

## Ⓒ Cedric Wood: Can we stop psychopathic murders?

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PM

A productive and much loved mother of an 8-year-old was kidnapped from the country club where she worked, beaten, killed and dumped in the brush. How can society sit by without doing something about crimes like the death of Susan Loper?

You may think there is nothing society could have done to stop the misguided killer, who had a history of stalking Loper. But this lack of societal assertiveness comes into focus for SMU master's level counseling students this month, who have registered for a class led by best-selling author John Bradshaw.

Bradshaw is best known for his PBS "wounded child" programs in the early '90s. He would lead a group of participants into a deepened state of consciousness to heal their deep childhood pain. Is it possible Bradshaw's methodology holds the key to preventing further rapes, brutalities and murders?

That is not just a question for licensed professionals like me or the students in Southern Methodist University's master's class on family counseling. Over the past 10 years, well, 20 years — no, I guess it's been since the beginning of time — we have witnessed "chronic psychopaths" and "momentary psychopaths" unleash their wounded fury on innocent victims who had the temerity to reject them. Oh, how an egopath's feelings are stirred when they feel rejected. And where does this rage come from that foams and boils up into an un holy rage? According to Bradshaw, it comes from repressed and unhealed trauma and grief that dates back to the perpetrator's childhood.

This is what you'll see in the current movie *Water for Elephants*. "August" (Christoph Waltz) is a wounded soul who is running the circus. His anger is unleashed at his prized elephant, his employees and finally at his wife, whom he almost kills in a manic rage. This is momentary psychopathy well-presented.

If we are to accept Bradshaw's well-validated developmental-needs concepts, then why are we not doing something about it at the civic level?

Most of us would admit that doing anything to prevent such horrors is preferable to seeing one more brutal murder in the newspaper. And yet here we sit, a full 20 years after Bradshaw's PBS

shows, and not one of his concepts has made its way into our schools, our laws or our law enforcement procedures.

It is clear from the cellphone records that Loper had a hint of what could happen starting early on the morning on April 19. But who could she call? The police are unwilling to protect a woman who thinks she could be in danger.

When it comes to egopaths being brutal and controlling, the police are shackled by the law that says, "It's a domestic issue" or "We can't do anything unless he's done something illegal!" But egopaths should be ticketed and ordered to receive counseling, where they can come to terms with childhood trauma that may be waiting to unleash itself.

Sending a signal to would-be brutalizers that society does not tolerate even low-level threatening behavior just might save a life of someone as precious as Susan Loper — and save us all a lot of shared grief.

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