and harass people and then sleep like babies. In a corporate setting they are parasites seeking to get others to do their work and taking credit (Babiak and Hare, 2006). Psychopaths are predatory in nature and seek out opportunities to meet their needs and wants with a minimum of effort.

To be diagnosed as a psychopath requires behaviors from all four dimensions, chronically over time and in a variety of contexts such as home and work. These definitions form the basis for the majority of the research done on psychopathy in corporate settings e.g. (Morse, 2004; Pech and Slade, 2007; Wexler, 2008; Wytonis and Sadoff, 2008; Boddy, Ladyshewsky et al., 2010; Boddy, 2011; Boddy, 2011).

2.1 Successful Psychopaths

Most of the research into psychopaths has been undertaken with incarcerated criminals (Hare, 1993; Hare and Neumann, 2008; Gao and Raine, 2010). However, in his original work (Cleckley, 1976) described cases of “successful” psychopaths including business-men, physicians and scientists. Successful psychopath has become a term for psychopaths who have not been arrested, incarcerated or otherwise involved in the criminal justice system (Board and Fritzon, 2005; Babiak and Hare, 2006; Gao and Raine, 2010).

2.2 Corporate Psychopaths

The impacts of psychopaths cannot be underestimated and can have global consequences (Hare, 1993; Babiak and Hare, 2006). In a qualitative study of senior manager’s experience with “evil” individuals, Delbecq (2001) found the damage done by these individuals was always significant. As Babiak, Hare and colleagues write: “employees high on psychopathic traits will exhibit few behaviors that facilitate organizational functioning and many behaviors that harm the organization and its members” (Mathieu, Hare et al., 2012) (p. 5)

Clarke (2005) categorizes the impacts of corporate psychopaths into organizational and human. In organizational terms, psychopaths have been suggested as an underlying cause for the Global Financial Crisis (Boddy, 2011) and for corporate failures at Enron, Starbucks and General Motors (Madsen and Vance, 2009; Craig and Amernic, 2011). Psychopaths are suggested as the source of many corporate crimes including fraud, corruption, insider trading, mortgage fraud and internet scams (Hare, 1993; Clarke, 2005; Babiak and Hare, 2006; Babiak, Neumann et al., 2010). Other research shows significant impacts on organizations from narcissism or anti-social behaviors which are both facets of psychopathy e.g. (Kets de Vries, 2004; Duchon and Burns, 2008; Duchon and Drake, 2009; Craig and Amernic, 2011).

In terms of human costs, Boddy has found significant correlations between numbers of staff with psychopathic traits and lower productivity, workplace bullying, unfair supervision and commitment to employees (Boddy, 2010; Boddy, Ladyshewsky et al., 2010; Boddy, 2011). Mathieu, Babiak et al. (2012) found the number of staff with psychopathic traits strongly predicted employee psychological distress.
2.3 Corporations as Psychopaths

The movie “The Corporation” (Achbar, Abort et al., 2003) portrayed some corporations as being like a psychopath. However, in commenting on the movie, Hare says that many corporations display many psychopathic traits but if a full diagnosis was undertaken he doubts they would be diagnosed as psychopathic (Babiak and Hare, 2006). He is not saying an organization cannot be psychopathic. Researchers from outside of psychology have considered personality disorders for an organization as a whole e.g. (Zuboff, 2004; Duchon and Burns, 2008; Duchon and Drake, 2009; Galvin, Waldman et al., 2010).

2.4 Why Psychopaths are Successful in Organisations

There is no doubt that psychopaths are successful in organizations and rise to senior levels. Babiak, Neumann et al. (2010) found that of a sample of 203 potential business leaders marked out for management development, nine were considered psychopathic. Of the nine “two were vice presidents, two were directors, two were managers or supervisors and one held another management position; thus they had already achieved considerable rank and status…” (p. 185). There are three groups of reasons why psychopaths are successful in organizations. The first is the personal characteristics of psychopaths are geared for seeking and obtaining success. The second is that modern organizations seek out the characteristics in which psychopaths excel. The third is that the dynamics of organizations operate to keep the psychopath in place.

2.5 Personal Characteristics

There is a body of research which suggests being psychopathic may enhance promotion prospects (Board and Fritzon, 2005; Ullrich, Farrington et al., 2008; Galvin, Waldman et al., 2010; Furnham, Trickey et al., 2012) Babiak, Neumann et al. (2010) found that the individuals with the highest psychopathy scores ranked significantly higher on communications skills and significantly lower for management style, being a leader or team player and on general performance than the rest of the sample. Robie, Brown et al. (2008) has found that negative traits may even enhance promotion prospects. This is related to the ambition and drive of corporate psychopaths for wealth or power.

2.6 Organisational Requirements

Psychopaths have many of the characteristics organizations actively seek in their managers and executives (Clarke, 2005; Babiak and Hare, 2006; Boddy, 2006; Pech and Slade, 2007; Wexler, 2008). Wexler (2008) has given labels to illustrate how the psychopathic traits can appear to meet organizational requirements – see Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychopathic Dimension</th>
<th>Corporate Label</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Conscience</td>
<td>Gets the hard jobs done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberrant self-promoter</td>
<td>Makes an excellent first impression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lies and schemes</td>
<td>Strategically-minded</td>
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<tr>
<td>No fear</td>
<td>Shows courage and steadfastness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thrill-seeking</td>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feels no guilt or remorse</td>
<td>Can live with tough decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandiose self-image</td>
<td>Confident, knows self-worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold-hearted</td>
<td>Objective, analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glib and superficial charm</td>
<td>Networks well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severs ties with those who no longer benefit them</td>
<td>Move up the hierarchy without being slowed down by loyalties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promises the sky</td>
<td>Visionary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 – Psychopathic Traits and Corporate Labels (Wexler, 2008)*
2.7 Organisational Dynamics

Even when the true characteristics of the psychopath begin to emerge organizations typically avoid doing anything. There are a number of reasons this happens. It may be the initial good impressions carry more weight and influence than more objective assessments (Babiak, Neumann et al., 2010). The behaviors and lack of performance will be covered up with a lattice of lies and excuses, threats to other staff and manic attention to keeping their behavior secret (Delbecq, 2001). The behavior may be rationalized as personality conflicts or aggrieved staff members. Staff are often reluctant to report behavior because they fear the psychopath and because they doubt they will be believed (Babiak and Hare, 2006). This can occur to the degree that the staff may find themselves doubting their own perceptions and sanity and this is reinforced when they are not believed (Delbecq, 2001; Wexler, 2008).

3 Psychopathy and IS

Searches of the ACM Digital Library and the Proquest database using a wide variety of key terms found two IS papers that could be related to psychopathy. In a conference paper, Landry (2008) suggests that IS staff can create systems which incorporate the dark triad of narcissism, psychopathy and machiavellianism and are therefore administratively evil. Another paper, Ganesh (2003) suggests narcissism, which is an aspect of psychopathy, as an explanation for treating users with disdain. Personality has been considered in terms of leadership in IS implementation e.g. (Armstrong and Sambamurthy, 1999). It has also been considered in terms of user resistance e.g. (Zmud, 1979; Devaraj, Easley et al., 2008) and software development projects e.g. (Gorla and Lam, 2004; Capretz and Ahmed, 2010). Within management and psychology, there have been over two decades of steady research into how personality may impact individual and organizational performance e.g. (Conger, 1990; Kets de Vries, 1991; Conger and Kanungo, 1994; Goldman, 2006)

4 Psychopathy in IS Implementation

The following sections illustrate how psychopathy might impact IS implementation. The purpose is to show that psychopathy can impact an area of IS research to encourage other researchers to consider how it might apply in their own areas.

4.1 IS Implementation Failures

Over 50 years of IS research, and a multi-billion dollar consulting industry, have identified a range of factors to ensure IS implementation success. These factors include better governance, senior management commitment, stakeholder engagement, system development approaches, user participation, project management, benefits management, change management, quality management approaches, and training and support (Yeo, 2002; Al-Mashari, Al-Mudimigh et al., 2003; McLeod and MacDonell, 2011).

Despite this long history of research, IS implementation failures are still manifest. The Standish Group’s 2011 CHAOS Study suggests that 66% of projects are either “challenged” or downright failures. Sauer, Gemino et al. (2007) found 9% of projects are abandoned and 33% of projects are considered under-performers.

Delving into why failures are still happening reveals the research and the consultants are being ignored (Lau and Herbert, 2001; Akkermans and Helden, 2002; Al-Mashari, Al-Mudimigh et al., 2003). In simple terms, we know the right things to do but the right things do not get done. Why is this happening? One answer might be to look at who are the kinds of people that do not do the right things and that could be psychopaths.
The following sections of the paper discusses how psychopathy might impact IS implementation success. The taxonomy of critical success factors is taken from Al-Mashari, Al-Mudimigh et al. (2003) a well cited article on ERP success factors. Examples are taken from preliminary data from a study on the Queensland Health Payroll implementation. Payroll is an ERP based application and the categorisation of factors match that project. The descriptions of psychopath’s behaviours are taken from the literature but referencing each behaviour became unmanageable.

4.2 Potential impacts of psychopathy on implementation success

The Queensland Health Payroll (QHP) implementation has been described as one of the largest bureaucratic disasters in Australian history (Solomons, 2012). The original cost was estimated at approximately US$6 million. Two years after implementation in March 2010 the estimated cost likely to be approximately US$1.2 billion. Within weeks of its implementation, 1,251 employees had been identified as receiving no or less pay and were being referred to charities if they were in financial distress. Tens of thousands had received incorrect pay (Wenham, Caldwell et al., 2010). Meanwhile, executives and contractors held a celebration party at taxpayers` expense (Condon, 2010).

Data has been collected from numerous reviews and considerable press coverage including leaked documents. The data is being analysed and coded. At the time of writing in March 2013, a Special Commission of Inquiry has commenced taking evidence and there are witness statements and transcripts of the evidence. For further reference, readers are directed to Auditor-General (2010) and the Courier-Mail website at www.couriermail.com.au.

4.3 Management and leadership

Because they lack empathy and conscience psychopaths make terrible managers (Boddy, 2010; Boddy, 2011; Mathieu, Babiak et al., 2012). They initially charm and manipulate subordinates to achieve work goals and if that fails they will resort to coercion and bullying. The psychopath has no compunction in working people for very long hours while smoothing over complaints with talk of future promises (Babiak, 2007).

For the QHP implementation, even the preliminary data analysis shows that management and leadership were found wanting from the beginning. Failures included a complete absence of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. The data reviewed so far indicates no senior management person having any interest other than the impact on their own self-interest. There is almost no part of the project where there were not significant failures of leadership and management. One newspaper article captures the essence of it by saying the whole project was a “series of erratic decisions in an environment where confusion reigned supreme.”

Ultimately, what can out psychopaths is a lack of results. The psychopath’s delight with chaos and drama becomes the motivating factor behind the psychopath’s behaviours and everyone else becomes an unwitting actor in the psychopaths drama (Babiak and Hare, 2006). In the QHP implementation this is illustrated by the cost blowout from US$6.1 million to US$1.2 billion.

4.4 Visioning and planning

Psychopaths are at their best when being visionary, creative and innovative. As masters of reading people and telling them what they want to hear, psychopaths are ideally suited to reassuring senior managers or clients on the benefits and ultimate success of IS proposals. Psychopaths are ideally suited to sales and marketing roles for IT consultants and vendors and these roles are used as examples by Babiak and Hare (2006) and Clarke (2005).

However, psychopaths are pathological liars and will say anything to get a deal. In the example from Babiak and Hare (2006), the psychopath focuses on doing what is necessary to obtain short term rewards such as sales commission. Compared to the average person, psychopaths are significantly
more focused on and motivated by rewards while ignoring risks (Buckholtz, Treadway et al., 2010; Dutton, 2013). 

In the QHP implementation, there has been testimony that the scope of the project was always too broad, the project too complex and it was unsuitable to be managed by a single contractor. The Auditor-General’s report says there was no detailed planning. To date, nine separate sets of warnings have been identified from different stakeholders. These cover the period from inception to going live. Not only were these warnings ignored but in many cases those making the warnings were vilified.

4.5 Package selection

The selection and purchase of software and services offers many opportunities for personal gain including bribery and corruption. Alternatively, psychopaths may not properly assess the risks associated with a particular solution. A psychopath would also have no problem spending large amounts of an organization’s money on a project doomed to failure.

All of these situations have occurred in the QHP implementation. Witness statements and testimony to the inquiry indicate the selection process may have been subverted by one or more individuals. The actual decision to purchase the solution was considered by many to be extremely risky and yet was made without any verification the proposed solution would work (Madigan, 2013)

4.6 Communication

Psychopaths are often seen by their superiors and colleagues as good communicators, and by their subordinates as poor communicators (Babiak and Hare, 2006; Babiak, Neumann et al., 2010). They are adept at managing communication in terms of painting a positive picture no matter how inaccurate. Psychopaths will engage in bullying, harassing and subjugating subordinates to hide what they are doing. Psychopaths are inclined to secrecy so they can tell different versions of the truth to different people.

In the QHP implementation, senior management sat on any negative reports and the Minister has claimed he was never kept informed (Condon, 2010). At least one internal staff member has told the inquiry he was encouraged to leave because he was not telling management what they wanted to hear.

4.7 Process management, legacy systems management, systems integration and testing, education and training

These areas are combined because they are the more technical areas that require a disciplined, professional approach. Process management requires the assessment of business requirements and ensuring any new system enables the business to meet its process requirements. Legacy systems management requires careful consideration of the current systems and the transition needed to implement a new system. Similarly systems integration, system testing and training and education need to be carefully planned and executed to ensure implementation success.

Psychopaths are glib and superficial. They are not built for the kind of detailed, disciplined work required. They get bored or as managers will not be interested in the details. Hard work offers little reward for them personally and lacks the necessary excitement to keep them interested. Psychopaths may even go so far as to deliberately sabotage the processes to create excitement (Babiak and Hare, 2006).

In the QHP implementation, all these success factors were impacted with the exception of education and training. The Auditor-General’s report makes clear there was no business requirements analysis nor ongoing checking to ensure the system could meet processing requirements. In terms of legacy systems it was decided to cut-over to the new system using a big-bang approach with no contingency or back-out plans after receiving numerous formal warnings the new system was not ready. The legacy
system was turned off and when the new system failed, it was not possible to go back to the old system.

Similarly, warnings about systems integration were ignored. There needed to be integration between an SAP payroll module and another application for rostering staff. No proof of concept was ever developed and the multi-million dollar contract signed with no verification the system could work (Madigan, 2013).

It is clear the systems testing process was manipulated to achieve a pre-determined outcome. Among many examples was the reclassification of defects in the software. Testing revealed numerous severe software defects classified as Level 1 and Level 2. Level 1 defects were “show stoppers” and Level 2 defects were major impacts on system operation. To allow the project to pass user acceptance exit criteria, a committee ordered the reclassification of Level 1 and 2 defects to Level 3.

4.8 Project management

Psychopaths prefer a free-wheeling approach. The psychopath resists being held accountable and resists the control inherent in sticking to timelines and budgets inherent in a project plan. Psychopaths like excitement and chaos and a project plan is, at one level, an organisational attempt to minimise chaos.

The Auditor-General’s report, and testimony to the inquiry into the QHP implementation, indicates there was little project management. The primary contractor used their own proprietary method in violation of Government policy. It appears project plans were rarely developed and never updated.

4.9 Cultural and structural changes

Psychopaths can significantly impact the culture of an organization (Babiak and Hare, 2006). In leadership roles, the psychopath carefully recruits others who will participate or at least condone their behaviors so they can have even more success with schemes and scams they might be running (Pech and Slade, 2007; Wexler, 2008). Delbecq (2001) found that when senior executives sought to facilitate innovation in units controlled by “evil” managers they found the units were incapable of dealing with change. They were immobilized. Any vestige of collegiality or trust had been removed to be replaced by a culture of self-protection and maintaining or increasing personal benefit.

Queensland Health has a long history of bullying staff and removing whistleblowers (Dunbar, Reddy et al., 2011). A leaked resignation letter from a senior Payroll Manager said the implementation and its aftermath were a classic case of workplace bullying. Queensland Health has had the Jayant Patel, Paul Summerfield and Joel Morehu-Barlow cases of death, fraud and cover-up as examples of a toxic workplace.

4.10 Performance evaluation and management

The literature suggests that psychopaths will manipulate this process to ensure they take the credit if the implementation went well or avoid responsibility if there is a failure or may attempt to subvert the process altogether (Hare, 1993; Boddy, 2011).

In the QHP implementation there are reports of senior management hiding information to avoid being held accountable. Two senior managers who were key to the failure of the project were fired by the Minister and then subsequently re-employed as consultants without the Minister’s knowledge. A number of senior public servants have provided testimony to the inquiry they cannot recall the reasons behind key decisions in the project. Table 2 below summarises what happened in the QHP implementation and suggests the psychopathic traits that are indicated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>What Happened</th>
<th>Psychopathic Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management and leadership</td>
<td>Absence of any governance mechanisms; overriding concern about appearance and reputation; managers lack necessary experience; failed to create a workable contract; failure to meet contractual requirements by Government agencies</td>
<td>Grandiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Callous/No empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning and Planning</td>
<td>Large complex project based on unproven assumptions; Prime contractor model unworkable yet warnings ignored; unrealistic goals; unrealistic timeframes; multiple warnings at planning stage were ignored.</td>
<td>Grandiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Glibness/Superficiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of realistic goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Irresponsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Package Selection</td>
<td>Package selection influenced by one individual possibly through unethical or criminal behaviour; accurate estimates not required; package not tested prior to selection.</td>
<td>Glibness/Superficiality</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lying</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cunning/Manipulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication stage-managed for appearances; multiple meetings deciding nothing; negative communication not given to Minister; warnings from Consultants, External Contractors, Staff, Unions and others ignored; whistle-blowers targeted and terminated.</td>
<td>Cunning/Manipulative</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Management</td>
<td>Inadequate documentation of business requirements at start of project and nor review of requirements as project progressed; No validation to determine whether systems, processes and infrastructure were in place; Critical business readiness activities and practices were not fully developed prior to implementation of the new system.</td>
<td>Glibness/Superficiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and education</td>
<td>No data found for this category.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>No project management methodology in evidence; confused roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Glibness/Superficiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legacy systems management</td>
<td>Big bang cutover; legacy system shut off even though no testing of new system conducted in production environment and multiple warnings received; No contingency plan in place to roll back to legacy system if new system failed.</td>
<td>Glibness/Superficiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems integration</td>
<td>Tried to integrate two systems not fit for purpose; No proof of concept; Business continuity plans were not available and able to be quickly implemented to address payroll issues as they emerged.</td>
<td>Glibness/Superficiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of realistic goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System testing</td>
<td>System testing process manipulated to allow system to go into production; Testing never completed; warnings by system testing contractor and other contractors ignored</td>
<td>No accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Irresponsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and structural changes</td>
<td>HR executive resigns citing unrealistic deadlines and pressure on staff is classic case of workplace bullying; Managers initially blamed staff; referred staff to charities when unpaid.</td>
<td>Callous/No empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance evaluation and management</td>
<td>Managers and vendors have party to celebrate implementation even though it is a disaster; Prime contractor in breach of contract but not pursued; two Managers sacked but re-employed by Queensland Health as consultants within 6 month period; Primary contractor says they fulfilled all contract requirements</td>
<td>Parasitic lifestyle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No conscience</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>No accountability</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Glibness/Superficiality</td>
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Table 2 – Queensland Health Payroll and Psychopathic Traits

5 Researching Psychopathy in Information Systems

5.1 Difficulties

There are considerable difficulties researching psychopathic behavior in organizations. These include access to organizations, ethical and legal issues, expertise and assessment issues and significant potential harm to the researcher.

Even Robert Hare has had trouble undertaking research because many organizations do not wish to participate in research due to possible adverse publicity (Babiak, 2007; Babiak, Neumann et al., 2010). Identifying and potentially taking action against corporate psychopaths before they have overtly or
identifiably done anything wrong raises ethical and legal issues. There is an ethical trade-off between the rights of psychopaths as individuals and the amount of harm they do to their fellow co-workers and the organization (Clarke, 2005; Babiak and Hare, 2006; Boddy, Ladyshewsky et al., 2010).

There have been methodological difficulties in a corporate setting because of the lack of a suitable instrument for assessing psychopathy (Mathieu, Hare et al., 2012). Due to space limitations it is not possible for a full discussion but the reader is referred to Smith and Lilienfeld (2013).

The difficulties also must include a note of caution because researching psychopathy has the potential to cause significant harm to the researcher or the subjects. Some methodologies such as autoethnography, participant-observation and action research should be approached with extreme caution. As an example, the documentary "I, Psychopath" (Walker, 2009) shows the damage that can be caused by an association with someone with major psychopathic tendencies. The documentary film maker suffered considerable mental health issues at the hands of the film’s subject. It is suggested any research involving direct contact should only be done in collaboration with experienced psychiatric or psychology researchers.

5.2 Future Research

The author is undertaking a detailed case study of the Queensland Health Payroll implementation discussed above. Witness statements, transcripts, government reports, press reports and other documents available in the public domain are being coded and analyzed to identify the true causes of the failed implementation.

In speaking to practitioners, the author has received multiple invitations to interview them concerning their own experiences and these will be pursued as time permits. While it may not be possible or ethical to identify individual psychopaths it may be possible to identify where psychopathy or other toxic leadership behaviors may explain why the ‘right things’ are not done.

The author is reviewing IS theory to attempt to make explicit the links between theories and psychopathy. Psychopathy may be relevant to theories based in organizational culture, socio-technical systems, contingency and impression management.

Further case studies of failed implementations have to be planned carefully in order to distance the researcher from any potential harm but also ensure a rigorous analysis of the data. There is the opportunity to administer the B-Scan or other instruments to identify whether there are psychopaths in positions of importance in failed implementations and identify any correlations.

Although not covered in this paper there is an argument that IS roles may be more attractive to psychopaths than other occupations. There are a number of studies that seek to determine the proportion of people with psychopathic traits within a defined community e.g. (Widom and Newman, 1985; Gao and Raine, 2010). Replicating this type of study within communities of IS students and practitioners would ascertain whether IS is attractive as an occupation for psychopaths.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to stimulate interest in psychopathy as a phenomenon worthy of study in the IS domain. The literature on psychopaths suggests they have a significant impact on individuals and organisations. Yet, this is an area has never been considered by the IS research community.

The relevance to academia also extends to the behaviours of academics and students (Cangemi and Pfohl, 2009) and the suggestion that modern management practices within Universities facilitate the rise of the corporate psychopath (Todnem By, Diefenbach et al., 2008; Samier and Atkins, 2010). It appears the empathy of students is falling while their narcissism is increasing (Twenge, Konrath et al., 2008; Twenge, Konrath et al., 2008). It has also been suggested business schools explicitly teach students about psychopaths and how to deal with them (Gudmundsson and Southey, 2011; Holt and Marques, 2012).
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