

No “Human” in Humane

In order to determine what serial killers reveal about being human, one must first decide what constitutes a human being. Some definitions say that the distinguishing trait between humans and other living organisms is an erect stance. But what about people who have been paralyzed, are they not human? Another definition claims that humans are abstract thinkers and problem solvers, but whoever wrote this clearly disregarded children, who under the age of eleven have not yet reached the formal operational stage of life and consequently, are unable to think abstractly. A human being is not an erect problem solver. A human being is someone with the *potential* to both stand erect and problem solve, along with containing an infinite number of other abilities. Human beings must be defined by their opportunities, not their outcomes (Aaron Lewis). So, what do serial killers reveal about what it means to be human? Through countless studies to explore why serial killers do what they do, scientists and FBI agents are slowly beginning to understand a tiny fraction of the biology of a criminal's mind. They are exposing a part of human nature many people choose to ignore on a daily basis: evil. Serial killers demonstrate both the imperfections, as well as the brilliance, embodied in mankind.

There are two types of serial killers, organized and disorganized. Organized serial killers are the people who, if it weren't for a chemical imbalance in their brains or a possibly detrimental childhood, would be winning awards and coming

up with unbelievable inventions. Passed on the sidewalk, these men and sometimes (but much more infrequently) women would seem like completely normal individuals with no trouble fitting into society. That being said, while their bodies are seemingly standard, their brains are not even close. Organized serial killers plan their crimes meticulously, leaving nothing out. They often meddle in police work and visit their crime scenes on multiple occasions. But the most terrifying characteristic of an organized serial killer is his or her inability to feel any guilt. Disorganized serial killers, although far easier to catch due to their lack of intelligence, are equally dangerous. Because these types of killers often don't have a specific MO (motive), they will kill anyone anywhere- as long as it's convenient. Disorganized killers also tend to feel guilty and spend time with the victim postmortem. Whether organized or disorganized, more often than not both types of serial killers have a chemical imbalance in their brains. Serotonin, the neurotransmitter connected to happiness, reduces aggression. Most serial killers have a deficiency of serotonin, consequently increasing aggression. This increase of aggression causes an increase of testosterone, which has its own negative effect. Along with a shortage of serotonin, a surplus of testosterone also increases aggression, essentially creating a vicious cycle of anger. Another common characteristic shared by serial killers is a painfully abusive childhood. The modeling theory states that humans learn aggression by observing others who behave in an aggressive manner, as many parents of future serial killers did. Tom Bundy, for instance, was raised by his grandparents who he was led to believe were his parents, and grew up with a sister who turned out to be his mother; that's a pretty messed

up childhood. Serial killers are dangerous, incomprehensible, sadistic, insane, and pathetic, but they are also human.

The topic of serial killers sparked a thought: why are the words “human” and “humane” nearly identical? It implies that “humane” was derived from “human,” therefore claiming that “human” is synonymous with compassion and sympathy. Are all humans compassionate? Are serial killers compassionate? For the most part, no. Are serial killers human? Although some may disagree, yes. More than anything else, serial killers reveal that the human race is under no circumstances humane.