

Preface

Evolutionary Forensic Psychology is not a completely accurate title for this volume. It may suggest to some readers that the topics explored here are representative of a subdiscipline of the field of forensic psychology. This is not the case. Evolution by natural selection is the only known process capable of generating the complex adaptive mechanisms of the human mind. Because all psychological mechanisms owe their existence to evolutionary processes, there is no such thing as a nonevolutionary forensic psychology. All forensic psychology is inherently evolutionary, whether or not it is explicitly acknowledged. Our understanding of forensic psychology can benefit from knowledge of the causal processes that designed our psychological mechanisms.

The book is titled *Evolutionary Forensic Psychology* because the profoundly important insights that evolutionary perspectives provide are relatively new. This volume provides a critical introduction to the application of evolutionary perspectives to prominent issues in forensic psychology, exploring theories and research findings that will move the field of forensic psychology rapidly forward.

Forensic psychology encompasses a large and diverse range of issues. In constructing this volume, we sought contributions from experts on topics that are of the greatest relevance to the field. Each chapter demonstrates how evolutionary logic has enriched our understanding of topics and generated new hypotheses and research findings, progress that would not have occurred without the unique contribution of a Darwinian perspective.

Although most of the chapters explore the nature of psychological mechanisms that produce criminal behavior, an evolutionary perspective has the power to inform research across domains of forensic psychology. It can help us to differentiate between crimes resulting from psychopathology and those that are the product of cognitive adaptations functioning as they were designed to function. It can help us understand the origins and functions of cognitive adaptations that produce crime and the psychological mechanisms that generate the perception that some behaviors are criminal. An evolutionary perspective also can inform our understanding of why some crimes are considered to be worse than others, why some people are thought to deserve longer sentences than others who committed the same crime, and why

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sex differences are pervasive in the commission and perceptions of crime. Current and future forensic psychological research informed by an evolutionary perspective will have an impact on the prevention of crime, how laws are written and enforced, how clinical forensic psychologists and forensic psychiatrists evaluate criminals, the selection of juries and the methods of presenting information to them, and the kinds and structure of punishments in the penal system. The ultimate goal of this volume is much more ambitious than to provide information about how evolutionary theory can inform forensic psychology—we hope it will provide a spark that will ignite theoretical innovation and new programs of research.