

Book Reviews

DEMONIC MALES, by Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson. New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1996, 350 pp.

Demonic Males is an interesting, fast-paced exploration into the evolutionary roots of human behavior. This volume specifically addresses the occurrence of, development of, and selection for aggressive behavior in human males by comparing them with the other great apes. This account “bucks” the current trend of attributing human male aggression to cultural norms and values and instead exposes human male aggression as the combined result of male and female reproductive choices acted on by natural selection.

This volume will appeal to a wide audience: It has the speed and enthusiasm of a novel but is accompanied by 35 pages of extensive notes and 30 pages of appropriate references that should convince even the strongest skeptic that this is based on empirical scientific investigation. Any student of evolutionary theory will find this book compelling, but perhaps the most important audience comprises those who feel they understand behavior but do not have an evolutionary perspective. This volume reviews the data from animal behavior and nonhuman primates in general and from great apes and human beings in particular. For the nonevolutionist, perhaps there could have been more emphasis and detail on the processes of natural selection, but the wide data set should convince anyone of the universality of the processes of selection and evolution.

Wrangham and Peterson begin and end this exploration into human behavior with a consideration of chimpanzees and of how our perspective of ape behavior has changed following long-term studies of undisturbed populations. Rather than the cute circus stars (who, incidentally, were infants), we see the real life of common chimpanzees, a life organized around male-bonded, patrilineal societies, where females leave their natal families and join a male’s band, effectively trading independence for male protection and access to resources. The reader then is transported through a “time machine” where the close genetic relatedness between human beings and common chimpanzees is revealed and the slight differences in evolutionary history are explored, and we start to see our reflection as we reexamine the behavior of these “lethal apes.” Although the common chimpanzee is genetically closer to human beings, similar behaviors are explored in gorillas (infant-killing) and orangutans (rape). The details may be different, but great apes share a history of violent behavior toward conspecifics.

The authors proceed to intertwine the story of our evolutionary history with the concept of “masculine” and “feminine” temperaments, emphasizing that powerful females were “masculine” and that “paradise” generally was equated with a “feminine”

lifestyle. "Paradise Imagined," while at first glance an all-female world, is more properly viewed as a place with plentiful and constant resources and no male-male competition. It is "paradise" specifically because it represents something atypical of human beings, past or present. It is no accident that only one male exists in "Paradise Imagined" (usually the creator of the idyllic image), and in the absence of male-male competition, there were resources and freedom for all. In the real world, however, resources are limited, which brings the reader to Wrangham's previously published hypotheses (e.g., Wrangham, 1993; Wrangham et al., 1993) on the evolution of human behavior.

In the next few chapters, the authors carefully direct the reader through some complex analyses. In short, seasonal or concentrated resources are associated with defensible areas, and powerful males are more capable of garnering and defending resources. Females that associate with protective males with resource control have more offspring than females without those resources. This is observed in many animals with defensible resources but is at the heart of our human evolutionary heritage for one simple reason: our big, expensive brains. As hominids became more like modern human beings, our ancestors required significantly higher-quality foods to support our huge brains and associated cultural behavior, increasing our dependence on rich resources. Selection pressure increased for human males to outcompete other males to provide protection/resources to females, who then produced more offspring. Females who chose and stayed with powerful males (despite occasional abuse) also had more surviving offspring than females who did not, and females perpetuated the behavior by competing for the "richest" male. Since these behaviors resulted in more offspring in the next generation, they were favored by natural selection, and the behavior continues in modern human beings.

To "lighten" this bleak picture, the authors then return to the exception to the above "rule": the pygmy chimpanzee (bonobo). Although only recently studied, there are some differences that entice the reader into thinking that perhaps our evolutionary future could be different. Pygmy chimpanzees exhibit the same migration pattern as common chimpanzees, but resource distribution is more even since these apes utilize both fruit and leaves. Access to resources is not controlled by male defense; so male-male competition is less effective and nonrelated females are more closely socially bonded. This slightly different portrait of a great ape is presented as a potential alternative for the human species, ending on a note of optimism that with wisdom (and female-female bonding) we may be able to overcome our evolutionary heritage.

As one interested in studying aggression, however, this reviewer cautions readers to question this optimistic approach. First, bonobos have not yet been as intensively studied as other species exhibiting conspecific violence, and their nonviolent nature may not be confirmed in the future. After all, common chimpanzees were once thought of as lovable creatures, but intensive investigations have shown otherwise. Second, the strength of this volume is the demonstration that stereotypes, often attributed to cultural norms, are both biologically based and the product of our evolutionary history. As such, these behaviors are not "remnants" of a former life, but are still under active selection in our present human populations, whether we are the last of the hunter-gatherers or western urbanites. To quote from this book: "in the real world, the tough guy finds himself besieged with female admirers, while the self-effacing friend sadly clutches his glass of Chablis at the fern bar alone" (p. 241). Even if females consciously "bond for power," as long as "cheater" females improve their relative repro-

ductive success by trading “freedom” for powerful males’ investment in their offspring, female bonding will be selected against.

Perhaps the most important (although somewhat veiled) message from this volume is that we can no longer justify blaming male aggression, and female acceptance of aggression, on the social system or on males in general. It is time to recognize that this behavior is perpetuated by *both* females and males, and the authors have done a masterful job of opening eyes to the evolutionary basis for human social behavior. We may be enlightened, we may have “wisdom,” but as long as competitive, aggressive men (and the women who prefer them) produce the most offspring, “demonic” males and “tolerant” females will continue to be typical of the human ape.

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CHILDREN AND MEDIA VIOLENCE, edited by Ulla Carlsson and Cecilia von Feilitzen. Göteborg, Sweden, Nordicom, 1998, 387 pp.

In 1997, the Government of Sweden and UNESCO established The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen, managed by the Nordic Information Center for Media and Communication Research (NORDICOM). One of the goals of the Clearinghouse is “to attract attention to the question of violence on the screen and its role in the lives of children and young people.” *Children and Media Violence* is an obvious early attempt to accomplish this noble goal.

One of the preeminent strengths and weaknesses of *Children and Media Violence* is its eclecticism. The contributors are diverse in terms of nationalities, interests, epistemologies, and methodologies, among many other factors. For a reader who wants a glimpse into the state of children and media violence in China, Flanders, Senegal, Togo, Tadjikistan, Trinidad, Tobago, and many other countries, this can be a very useful compendium. This should not be taken to indicate that the contributors to this volume are from such diverse locales; in fact, for the 20 chapters for which authorship is attributed, nine are by European contributors, three are by Asian scholars, and three are by researchers based in the United States. However, the findings reported represent research conducted in a much wider array of countries. Contributing further to the book’s diversity, traditional social scientists share space with psychodynamic researchers, policy experts, and politicians. This is not always an asset in terms of the book’s quality, but it

adds spice to the stew and increases the size of the readership that will find portions of the volume to be of value to them.

Topics include the amount and nature of violence on the screen, media usage and behaviors, media criticism, traditional effects research, children's perceptions of violence, programming issues, normative data on adoption of various media, cross-national demographics on children, children's participation in media, and issues of regulation. A wide range of international and regional declarations and resolutions about children and media is included. Two very useful sections of statistical abstracts are included—one on media around the world, the other on various descriptors of the world's children. A concluding bibliography offers a sampling of research on children and television from around the globe.

One positive attribute of this volume is that every reader can expect to learn something. With such diverse content, even experienced media-violence scholars can glean nuggets of knowledge. Some chapters are inordinately valuable. For example, Groebel's chapter on "The UNESCO Global Study on Media Violence" presents a sampling of the results of a survey of 5,000 children age 12 years from 23 countries that represent a broad spectrum of development. Notable conclusions include that television dominates the lives of children around the globe, media violence is universal, and, despite many cultural differences, the basic patterns of media-violence effects are similar around the world.

Not all chapters are as meritorious as this one. In fact, a gratuitous revelation many readers will garner from this international collection is that the state of the science of media-violence research and the state of regulatory deliberations vary greatly from country to country. The editors obviously opted for an egalitarian approach to gatekeeping. Whereas this may provide valuable insights regarding the relative degree of advancement of media-violence research from around the world, what necessarily results is a volume that is extremely uneven in quality. A sophisticated chapter is often juxtaposed between a modest offering and one that will seem naïve to experienced scholars.

Scholars who are on mailing lists for various reports from government agencies, foundations, and the like will find that a sizable amount of the material in this volume already has been provided to them from other sources. Unfortunately, this includes many of the better chapters in the volume. Moreover, some of the inclusions in sections with labels such as "Research Articles" stretch the common definitions of such terms.

An annoying feature of this volume is that considerable space is devoted to self-promotion and self-congratulation. The foreword and two prefaces, followed by three sections on UN and UNESCO agendas, easily could have been condensed into an introductory section of one-third as many pages.

Nevertheless, despite its several flaws, this is a volume that scholars concerned with media violence and its effects on children will find useful. Because of the considerable attention given to children's rights and regulatory issues, advocacy organizations also will find this to be a useful reference volume.

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DE LA AGRESION A LA GUERRA NUCLEAR: ROTBLAT, PUGWASH Y LA PAZ, by J. Martin Ramirez and Antonio Fernandez-Ranada. Oviedo, Spain, Ediciones Nobel, 451 pp.

Written as a homage to the Pugwash movement and to its president and the winner of the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize, Joseph Rotblat, this book provides an incisive view into the causes and manifestations of human aggression. Its authors, J. Martin Ramirez and Antonio Fernandez-Ranada, both professors at the University Complutense in Madrid, are authorities in the fields of aggression and war technology, respectively. They focus their discussion around the following questions: What is human nature? How does aggression develop? How do genetic, environmental, and cultural factors influence aggressive behavior? Also, the authors devote attention to what is arguably the most destructive and uniquely human form of aggression—nuclear war—and consider the current status of nuclear weapons, including their number, forms, history, and effects, as well as how they might be eliminated. Furthermore, the origin and development of movements within the scientific community in favor of disarmament are discussed, with a special focus on the Pugwash movement. The authors advocate the use of education as an essential ingredient of any anti-aggression campaign if it is to achieve any lasting effects toward peace.

The first of the book's three general sections deals with methodological and theoretical issues in research on aggression. The authors provide an operational definition of aggression to help remedy what they perceive to be the conceptual confusion existing previously; however, there are limitations to what they propose. Aggression here is "any type of observable behavior (passive or active) producing any type of negative consequence (psychological or physical) on an animate or inanimate object." Absent from this definition is the notion of intentionality, which has been at the center of the controversy regarding the conceptualization of aggression in humans.

In this section, the authors also discuss the multidimensional nature of aggression, highlighting the various forms that can be distinguished based on differences in functions, motivations, and physiological processes. Specifically, a typology necessary for differentiating between animal and human aggression, between aggression and predation, between instrumental and hostile aggression, and between direct and indirect aggression is presented. A three-dimensional scheme for classifying aggression, which in our opinion is parsimonious, is endorsed. However, this type of classification scheme has been criticized by others as being too simplistic.

The authors advocate integrating the findings from various scientific disciplines to produce a complete and coherent picture of aggression. They urge the abandonment of what they perceive as the false dichotomy inherent in an obsolete nature vs. nurture polemic and offer instead a multifactorial model of causality in which the biological, environmental, and learned aspects of aggression are inextricably intertwined.

In the second section is a discussion of war, which is understood as a particular type of collective aggression—uniquely human and different from other forms of aggression. The evolution of nuclear weapons is traced, with particular attention given to the world wars and to the Manhattan Project. The biological effects of the radiation discharged by nuclear weapons are also discussed. A large portion of this section is devoted to the various movements within the scientific community in support of nuclear

disarmament as well as the problems associated with the dismantling of nuclear weapons. The Pugwash movement, especially its activities under Joseph Rotblat's leadership, are highlighted.

The final section is devoted to attainment of peace through educational efforts. The primary message is that human aggression, while grounded in biological processes, can be controlled. The authors argue that at the center of any effective program for controlling human aggression must lie global education efforts embracing a scientifically based understanding of aggression, including information as to its controllability. Such efforts highlight the nature of alternative nonaggressive behavioral strategies for resolving interpersonal conflicts. For the authors, the challenge is to tailor educational efforts so as to counter what the authors identify as erroneous beliefs regarding aggression (often drawn on to justify its use). Such efforts require a concerted effort from all segments of society, from family to major institutions and government. The authors' arguments are well-founded and eloquent, yet they are so general in nature that they do not easily translate into specific intervention programs.

The book ends with a reprinting of several important documents pertaining to aggression and nuclear war, including the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, the Seville Declaration, and Joseph Rotblat's acceptance speech for the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize.

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De La Agression a La Guerra Nuclear, by J. Martin Ramirez and Antonio Fernandez-Ranada, constitutes a homage to Joseph Rotblat, the Pugwash Movement, and the Nobel Peace Prize and was written just half a century after the first release of the atomic bomb. Accordingly, only the first 100 pages are not historical, i.e., are on the study of aggression, fortunately through plurifactorial transdisciplinarity.

So, the book deals overwhelmingly with the political, strategic, and military affairs that led to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing. Interesting enough, but not quite enough. Although it refers to Freud, Morris, and the Seville Statement—in which Ramirez participated along with Hinde, Simpson, Scott, and other International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA) members—it remains much more concerned with the Manhattan Project, Truman, treaties of nonproliferation, von Neumann, Mao Tse Tung, Fermi, and Stalin. Those interested in following institutional actions, and in ensuring that the events of 1945 will not happen again, will find a fine historical coverage: the Russell-Einstein and Franck manifestos, Project Baruch, the birth and attainments of Pugwash, and the International Association of Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

The first section deals, unhappily not in great depth, with the nature-nurture question;

the last section deals with the need for psychological education, on which Ramirez' professional activities are centered. Neither Descartes' *Treatise on the Passions of the Soul* nor Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* are used to explain Goya's painting on the "Dreams of Reason." That is, the very human interplay and feedback between qualitative and quantitative values are practically forgotten in research on aggression. There is an ample international bibliography, but, human that he is, Ramirez may overcite himself.

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