

Andrea Yates was found Not Guilty By Reason of Insanity (NGBRI) for killing her five children. The M'Naughten test is used in Texas. This is the traditional and most popular rule, known as the knowledge or cognition test.

The defendant has a diseased mind which causes a defect of reason, such that when the defendant acted he either didn't know his act was wrong or he didn't understand the nature and quality of his actions [only one is needed] (Singer & La Fond, 2010, p. 516).

“Yates was seriously mentally ill when she drowned her children in the bathtub of her Houston-area home. Her illness dramatically affected how she perceived this horrific act. Almost certainly, she psychotically believed that her children would suffer eternal damnation unless she quickly ended their young lives. Her belief that she was ensuring her children's salvation prevented her from having a meaningful appreciation of just how incredibly morally wrong her actions actually were” (Castro, 2005, para. 3).

Yates was found guilty of murder in her first trial, yet an appeal overturned the conviction due to false testimony by a state expert witness. The second jury found that Yates met the elements of the M'Naughten test and she was found NGBRI. Yates currently resides in a low security mental hospital in Kerrville, Texas.

References:

Castro, L. (2005, November 18). *Dix: Texas needs to change how it defines insanity*. Retrieved from http://www.utexas.edu/law/news/2005/111805_dix.html.

Singer, R. & La Fond, J. (2010). *Criminal law* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Wolters Kluwer.