

## Are Trophy Hunters Psychopaths?

February 14, 2014  
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Psychologist Joseph Newman at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, one of the preeminent research scientists in the field of psychopathy, defines a psychopath this way. "Broadly speaking, they are people who use manipulation, violence and intimidation to control others and satisfy selfish needs. They can be intelligent and highly charismatic, but display a chronic inability to feel guilt, remorse or anxiety about any of their actions." He further states, "... that up to 1 percent of the general population could be described as psychopathic. Surprisingly, many who fall into that bracket might lead

perfectly conventional lives as doctors, scientists and company CEOs."

Newman believes that psychopathy is a type of learning disability that makes individuals oblivious to the implications of their actions.

Neurologist Dr. Kent Keel has studied psychopathic brain activity. He discovered through neurological testing that the brain of a psychopath is wired differently, making them emotionally devoid of certain feelings.

Professor Declan Murphy of the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College, London believes he has found an area of the brain that is decidedly different in a psychopath as compared to a normal person. Most research to date has focused on the orbital frontal cortex. Professor Murphy is focusing more on the uncinate fasciculus, a white matter region that connects the amygdala and the orbitofrontal cortex. A disfunction in the uncinate fasciculus may lead to abnormalities in the aforementioned regions.

Then there is the nature (brain abnormalities or disability) versus nurture (influence by others) that ultimately shapes an individual's behavior.

How does the definition of a psychopath and the causative research relate to hunters? Personally, I believe psychopath, using the updated definition, can be considered the proper diagnosis for many. The commitment and intension to kill an animal for trophy, sport, or simply the adrenaline rush is foreign to a majority of the population. If you ask a hunter, and I use that term with reservation, why they hunt, they will tell you, "I enjoy it" or "it's my right". OK, it's your right. What about *enjoy*? If you *enjoy* killing and watching an essentially helpless animal die, then I would say you were a psychopath.



I am not inferring that all hunters are psychopaths. There are those who must hunt to eat. There are professional hunters who cull herds to curtail over population. There's the average guy who likes to eat venison or duck and hunts responsibly. My focus is on trophy hunters and those who simply enjoy killing. Some who enjoy killing try to absolve their compulsion by saying they donate the meat to x, y, or z. Then there is the good old boy who kills a deer for its rack of antlers and the head that will decorate his wall. These folks, in my opinion, are psychopaths.

I postulate the degree of psychopathy correlates with an individual's motivation and autonomic responses at the time of a kill. At the far right of the spectrum I would place trophy hunters, people who kill for the thrill and heads for their wall. Even further right would be those who target endangered or threatened species. They all have a compulsion that most people will never understand. They are quite obviously oblivious to the implications of their actions.

Unfortunately, this psychopathic behavior may be nurtured in others. Say for instance, there was a big game trophy hunter who had young children. High-powered weapons and trophy heads were the norm in that family. A psychopath is nurturing the kids. What will be the outcome?

As a sidebar, I have no idea why anyone would call hunting a sport. That was probably instigated by profiteers and businesses endeavoring to legitimize an industry.

My primary reason for writing this paper was to focus on the trophy hunter who, in many cases, pays large sums for the opportunity to kill an endangered or threatened species. Many participate



in *canned hunts* to satisfy their desires. Their motivation is beyond my understanding. I have always believed there could be a brain abnormality fostering their need to kill. These psychopaths have been killing under the radar for years, but the Internet has helped to expose them. Death threats have been made. That should stop. My father's counsel - never make a threat. He was in the OSS during WWII.

What can be done to save the wildlife that is being slaughtered for sport and profit? Trophy hunting has been banned in Botswana and Zambia. Other African nations must follow their lead. Poaching, which is now being organized by powerful cartels, is a huge problem. Do governments have the will to stop the killing? Follow the money.

What about canned hunting? These businesses need to be shut down, no matter where they are. We have them here in the US. I passed one when I was driving through Texas. These attract the psychopaths I've been talking about. Why would any state or country allow these operations? You're right. Follow the money.

The trophy hunters have a disability, brain abnormality, or personality disorder that drives them. They don't perceive the problem and more than likely never will. I feel sorry for the animals they kill. Maybe public humiliation along with a universal ban on trophy hunting will stop them. Let your voices be heard!