

Culture

Culture Briefs

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Killer egos

"Brad Bushman, a social psychologist at the University of Michigan who has published research on school shootings since the mid-1990s, has found that narcissism often plays a role in the shootings.

" 'This student at Virginia Tech killed two people and then made a video of himself and sent it to NBC news,' Bushman points out. 'He wanted people to know what he did.' ...

"Narcissists, says Bushman, believe that they are entitled to admiration and respect and, when they don't get it, they become aggressive. Bushman blames the self-esteem movement of the past 20 years for producing a generation of people who think the world has been turned upside down when they are not singled out for their 'special-ness.' ...

"These young people are essentially set up for failure in the real world, says Bushman. That is, most people don't get much recognition, either in their professions or in their private lives, and trying to keep an ego inflated in those praise-deprived conditions can breed frustration and anger. ...

"Bushman likes to conduct a simple mental test: Imagine the most aggressive person you can think of. It might be Hitler, Hugo Chavez, Mussolini, Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden, none of whom has a self-esteem problem. They all wanted, or want, the spotlight. And they all were, or are, extremely sensitive to criticism."

-- Stephanie Ramage, writing on "Why?" in the Atlanta Sunday Paper

'Begin with facts'

"Professor Carol Swain, professor of law and political science at Vanderbilt University and author of 'Debating Immigration,' would like to see more people speak up for the sectors of society most affected by illegal immigration.

" 'How many African-American leaders have you seen come out and address the impact that high levels of illegal immigration [are] having in the communities when it comes to jobs, when it comes to education, when it comes to health care?' she asked. 'And often, these low-skilled, low-wage workers compete in the same sectors for jobs.'

"Let's have a vigorous open debate on illegal immigration in this country, and let's begin with the facts. Estimates of illegal aliens in this country range from 12 million to 20 million people. Why doesn't our government know how many there are?"

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