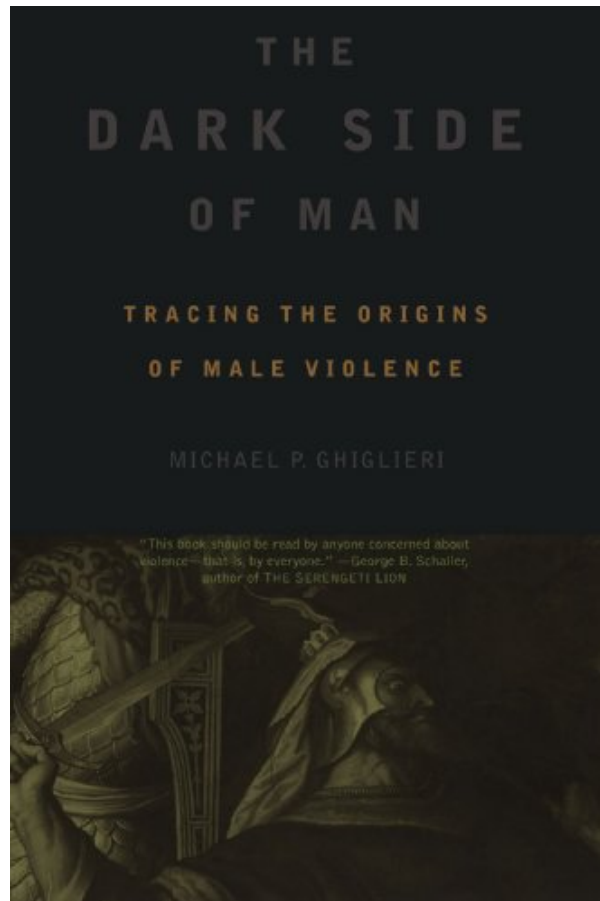
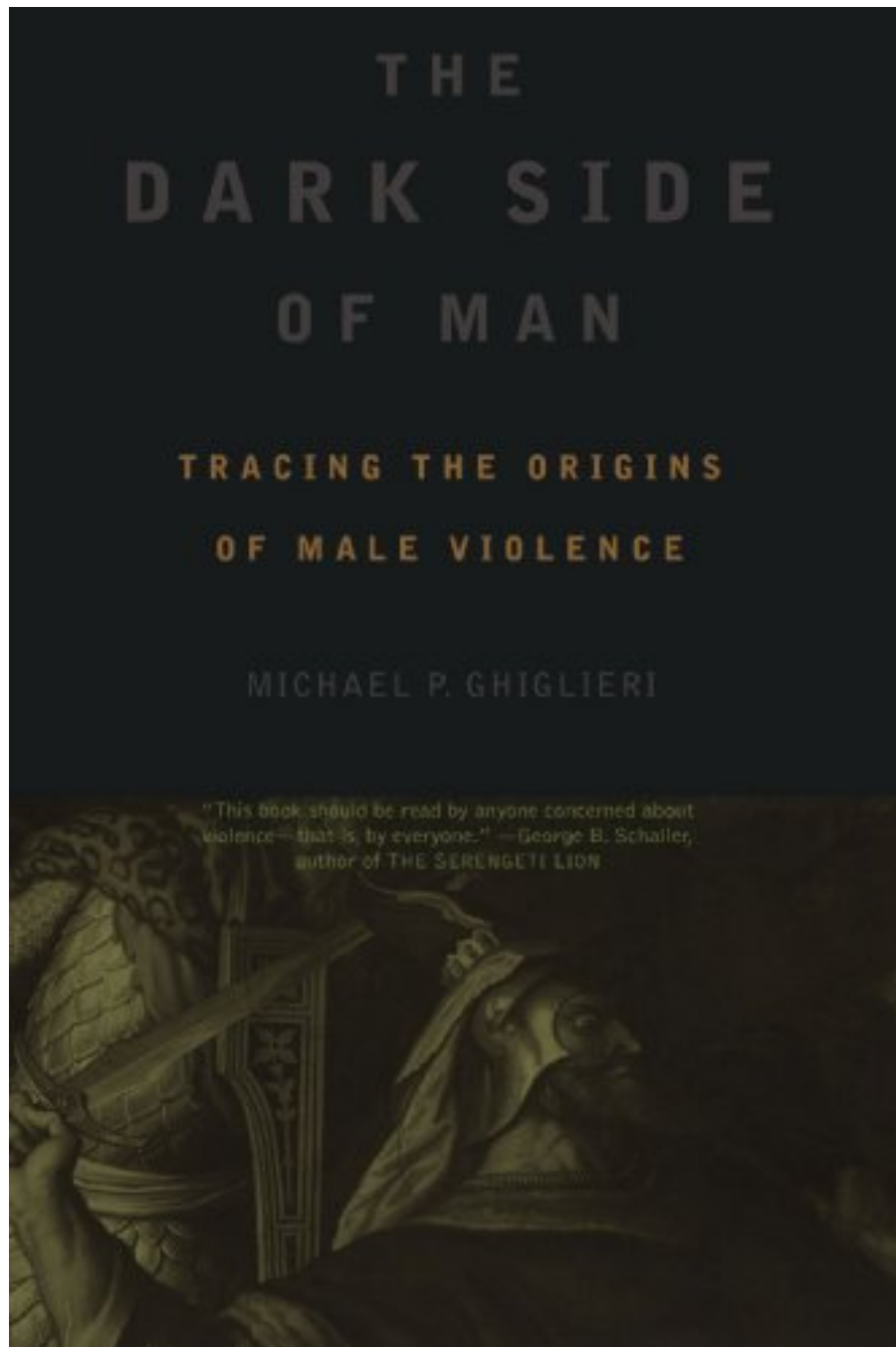


THE DARK SIDE OF MAN (HELIX BOOKS) BY MICHAEL GHIGLIERI, JOSHUA BILMES



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Central to Ghiglieri's argument is that violence is a deeply entrenched behavioral strategy--especially among males--that simply emerges when other strategies fail, a thesis he reinforces convincingly with both anecdotes and hard numbers. And while he recognizes that culture and socialization play important roles in encouraging violence, he maintains that ignoring the powerful biological and evolutionary forces at work is "the single most useless--and dangerous--approach one could take in trying to explain human violence."

With extensive sections on rape, murder, war, and genocide, Ghiglieri methodically details our grim heritage, from wilding New Yorkers to wild gorillas. Some of his conclusions are surprising but persuasive--that the goal of rape is actually copulation, not control, for instance. But Ghiglieri's assessment is ultimately a hopeful one: he believes that by understanding and admitting to the biological origins of violence, we are better prepared to deal with it. --Paul Hughes

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In *The Dark Side of Man*, Michael Ghiglieri, a biologist and protégé of Jane Goodall, takes on one of the most highly charged debates in modern science: the biological roots of bad behavior. Beginning with rape, and moving on to murder, war, and genocide, Ghiglieri offers the most up-to-date, comprehensive look at the male proclivity for violence. In a strong narrative voice, he draws on the latest research and his own personal experiences—both as a primatologist and as a soldier—to explain that male violence is largely innate, a product of millions of years of evolution. In the process, he debunks many of our most clung-to, “politically correct” notions: that the differences between men and women are strictly due to socialization, that rape is really about power—not sex—and that genocide is only possible with a single madman at the helm. Well-argued, evenhanded, yet never dull, this important book illuminates the darkest impulses of the male psyche, and suggests ways for modern society to curb them.

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18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Lex Talionis leaves the World Blind

By A Customer

Ghiglieri convincingly points out the parallels in human behavior found in primatology, focusing on the capacity for our closest genetic relatives, the chimps, to literally murder, rape, and go to war. Although I find the third part of his book, which is focused on finding appropriate responses to man's inherent biological capacity for violence to be rather polemical tripe, his anthropological look at what is often considered as merely a problem of socialization and environment is refreshing. His assertion that lex talionis, "eye for an eye" justice is an antidote for violent behavior within American society might better be encapsulated within another book. There are drawbacks to this approach that Ghiglieri doesn't examine, and might better be addressed by someone experienced in criminal psychology. Also, when comparing the American criminal justice system to systems in France and Saudi Arabia, it is best to entertain many hypotheses for the ostensive differences in recidivism, crime rates, and quality of life- surely the data is not so clear cut to always suggest a cause and effect relationship between the harshness of punishment and the subsequent levels of crime. And this isn't even to mention the prickly possibilities for human rights abuse, though

certainly it is troubling to see criminals released back to society only to claim more victims. So in short, while it is no coincidence that men are the vast majority of violent offenders, and that the differing abilities of men to sire an infinite amount of offspring, in comparison to women being limited has left its traces on human psychology, facile answers aren't to be found. Calling to public opinion on the death penalty, as well as police departments, only demonstrates that indignation is a protective response to maintain reciprocal altruism in society- not that this means the death penalty will be effective in the age of megalopolises. Thus I don't see Ghiglieri's pronouncements on social policy to be as convincing as his empirical evidence to suggest that violence predates civilization and its taint- M. Mead be damned.

35 of 37 people found the following review helpful.

Violence is Man's Original Sin Says the Good Doctor

By Jeffrey Morseburg

Because it reaches deep inside the dark soul of man, this is a book that has aroused a great deal of controversy. Michael Ghiglieri has tackled a very difficult subject - the origins of male violence. Emerging from the field of anthropology and evolutionary psychology is the argument that male violence is deeply entrenched, that it is part and parcel of being male, not largely due to social factors. This idea makes people uncomfortable because if violence is a largely immutable male characteristic, than utopian social schemes won't be able banish it, to throw it on the dust heap of history. The author is an anthropology professor who toiled as a field biologist in Africa and Asia, where he worked with chimpanzees, the most intelligent of the great apes and man's closest animal relation. This work with the great apes - once thought to be peaceful animals - has contributed to his conviction that violence - while varying by degree from individual to individual - is an immutable human trait as it is among the chimpanzees. Ghiglieri is an advocate of evolutionary psychology and believes that most traits make sense when viewed through the prism of reproduction. He argues that male violence is largely a reproductive strategy.

Ghiglieri begins by citing the ever-larger body of scientific evidence that indicates just how different men and women are and why their reproductive goals fundamentally diverge. Then, he begins to address the spectrum of male violence - warfare, genocide, warfare, murder and rape - and begins each chapter with real world examples before segueing into a recitation of his evidence as to which reproductive and biological imperatives are fulfilled by that behavior.

One of the most controversial chapters of the book is about rape. While campus feminists have repeated the mantra that "rape is about power, not about sex" so many times that it has become part of the conventional wisdom, others have long questioned this certainty from purely logical viewpoint. After all, in a rape, the victim is not simply subjugated and beaten, but sexually violated. Now, Ghiglieri explains rape in the animal world and how it fulfills a mating strategy and then methodically marshals his evidence to prove that it is a disturbing but entrenched human mating strategy as well.

In a bold move, the author has a number of prescriptions - strategies - that he advocates in order to minimize the effects of male violence. In addition to our violent traits, he cites mankind's attributes, his ability to cooperate, to channel behavior, which will allow us to cope with man's innate aggression. Ghiglieri wants us to be appropriately tough on criminals, to eliminate those who are most violent, to encourage self-defense and advocates a criminal justice system that is almost biblical in its sense of retribution. According to him, these actions would reduce the damage done by male violence as they channel the protective strategies that are innate to me.

So, to Ghiglieri, there is no font of primitive happiness, no ideal society that so many anthropologists have sought. Man simply has a dark, aggressive side that is programmed into his DNA and so while it may be challenged, it can never be eliminated. With its disturbing anecdotal examples of male violence and its

conviction that male aggression is an immutable reality, "The Dark Side of Man" is a disturbing book, but instead of looking away from some dark questions, it addresses them head-on. While the outlook for the world will forever be grim if man's baser instincts are hard-wired into us, it is probably better to be realistic about them so that we can develop effective countermeasures.

17 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

We're Evolved, but not THAT Evolved

By James R. Mccall

Violence is right up there with sex as a subject of universal and apparently unshakable interest. And if the two are linked, how much more fascinating-and here's a whole book that purports to be about sex and violence, with chapter titles like "Rape", "Murder", "War", and "Genocide".

Alas for the devotees of Real Crime, this book looks at the subject more clinically, but that makes it more interesting, really. If you actually look at the way men behave in certain extreme circumstances, rather than sneaking sidelong glances and then looking away, and talk straightforwardly about what you see, you can come to some surprising and useful conclusions.

I should say that the conclusions are surprising to academic theorists of criminal behavior, but not so surprising to the average person. The average person has always felt that rape is about sex rather than domination, and that if you want to discourage mugging, just let a few victims shoot a few muggers. The average person thinks that war, too, is mostly about ganging up to try and take something that belongs to someone else, and getting into a fight. But this is a book that comes to such commonsense conclusions in a way that should also pass muster with the theoreticians.

However, a book that talks about extremely antisocial behavior as being linked to one particular sex is going to have tough sledding these days. Furthermore, if it embraces the insights and results of human evolutionary psychology it is going to alienate religious fundamentalists as well as swatches of others of the "blank slate" school of human mental development.

Still with me? Well, the book is quite good, and to this reader at least, offered the surprising insights of a couple of paragraphs back. Perhaps too many years of hearing about the Patriarchy and its strategies of domination has kept me from thinking straight about why men do what they do, from flaking junk bonds to building bridges to robbing banks. Mostly, deep down, they do what they do to get women. Not to oppress them, or dominate them, or enslave them in the kitchen, but to have sex with them. Ghiglieri is an anthropologist, and his field studies (of chimps in particular) have given him a detachment that he applies to his own species. He starts with ideological biases, of course, but apparently also an intellectual honesty that lets the data speak to him and change his mind.

He paints a grim picture, but rather than throw up his hands at the intractability of violent behavior, Ghiglieri believes that we have the intelligence and, as important, certain countervailing behaviors-the instincts for cooperating and for monitoring cheating-to enable us to contain and channel the always latent violence in our natures. Society foils our impulses in this direction right now (in particular the criminal justice system does), but need not.

So I recommend this book. It's a good read, with statistics but also with stories, and its conclusions do not get out too far ahead of its numbers. (Stats on human behavior, of course, are almost always shaky!). And it will teach you some things you didn't know about chimpanzees, too.

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