

Preface

Welcome to the “Advances in Psychology and Law” book series published by Springer. The idea for the series was born from the observation that there was no publication outlet dedicated to thorough reviews of existing research that can reveal policy implications and suggest important directions for future research. This series seeks to fill that gap. We quickly realized that one book could not reach this goal—a whole series was needed. We would like to thank Springer, and Sharon Panulla in particular, for helping make this vision a reality.

This book series is unique in its scope and purpose, in that it seeks to enhance understanding of the connections between these disciplines, present “state of the science” summaries for researchers, and provide a starting point for scholars wanting to delve into a new topic of study by reading an up-to-date review chapter on that topic. The series will include all areas of psychology (e.g., developmental, social, cognitive, clinical, neuroscience) and law (e.g., criminal, civil, contracts, property, family). Chapters will be primarily literature reviews or meta-analyses about particular topics that are relevant to psychology and law and are of current interest to the field. Authors will typically go into great depth to summarize research on one particular topic (rather than focusing on the entire body of research in an area) and will be encouraged to take calculated risks (e.g., engaging in informed speculation about future research or the consequences of particular legal policies). Volumes in the series will appear at roughly annual intervals.

In addition to the coeditors, the book series has an editorial board of distinguished scholars who are experts in various areas in psychology and law. The editorial board offers guidance about the development of topics and serves as expert reviewers.

This inaugural volume contains eight chapters, each focusing on a different topic within psychology and law. The first three chapters address pretrial issues. Specifically, Villalobos and Davis discuss how minority race suspects are at a distinct disadvantage during interrogation. Their vulnerabilities might make them susceptible to falsely confessing and being unfairly judged as guilty. The second chapter addressing pretrial issues is by Neuschatz and colleagues. They address the issue of showup identifications. The authors summarize research generally

indicating that showups are less reliable than lineups. The authors offer theoretical explanations and policy implications. Similarly, the third chapter, by Kocab and Sporer, addresses another issue related to identifications; specifically, they conduct a meta-analysis of the weapon focus effect. Results help the authors present practical recommendations for police and experts testifying in court.

The next three chapters deal with issues regarding trial procedures. First is a chapter by Alvarez, Miller, and Bornstein which reviews the law and psychology relevant to criminal jury instructions. Such instructions are given by judges to help juries make legally appropriate decisions, avoid bias, and prevent unjust outcomes. However, instructions are often ineffective and sometimes even counter-productive. The second chapter also deals with influences on jurors' decisions. Scurich's chapter on risk assessment reviews the literature regarding the effects of structured risk assessments on jurors' decisions. The author offers several psychological explanations for why jurors are generally insensitive to risk assessment information. The third chapter that deals with trial issues is written by Milojevich, Quas, and Yano. The authors discuss the experiences of children who are involved in legal proceedings. Participation in both criminal and civil proceedings can be detrimental to children's well-being; this chapter reviews the evidence and recommends ways to mitigate stress and facilitate coping.

The seventh chapter, by Mesler, Anderson, and Calkins, reviews the various legal policies that apply to sex offenders. The chapter addresses the faulty perceptions that underlie sex offender policies (e.g., housing restrictions) and how these perceptions have led to ineffective policies. They offer suggestions for reforming such policies. In the final chapter, Robbennolt and Hans present an overview of the ways that tort law interacts with psychology. This review discusses the various ways that psychological theory can inform several central issues and domains of civil law, including causation, contributory negligence, and tort damages.

As this preview of the chapters illustrates, the field of psychology and law encompasses a wide variety of diverse topics. These topics have a number of real-world consequences for suspects, offenders, witnesses, litigants, factfinders (e.g., juries and judges), and others. We hope that the series will be helpful to scholars and practitioners by providing broad overviews of many topics relevant to the intersection of psychology and law. To that end, we invite scholars to visit our website (<http://www.springer.com/series/11918>) and submit chapter ideas for future volumes to either of us (mkmiller@unr.edu or bbornstein2@unl.edu). We hope that the series will ultimately educate readers and inspire future scholarship.

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Advances in Psychology and Law

Volume 1

Miller, M.K.; Bornstein, B.H. (Eds.)

2016, XVII, 280 p. 9 illus., 1 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-29405-6