The Use and Effectiveness of the Insanity Plea by Serial Killers
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1. Abstract
Over the past 15 years, we have gathered information about serial killers. The result of this effort is the Radford Serial Killer Database, a database containing information on 1,737 serial killers worldwide. Our goal is to use this dataset to provide empirical answers to questions regarding serial murder. This poster presents the answers to three of those questions:
(1) With what frequency do serial killers plead Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity?
(2) How successful are these pleas?
(3) How do these frequencies and success rates compare to those found in other types of crimes?

2. Developing the Database

Find information about individual serial killers
- Prison records
- Trial transcripts
- True crime books
- Media reports
- Internet sources

Use multiple sources to verify information

Develop Radford Serial Killer Database
- 15 years of data collection
- Information on 1,737 serial killers
  - Demographics and life history
  - Details about the crime
  - Sentencing details

Develop serial killer profile and subtypes

Determine if victim and crime scene info provide insight into serial killer demographics

3. Definition of Insanity

“Insanity” is a legal rather than a psychological term.

For a person to be found not guilty by reason of insanity (NGRI), they must be found to have a mental disease or defect, and as a result of that defect, demonstrate one of the following (varies by state):
- They didn’t know what they were doing
- They didn’t know what they were doing was wrong
- They were unable to control their behavior

There are Four Common Insanity Standards
- McNaughten Rule
  - There is an interesting story regarding the spelling of Daniel McNaughten’s name
- New Hampshire Rule
- American Law Institute
  - Used for federal cases
  - Eliminated volitional aspect
  - Prohibited experts from giving opinions on defendant’s sanity
  - Placed the burden of proof on the defendant

4. Frequency of Insanity

Information on use of NGRI plea available for
- 474 serial killers in the United States
  - 85 plead NGRI
  - 15 were successful
- 201 serial killers in other countries
  - 26 plead NGRI
  - 7 were successful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial Killers</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% pleading NGRI</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>% found NGRI</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Criminals

| % pleading NGRI | 1% |
| % found NGRI | 25% |

Conclusion
- Serial killers more likely to plead NGRI
- Serial killers less likely to be successful

Future Analysis
- Continue to gather data
- Percentages likely to change (lower) as more data are collected
- Compare individual countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Serial Killers Found NGRI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herbert Arnold</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Bischoff</td>
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<td>John Casablanca</td>
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<td>Edward Gein</td>
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<td>Janice Lou Gibbs</td>
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<td>William Hanson</td>
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<td>Steven Hurd</td>
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<td>Fredrick Mors</td>
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Society for Police and Criminal Psychology ● September 27, 2007 ● Springfield, MA