

Preface

In April 2012, we invited dozens of scholars from around the USA to join us at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan for a day-long interdisciplinary conference on “The Evolution of Violence.” This conference followed a visit and lecture the day before by Steven Pinker on his recent book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. We invited as panelists some of the leading violence scholars from many different disciplines, including psychology, criminology, biology, anthropology, archeology, law, philosophy, and medicine. Each of these scholars had conducted and published significant and substantial work addressing violence from an evolutionary perspective. This volume showcases the groundbreaking empirical and theoretical work from several of these panelists and other distinguished conference guests.

Steve Pinker provides a thoughtful Foreward to the volume, setting the stage for the remaining chapters. Next, evolutionary psychologists David Buss and Joshua Duntley summarize some of their own and others research on intimate partner violence, guided by an evolutionary psychological perspective. A key contribution of this work is that there may be functional design in the atrocities men inflict on their intimate partners, to control women’s sexual behavior. In the next chapter, anthropologist Lawrence Keeley updates his classic book, *War Before Civilization* and provides insightful commentary on the changing state of the field of anthropology, which now includes thoughtful analyses of our warring evolutionary past, despite persistent efforts by others to maintain the fiction of the “noble, peaceful savage”. Literary scholar Joe Carroll presents an overview of the new field called “Darwinian literary analysis”, which he helped to create. In a stunningly original contribution, Carroll applies an evolutionary lens to violence in literatures of the past and present, showcasing the value of Darwin’s insights for securing a richer appreciation of core themes and characters in literature.

Legal scholar David Herring shines a brilliant evolutionary light on the law, with special consideration of child welfare laws. Herring is among a vanguard of lawyers at the forefront of a new field of legal scholarship, “Darwinian legal analysis.” Next, archeologist Steven LeBlanc trains a keen eye on what the archeological record tells us about our ancestral history of war, updating the groundbreaking analysis from his book, *Constant Battles*. In short, the archeological record clearly indicates that human history has been a series of constant battles. We are a warring

species, and the bones tell the tale in no uncertain terms. Evolutionary psychologists Carlos Navarrete and Melissa McDonald offer a clear and powerful summary of the value of applying Darwin's theory of sexual selection to the psychology of intergroup conflict, including violence and war. For a number of years, criminologist Kevin Beaver et al. have led the application of evolutionary principles to crime, and more recently they have been among just a handful of daring scholars attempting an integration of evolutionary psychology with behavioral genetics and criminology. The results of these efforts—as this chapter showcases—have pushed each of these fields into new intellectual territory and opened doors to exciting new interdisciplinary work.

Sibling conflict is ubiquitous among humans and extraordinarily common across many species. This conflict sometimes takes a deadly turn, with one sibling killing another. Evolutionary psychologists Catherine Salmon and Jessica Hehman offer a thoughtful evolutionary psychological analysis of this conflict and, in the process, provide a clear and compelling summary of historical and recent empirical and theoretical work in this interdisciplinary field. In the next chapter, David Bjorklund and Patricia Hawley make a strong case for the heuristic value of an evolutionary developmental perspective, especially as this perspective can shed light on the causes and consequences of human violence. Social psychologists Robin Vallacher and Christopher Brooks, in turn, make an equally compelling case for the empirical and theoretical harvest that might be won by careful integration of evolutionary psychology with dynamical systems theory. In the closing chapter, psychologists Catherine Cross and Anne Campbell provide a masterful summary of recent work—including some of their own brilliant contributions—addressing violence and aggression in women.

The Evolution of Violence showcases the intense intellectual value of an interdisciplinary approach to human psychology and behavior. Guided by Darwin's insights, the contributions to this volume provide a staggeringly compelling case for an evolutionary analysis of violence.

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