

## Using the Radford Serial Killer Database to Monitor Trends in Serial Murder

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## Radford Serial Killer Data Base

- Currently has 2,162 serial killers
  - 1,294 from the U.S.
  - 868 from other countries
- Began with student serial killer timelines
- 17 years of data collection
- Goals
  - Provide accurate information to the public
  - Potentially assist law enforcement using statistical profiling models

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## Creating the Database

- Compiling names of serial killers
  - What is a serial killer?
    - 2 or more victims (this is a change in definition)
    - 2 separate events
    - Cooling off period in between
  - Determine whether person is actually a serial killer or a
    - Spree killer
    - Mass killer
    - None of the above
  - Issues
    - What to do with people who have killed twice and clearly would have killed again had they not been caught?
    - What about a person with two kills and nine attempts?

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## Creating the Database

- Gathering Information
  - Sources
    - True-crime books
    - Newspaper articles
    - On-line prison records
    - Court documents
    - Internet sites
  - Issues
    - Accuracy of information
    - Availability of information

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## Creating the Database

- Gathering Information
  - Information Obtained (141 variables)
    - Demographics (age, sex, race, country, state, city)
    - Childhood info
      - Birth order, raised by, teased, abused
    - Education and IQ
    - Vocational and military history
    - Criminal and forensic record
    - Information about the crime
      - Method, victim, location, partner
    - Information about the trial
      - NRGI, sentence, confession,

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## Classifying the Killers

- Motive
  - Financial, thrill, power, revenge, anger, convenience
- Victim
  - Age, sex, race
  - High risk vs. low risk
  - Acquaintance vs. stranger
- Location (e.g., home invasion, street, hospital)
- Method
  - Strangle, bludgeon, shoot, stab, suffocate, poison

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## Classifying the Killers

- Kills family
  - Black widow (financial gain)
  - Bluebeard (power)
  - Attention (Munchhausen by proxy)
- Kills patients or other dependents
  - Angel of death (power)
  - Lethal caretakers (financial gain)
  - Baby farmers (financial gain)

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## Classifying the Killers

- Home invasion
  - Rape or no sex
  - Robbery or just killing
  - Age of victim (elderly, family, adult female)
  - Type of weapon used
  - Torture?
  - Overkill or mutilation?
  - Staging, posing, totems?

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## What Have We Learned so Far?

- Update of Previous Presentations
  - Profile of white, male, mid to late 20s is accurate only 16.5% of the time
  - Race of U.S serial killers generally mirrored the census but this has changed
  - Men are more likely to commit homicide, but once they have killed, women are as likely as men to kill again
  - Median IQ of serial killers is 100
    - Lower for rape, using hands to kill, overkill
    - Higher for using bombs and shooting

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## Age of Serial Killers

- Age at the start of the series
- Potential problems
  - Should we use age at first kill rather than first kill in series?
    - 6% killed prior to the start of the series
  - Should we use age at first attempted murder
  - Many of the older serial killers spent time in prison prior to their series
- Simple descriptive statistics
  - Mean = 29.06 (SD = 9.29)
  - Median = 28
  - Youngest = 11 (Mary Flora Bell, Kody Scott)
  - Oldest = 72 (Ray Copeland)
- Only 29% actually fall into their mid-to-late 20's (23 – 29)

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## Family Comparison

	Serial Killers	U.S. Population*
Birth parent/s	80.13%	87.4%
Adopted	7.34%	2.2%
Relative	6.70%	8.3%
Foster home	3.67%	0.4%
Orphanage	1.30%	?
Abandoned	0.86%	?
Other		1.7%
	N =463	2000 Census

\*O'Hare (2008; Table 2)

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## Trends

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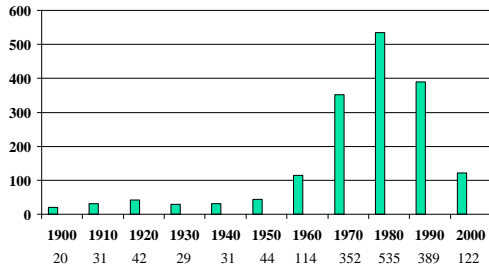
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### U.S. Serial Killers by Decade (All decades of activity)




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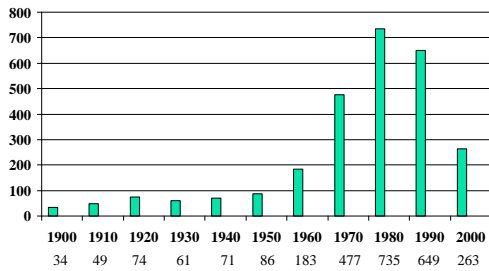
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### All Serial Killers by Decade (All decades of activity)




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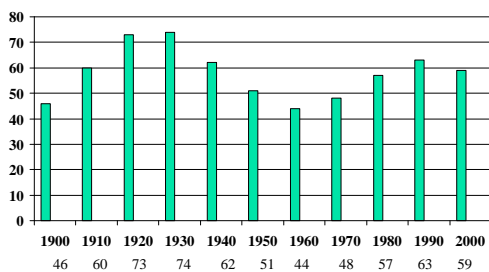
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### Percentage of Serial Killers from the U.S.




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### Why the Decline?

- Longer prison sentences
- Better law enforcement
- Dr. Phil has made the world a better place

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### Serial Killing is a White Thing 1980-2009

	Serial Killers	1980, 1990, 2000 Census
White	58.94%	74.40%
Black	32.12%	11.95%
Hispanic	6.70%	9.55%
Asian	1.12%	2.81%
Native Am.	0.70%	
Unknown	0.42%	

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### Racial Changes Across Time U.S. Serial Killers

Decade	White	Black	Hisp	Asian	N
2000	39.0%	58.5%	1.2%	1.2%	82
1990	59.4%	32.0%	6.6%	1.6%	256
1980	63.5%	26.7%	8.0%	0.8%	375
1970	73.4%	21.5%	3.8%	0.7%	293
1960	80.6%	18.3%	1.1%		93
1950	96.8%	3.2%			31
1940	81.0%	9.5%	4.8%		21
1930	76.5%	23.5%			17

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## Gender Changes Across Time

### U.S. Serial Killers

Decade	Men	Women	N
2000	92.3%	7.7%	82
1990	92.7%	7.3%	259
1980	90.0%	10.0%	380
1970	92.8%	7.2%	293
1960	89.4%	10.6%	94
1950	87.1%	12.9%	31
1940	81.0%	9.5%	21
1930	82.4%	17.6%	17

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### Types of Serial Killer

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### Broad motives (1,669 profiles)

Broad Motive	%
Enjoyment (thrill, lust, power)	56.5
Financial gain	27.7
Anger	11.0
Cult activity	1.4
Attention	1.0
Gang activity	1.0
Hallucinations	0.8
Convenience	0.4
Avoid arrest	0.4

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## Broad motive trends

- Compared to the 1950s and earlier
  - Financial motives less common
  - Enjoyment motives more common
  - Gang activity slightly higher

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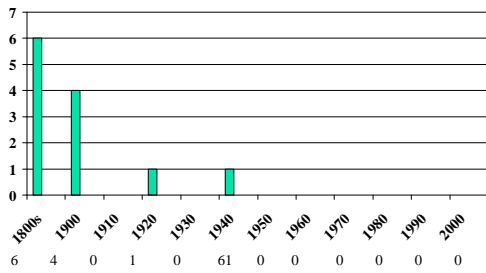
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## Body Farmers



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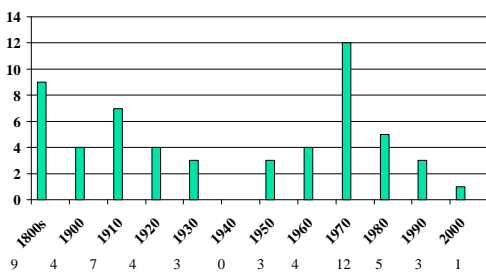
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## Black Widows



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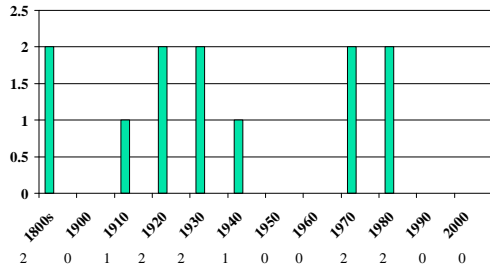
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## Lethal Caretakers



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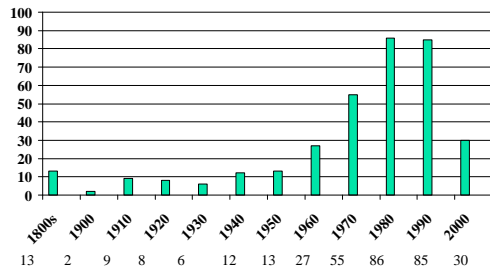
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## Robbery



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## Next Steps

- Continue to collect and verify data
- Finish classification system and apply to serial killers in the database
- Continue other analyses
- Publish (book? Internet? Journal?)

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## Contact Information

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## Profile Differences in Serial Killers who Kill Twice Versus Three or More times

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## Definition of a Serial Killer

- Had been 3 or more murders with 3 or more events
  - Protection of Children from Sexual Predator Act of 1998
- FBI symposium in 2005 (San Antonio, TX)
  - Definition changed to 2 or more murder with 2 or more separate events
  - No longer separated spree from serial killers

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## Method

- 1,272 U.S. serial killers
  - Limited to U.S. due to the underreporting of two murders thought to exist in media coverage of crime in other countries
- Compared those that killed twice with those that killed more than twice
  - 227 who killed twice
  - 1,045 who killed more than twice (median = 5 kills)
- Sample sizes will vary across comparisons due to missing information

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## Determining Number of Kills

- Suspected
- Confessed
  - Consistent with other evidence
  - Not consistent with other evidence
- Convicted
  - Charged in all crimes?
  - Confessions of other crimes after conviction

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## Demographic Comparison

	3+ Murders	Two Murders
Male	89.13%	89.29%
White	66.92%	73.87%
Black	26.63%	20.72%
Hispanic	5.19%	4.05%
Asian	0.77%	0.45%
Native American	0.48%	0.90%

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## Age Comparison (time of first murder)

	3+ Murders	Two Murders
Mid to late 20s	20.08%	28.24%
Mean Age	28.55	27.58
Median Age	28.00	26.00

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## Motive Comparison

	3+ Murders	Two Murders
Financial Gain	25.23%	38.42%
Attention	1.03%	1.48%
Enjoyment	58.29%	39.41%
Anger	11.53%	11.82%
Visionary	0.09%	1.48%
Other	3.83%	7.39%

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## Method of Kill

	3+ Murders	Two Murders
Gun/Poison/Bomb	50.63%	42.45%
Strangle/Stab/Bludgeon	49.37%	57.55%

$\chi^2 = 0.83, p = .36$

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## Duration of Killing

	3+ Murders	Two Murders
1 Calendar Year	50%	58%
2-5 Calendar Years	76%	73%
6-10 Calendar Years	87%	84%

Data are in cumulative percentage

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## Triad Comparison

	3+ Murders	Two Murders
Bed Wetting	18%	16%
Fire Starting	23%	11%
Animal Torture	36%	36%
Maximum n	189	11

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## What Might This All Mean?

- The FBI Was Correct!!!
- Bring on the Hula Dancers

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