Profiling the Age of Serial Killers

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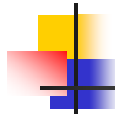# Radford Serial Killer Data Base

- Currently has 2,006 serial killers
  - 1,201 from the U.S.
  - 805 from other countries
- Began with student serial killer timelines
- 15 years of data collection
- Goals
  - Provide accurate information to the public
  - Potentially assist law enforcement using statistical profiling models

Creating the Database

- Compiling names of serial killers
  - What is a serial killer?
    - 3 or more victims
    - 3 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?

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

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,

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

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)
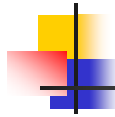 - Baby farmers (financial gain)

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?

What Have We Learned so Far?

- Last year at SPCP
  - Profile of white, male, mid to late 20s is accurate only 18% of the time
  - Race of U.S serial killers mirrors census
  - 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 103
    - Lower for rape, using hands to kill, overkill
    - Higher for using bombs and shooting

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 = 28.8 (SD = 9.27)
  - Median = 27
  - Youngest = 11 (Mary Flora Bell, Kody Scott)
  - Oldest = 72 (Ray Copeland)
- Only 29% actually fall into their mid-to-late 20's (23 – 29)

Age Distribution of Serial Killers

Age	N	%
Under 20	211	14.5
20's	658	45.3
30's	393	27.0
40's	155	10.7
50's	33	2.3
60's	8	0.5
70's	1	0.1

Can we predict age?

- Basically, no
- Very few significant relationships
  - Even the significant ones were very small
- Best regression model was three years more accurate than guessing the mean
  - Statistically significant
  - Useless from a practical standpoint
- Currently looking at victim type and motive
  - Shows some promise, but…

Older serial killers

- More likely to
  - Have a higher IQ
  - have been in the military
  - be married
  - have been arrested and spent time in prison
  - take a totem from the crime scene
  - kill an adult
- Less likely to
  - have a brain abnormality
  - have tortured animals
  - have been sexually abused
  - leave the body unhidden and unmoved

Age & Victim Type (in progress)

Victim Type	N	Mean
Child care	10	35.00
Street people (e.g., homeless, prostitutes)	107	32.59
Family members	88	30.92
Criminals (e.g., drug dealers)	42	30.83
Home invasion	159	26.97
Employees/customers	17	24.94

Age and killer motive (in progress)

Motive	N	Mean Age
Gang member	11	21.82
Anger – Racial	27	24.07
Attention – Munchausen by proxy	14	24.50
Anger – General anger or jealousy	40	24.88
Gain – Robbery	227	27.04
Enjoyment – lust & thrill killers	553	28.50
Anger – Missionary	23	29.09
Mental illness – Visionary	15	29.93
Power – Angel of Death	50	30.02
Anger – Revenge	31	31.45
Gain – Other (e.g., black widow, baby farmer)	91	34.58
Power – Bluebeard	21	36.14

Next Steps

- Continue to collect and verify data
- Finish classification system and apply to serial killers in the database
- Run regression analyses to determine if we can narrow age range of an unknown suspect
- Continue other analyses
- Publish (book? Internet? Journal?)

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