



# **The Myth of the Born Criminal: Psychopathy, Neurobiology, and the Creation of the Modern Degenerate**

*Jarkko Javala, Stephanie Griffiths, Michael Maraun*

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By some estimates, there are as many as twelve million psychopaths in the United States alone. Cold-blooded, remorseless, and strangely charismatic, they commit at least half of all serious and violent crimes. Supposedly, most serial killers are psychopaths, as, surprisingly, are large numbers of corporate executives. They seem to be an inescapable, and fascinating, threat in our midst.

But is psychopathy a brain disorder, as many scientists now claim? Or is it just a reflection of modern society's deepest fears? *The Myth of the Born Criminal* offers the first comprehensive critique of the concept of psychopathy from the eighteenth-century origins of the born-criminal theory to the latest neuroimaging, behavioural genetics, and statistical studies. Jarkko Jalava, Stephanie Griffiths, and Michael Maraun use their expertise in neuropsychology, psychometrics, and criminology to dispel the myth that psychopathy is a biologically-based condition. Deconstructing the emotive language with which both research scientists and reporters describe the psychopaths among us, they explain how the idea of psychopathy offers a comforting neurobiological solution to the mystery of evil.

A stunning merger of rigorous science and clear-sighted cultural analysis, *The Myth of the Born Criminal* is for anyone who wonders just what truth – or fiction – lurks behind the study of psychopathy.

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