# A Review of The Murderer Next Door by David Buss (2005)(review revised 2019)

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## ABSTRACT

Though this volume is a bit dated, there are few recent popular books dealing specifically with the psychology of murder and it's a quick overview available for a few dollars, so still well worth the effort. It makes no attempt to be comprehensive and is somewhat superficial in places, with the reader expected to fill in the blanks from his many other books and the vast literature on violence. For an update see e.g., Buss, The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology 2nd ed. V1 (2016) p 265, 266, 270–282, 388–389, 545–546, 547, 566 and Buss, Evolutionary Psychology 5th ed. (2015) p 26, 96–97,223, 293-4, 300, 309–312, 410 and Shackelford and Hansen, The Evolution of Violence (2014). He has been among the top evolutionary psychologists for several decades and covers a wide range of behavior in his works, but here he concentrates almost entirely on the psychological mechanisms that cause individual people to murder and their possible evolutionary function in the EEA (Environment of Evolutionary Adaptation—i.e., the plains of Africa during the last million years or so).

Buss starts by noting that as with other behaviors, 'alternative' explanations such as psychopathology, jealousy, social environment, group pressures, drugs and alcohol etc. do not really explain, since the question still remains as to why these produce homicidal impulses, i.e., they are the proximate causes and not the ultimate evolutionary (genetic) ones. As always, it inevitably boils down to inclusive fitness (kin selection), and so to the struggle for access to mates and resources, which is the ultimate explanation for all behavior in all organisms. Sociological data (and common sense) make it clear that younger poorer males are the most likely to kill. He presents his own and others homicide data from industrialized nations, and tribal cultures, conspecific killing in animals, archeology, FBI data and his own research into normal people's homicidal fantasies. Much archeological evidence continues to accumulate of murders, including that of whole groups, or of groups minus young females, in prehistoric times.

After surveying Buss's comments, I present a very brief summary of intentional psychology (the logical structure of rationality), which is covered extensively in my many other articles and books.

Those with a lot of time who want a detailed history of homicidal violence from an evolutionary perspective may consult Steven Pinker's 'The Better Angels of Our Nature Why Violence Has Declined'(2012), and my review of it, easily available on the net and in two of my recent books. Briefly, Pinker notes that murder has decreased steadily and dramatically by a factor of about 30 since our days as foragers. So, even though guns now make it extremely easy for anyone to kill, homicide is much less common. Pinker thinks this is due to various social mechanisms that bring out our 'better angels', but I think it's due mainly to the temporary abundance of resources from the merciless rape of our planet, coupled with increased police presence, with communication and surveillance and legal systems that make it far more likely to be punished. This becomes clear every time there is even a brief and local absence of the police.

Those wishing a comprehensive up to date framework for human behavior from the modern two systems view may consult my book 'The Logical Structure of Philosophy, Psychology, Mind and Language in Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Searle' 2nd ed (2019). Those interested in more of my writings may see 'Talking Monkeys--Philosophy, Psychology, Science, Religion and Politics on a Doomed Planet--Articles and Reviews 2006-2019 3rd ed (2019) and Suicidal Utopian Delusions in the 21st Century 4th ed (2019).

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On p 12 he notes that the war between each individual and the world over resources

begins at conception, when it begins growing by robbing its mother of food and stressing her body, and when her system fights back with frequently fatal consequences for the conceptus. He does not tell us that estimates of spontaneous abortion are in the range of up to about 30% of all conceptions, so that as many as 80 million a year die, most so early that the mother does not even know she is pregnant, and perhaps her period is a bit late. This is part of nature's eugenics which we have not succeeded in defeating, though the overall dysgenic effect of civilization continues and each day the approx. 300,000 who are born are on average just slightly less mentally a physically fit than the approx. 100,000 who die, with a net increase in world population of ca. 200,000 and an ever larger 'unfit' population to destroy the earth (while being partly or wholly supported by their 'fit' neighbors).

On p13 he says that we don't know for sure that OJ Simpson was guilty but I would say that regardless of the trial we do know he was, as it's the only reasonable interpretation of the facts of the case, which include his bizarre behavior. Also, in the subsequent civil trial, where his multimillion dollar defense attorneys were not present to subvert justice, he was quickly convicted, which led to the attachment of his assets, which led to his armed robbery conviction and imprisonment.

He notes on p20 that there were about 100 million known murders worldwide in the last 100 years, with maybe as many as 300 million if all the unreported were included. I don't think he counts the approx. 40 million by the Chinese Communist Party (which does not count the approx.. 60 million who starved), nor the ten of millions by Stalin. It is also to be kept in mind that America's murder rate is decreased by about 75% due to the world class medical system which saves most victims of attempts. I will add that Mexico has about 5X the murder rate of the USA and Honduras about 20X, and your descendants can certainly look forward to our rate moving in that direction due to America's fatal embrace of Diversity. Ann Coulter in 'Adios America' (2015) notes that Hispanics have committed about 23,000 murders here in the last few decades. For now, nothing will be done, and crime here will reach the levels in Mexico as the border continues to dissolve and environmental collapse and approaching bankruptcy dissolve the economy. Inside Mexico in 2014 alone, 100 U.S. citizens were known to have been murdered and more than 130 kidnapped and others just disappeared, and if you add other foreigners and Mexicans it runs into the thousands. See my 'Suicide by Democracy' 2nd ed (2019) for further details.

Even a tiny lightly traveled country like Honduras manages some 10 murders and 2 kidnappings a year of US citizens. And these are the best of times—it is getting

steadily worse as unrestrained motherhood and resource depletion bring collapse ever closer. In addition to continued increases in crime of all kinds we will see the percentage of crimes solved drop to the extremely low levels of the third world. More resources are devoted to the solution of murders than any other crime and about 65% are solved in the USA, but in Mexico less than 2% are solved and as you get further from Mexico City the rate drops to near zero. Also note that the rate here used to be about 80%, but it has dropped in parallel with the increase in the Diverse. Also 65% is the average but if you could get statistics I am sure it would rise with the percent of Euro's in a city and drop as the percent of Diverse increases. In Detroit (83% black) only 30% are solved. If you keep track of who robs, rapes and murders, it's obvious that black lives matter lots more to Euros (those of European descent) than they do to other blacks. These are my observations.

Throughout history women have been at a major disadvantage when it came to murdering, but with the ready availability of guns we would expect this to change, but on p22 we find that about 87% of USA murderers are men and for same sex killing this rises to 95% and is about the same worldwide. Clearly something in the male psyche encourages violence as a route to fitness that is largely absent in women. Also relevant is that murders by acquaintances are more common than those by strangers.

On p37 he notes that with high likelihood of conviction (and I would say the higher likelihood the intended victim or others will be armed), murder is now a more costly strategy than formerly, but I think this depends entirely on who you are. In a largely Euro USA city, or among middle and upper class people, over 95% of murders might be solved, but in lower class areas maybe 20% might be, and for gang dominated areas even less than that. And in 3rd world countries the chances of justice are even lower, especially when committed by gang members, so it is a highly viable strategy, especially if planned ahead of time.

Next, he deals with violence and murder as a part of mating strategies, which they have clearly been throughout our evolution, and remain so especially among the lower classes and in third world countries. He notes the frequent murder of wives or lovers by men during or after breakups. He comments in passing on mate selection and infidelity, but there is minimal discussion as these topics are treated in great detail in his other writings and edited volumes. It is now well known that women tend to have affairs with sexy men that they would not select as a permanent partner (the sexy son theory) and to mate with them on their most fertile days. All these phenomena are viewed from an evolutionary perspective (i.e., what would the fitness advantage have been formerly).

There is very strong selection for behaviors that prevent a man from raising children fathered by someone else for the same reasons that 'group selection' is strongly selected against (see my essay on group selection 'Altruism, Jesus and the End of the World…'). However modern life provides ample opportunities for affairs, and genetic studies have shown that a high percentage of children are fathered by other than the putative partner of their mother, with the percentage increasing from a few percent to as much as 30% as one descends from upper to lower classes in various modern Western countries at various periods and undoubtedly higher than that in many 3rd world countries. In his book Sperm Wars: The Science of Sex (2006) Robin Baker summarizes: 'Actual figures range from 1 percent in high-status areas of the United States and Switzerland, to 5 to 6 percent for moderate-status males in the United States and Great Britain, to 10 to 30 percent for lower-status males in the United States, Great Britain and France'. One might suppose that in societies where both men and women are highly concentrated in cities and have mobile phones, this percentage is rising, especially in the third world where use of birth control and abortion is erratic.

He finds that most men and women who murder their mates are young and the younger their mates are, the more likely they will be murdered. Like all behavior, this is hard to explain without an evolutionary perspective. One study found men in their 40's constituted 23% of mate murderers but men in their 50's only 7.7%, and 79% of female mate killers were between 16 and 39. It makes sense that the younger they are, the bigger the potential fitness loss to the male (decreased reproduction) and so the more intense the emotional response. As Buss puts it: "From Australia to Zimbabwe, the younger the woman, the higher the likelihood that she will be killed as a result of a sexual infidelity or leaving a romantic relationship. Women in the 15 to 24 year old bracket are at the greatest risk." A high percentage are killed within two months of separation and most in the first year. One study found that 88% of them had been stalked prior to being killed. In some chapters there are quotes from people giving their feelings about their unfaithful mates and these typically include homicidal fantasies, which were more intense and went on for longer periods for men than for women.

He devotes some time to the increased risk of abuse and murder from having a stepparent with e.g., the risk to a girl of rape increasing about 10X if her father is a stepfather. It is now very well known that in a wide range of mammals, a new male encountering a female with young will attempt to kill them. One USA study found that if one or both parents are surrogates, this raises the child's chance of being murdered in the home between 40 and 100X (p174). A Canadian study found the

beating death rate rose by 27X if one parent in a registered marriage was a stepparent while it rose over 200X if the surrogate was a live-in boyfriend. Child abuse rates in Canada rose 40X when there was a stepparent.

In humans, being without resources is a strong stimulus for women to eliminate their existing children in order to attract a new mate. A Canadian study found that even though single women were only 12% of all mothers, they committed over 50% of infanticides (p169). Since younger women lose less fitness from an infant death than older ones, it is not surprising that a cross-cultural study found that teenagers killed their infants at rates about 30X that of women in their twenties (p170).

He then briefly discusses serial killers and serial rapists, the most successful of all time being the Mongols of Genghis Khan, whose Y chromosomes are represented in about 8% of all the men in the territories they controlled, or some 20 million men (and an equal number of women) or about half a percent of all the people on earth, which makes them easily the most genetically fit of all the people who have ever lived in historical times.

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Others also take the view that we have a 'nice side' that is genetically innate and supports the favorable treatment of even those not closely related to us ('group selection'). This is hopelessly confused and I have done my small part to lay it to rest in 'Altruism, Jesus and the End of the World—how the Templeton Foundation bought a Harvard Professorship and attacked Evolution, Rationality and Civilization. A review of E.O. Wilson 'The Social Conquest of Earth' (2012) and Nowak and Highfield 'SuperCooperators'(2012)'.

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I now present a very brief summary of intentional psychology (the logical structure of rationality) which is covered extensively in my many other articles and books. Impulsive violence will involve the automated subcortical functions of System 1, but is sometimes deliberated upon ahead of time via cortical System 2.

About a million years ago primates evolved the ability to use their throat muscles to make complex series of noises (i.e., speech) that by about 100,000 years ago had evolved to describe present events (perceptions, memory, reflexive actions with basic utterances that can be described as Primary Language Games (PLG's) describing System 1—i.e., the fast unconscious automated System One, true-only mental states with a precise time and location). We gradually developed the further ability to encompass displacements in space and time to describe memories, attitudes and potential events (the past and future and often counterfactual, conditional or fictional preferences, inclinations or dispositions) with the Secondary Language Games (SLG's) of System Two- slow conscious true or false propositional attitudinal thinking, which has no precise time and are abilities and not mental states. Preferences are Intuitions, Tendencies, Automatic Ontological Rules, Behaviors, Abilities, Cognitive Modules, Personality Traits, Templates, Inference

Engines, Inclinations, Emotions, Propositional Attitudes, Appraisals, Capacities, Hypotheses.

Emotions are Type 2 Preferences (Wittgenstein RPP2 p148). "I believe", "he loves", "they think" are descriptions of possible public acts typically displaced in spacetime. My first-person statements about myself are true-only (excluding lying), while third person statements about others are true or false (see my review of Johnston - 'Wittgenstein: Rethinking the Inner').

Now that we have a reasonable start on the Logical Structure of Rationality (the Descriptive Psychology of Higher Order Thought) laid out, we can look at the table of Intentionality that results from this work, which I have constructed over the last few years. It is based on a much simpler one from Searle, which in turn owes much to Wittgenstein. I have also incorporated in modified form tables being used by current researchers in the psychology of thinking processes which are evidenced in the last 9 rows. It should prove interesting to compare it with those in Peter Hacker's 3 recent volumes on Human Nature. I offer this table as an heuristic for describing behavior that I find more complete and useful than any other framework I have seen and not as a final or complete analysis, which would have to be three dimensional with hundreds (at least) of arrows going in many directions with many (perhaps all) pathways between S1 and S2 being bidirectional. Also, the very distinction between S1 and S2, cognition and willing, perception and memory, between feeling, knowing, believing and expecting etc. are arbitrary--that is, as W demonstrated, all words are contextually sensitive and most have several utterly different uses (meanings or COS).

INTENTIONALITY can be viewed as personality or as the Construction of Social Reality (the title of Searle's well known book) and from many other viewpoints as well.

Beginning with the pioneering work of Ludwig Wittgenstein in the 1930's (the Blue and Brown Books) and from the 50's to the present by his successors Searle, Moyal-Sharrock, Read, Baker, Hacker, Stern, Horwich, Winch, Finkelstein, Coliva etc., I have created the following table as an heuristic for furthering this study. The rows show various aspects or ways of studying and the columns show the involuntary processes and voluntary behaviors comprising the two systems (dual processes) of the Logical Structure of Consciousness (LSC), which can also be regarded as the Logical Structure of Rationality (LSR), of behavior (LSB), of personality (LSP), of Mind (LSM), of language (LSL), of reality (LSOR), of Intentionality (LSI) -the classical philosophical term, the Descriptive Psychology of Consciousness (DPC) ,

the Descriptive Psychology of Thought (DPT) –or better, the Language of the Descriptive Psychology of Thought (LDPT), terms introduced here and in my other very recent writings.

I suggest we can describe behavior more clearly by changing Searle's "impose conditions of satisfaction on conditions of satisfaction" to "relate mental states to the world by moving muscles"—i.e., talking, writing and doing, and his "mind to world direction of fit" and "world to mind direction of fit" by "cause originates in the mind" and "cause originates in the world"   S1 is only upwardly causal (world to mind) and contentless (lacking representations or information) while S2 has content and is downwardly causal (mind to world). I have adopted my terminology in this table.

I have made detailed explanations of this table in my other writings.

| | Disposition* | Emotion | Memory | Perception | Desire | PI** | IA*** | Action/ Word |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cause Originates From**** | World | World | World | World | Mind | Mind | Mind | Mind |
| Causes Changes In***** | None | Mind | Mind | Mind | None | World | World | World |
| Causally Self Reflexive****** | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| True or False (Testable) | Yes | T only | T only | T only | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Public Conditions of Satisfaction | Yes | Yes/No | Yes/No | No | Yes/No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Describe A Mental State | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes/No | Yes |
| Evolutionary Priority | 5 | 4 | 2,3 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Voluntary Content | Yes | No | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Voluntary Initiation | Yes/No | No | Yes | No | Yes/No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cognitive System ******* | 2 | 1 | 2/1 | 1 | 2 / 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Change Intensity | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No |
| Precise Duration | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| Time, Place (H+N, T+T) ******** | TT | HN | HN | HN | TT | TT | HN | HN |
| Special Quality | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| Localized in Body | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| Bodily Expressions | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Self Contradictions | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | No | No |
| Needs a Self | Yes | Yes/No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No |
| Needs Language | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | Yes/No |

FROM DECISION RESEARCH

| | Disposition* | Emotion | Memory | Perception | Desire | PI** | IA*** | Action/Word |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subliminal Effects | No | Yes/No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes/No |
| Associative/Rule Based | RB | A/RB | A | A | A/RB | RB | RB | RB |
| Context Dependent/Abstract | A | CD/A | CD | CD | CD/A | A | CD/A | CD/A |
| Serial/Parallel | S | S/P | P | P | S/P | S | S | S |
| Heuristic/Analytic | A | H/A | H | H | H/A | A | A | A |
| Needs Working Memory | Yes | No | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| General Intelligence Dependent | Yes | No | No | No | Yes/No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cognitive Loading Inhibits | Yes | Yes/No | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Arousal Facilitates or Inhibits | I | F/I | F | F | I | I | I | I |

\* Aka Inclinations, Capabilities, Preferences, Representations, possible actions etc.

\*\* Searle's Prior Intentions

\*\*\* Searle's Intention In Action

\*\*\*\* Searle's Direction of Fit

\*\*\*\*\* Searle's Direction of Causation

\*\*\*\*\*\* (Mental State instantiates--Causes or Fulfills Itself). Searle formerly called this causally self- referential.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Tversky/Kahneman/Frederick/Evans/Stanovich defined cognitive systems.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*  Here and Now or There and Then

A detailed explanation of this table is given in my other writings.

One should always keep in mind Wittgenstein's discovery that after we have described the possible uses (meanings, truthmakers, Conditions of Satisfaction) of

language in a particular context, we have exhausted its interest, and attempts at explanation (i.e., philosophy) only get us further away from the truth. It is critical to note that this table is only a highly simplified context-free heuristic and each use of a word must be examined in its context. The best examination of context variation is in Peter Hacker's recent 3 volumes on Human Nature, which provide numerous tables and charts that should be compared with this one.