



CENTER *for* HOMICIDE RESEARCH

Progress Report 2014

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2013-14 Accomplishments

Currently in our 15th year, the Center for Homicide Research continues to support our mission, promoting greater knowledge and understanding of the unique nature of homicide through sound empirical research, critical analysis, and effective community partnerships.

With the help of your donations in 2013-2014, the Center for Homicide Research was able to:

- **Compose 350 pages of scholarship**
- **Train 160 homicide and violent-crime investigators**
- **Train and mentor 90 students in our Internship Academy**
- **Provide case assistance to 28 law enforcement investigators**
- **Partner with the “Have You Seen Us” website, providing them raw data on endangered missing persons**
- **Provide webhosting to 103 U.S. serial and sex homicide researchers and investigators**
- **Update software on 9 computer work stations**

These advancements would not have been possible without your help, and your generous contributions ensure that the Center for Homicide Research is able to continue our important work.

The Center’s research can be used to educate community members and advocacy workers about the characteristics of homicide, so that prevention strategies can be developed. Homicide is preventable, and you make this work possible!

Sincerely,

Dallas Drake, Executive Director

Female-Intimates Body Disposal Intelligence Project

A long-standing mission at the Center for Homicide Research has been the investigation of missing victim homicides. This evolved, in part, out of the search for LGBT homicide cases which had long been hidden. In addition, a large portion of LGBT homicides also involves a delayed discovery of the crime scene.

In 2013, several young women from the local area went missing under suspicious circumstances, including Kira Trevino of St. Paul, MN. In each of these cases their husbands and boyfriends were quickly arrested, yet the remains of these women were difficult to find. This led to extended grief for the families and infused fear into the entire community. It also buoyed the suspected offender, thinking he might get away with it if only the body were never found.

Center researchers responded by collecting 150 cases similar in demographics to that of Trevino, including wives, ex-wives, estranged wives, girlfriends, ex-girlfriends, estranged girlfriends, and partners. All victims were female and all offenders were male. The resulting analysis, including spatial mapping, provided a detailed account of how to construct a probability search area. No matter how hard offenders try, their actions, which result from complex social behaviors, will always be patterned; and therefore will always be predictable.

The results of this project included two research reports for law-enforcement. Lead researcher, Dallas Drake said, “If these men knew what we know, they would likely try to vary their disposal patterns.” Therefore, the Center’s reports are “law-enforcement sensitive,” meaning that only law enforcement can access these reports.

Preventing LGBT Homicide, Equality vs. Justice

Equality is sweeping across the United States for LGBT people. Marriage discrimination is being struck down, state-by-state. More and more corporations are offering benefits to gay couples, and even transgender people are experiencing unparalleled bouts of political success. But, how is this impacting the public health of LGBT people...especially with respect to homicide victimization?

While long-term trends are difficult to assess, LGBT homicide cases continue to pour into the Center's databases. Lead researcher Dallas Drake says that, "the problem is not so much the achievement of equality, but the attainment of justice." In Drake's chapter in a forthcoming book to be published by Taylor & Francis in September 2014, he outlines an intrinsic part of the LGBT homicide problem --that of income inequality.

Drake says that, "It is well-documented by the Williams Institute and others that Gay Affluence is a myth." He further says that "one unfamiliar feature of violence is that, according to Johnson and Ferraro (2000), some kinds of violence actually helps produce poverty."

It is fairly easy to see the economic impacts a homicide might bring. Funerals and burials are no less expensive than in the past. Survivors, when they have difficulty working due to despair and depression, can lead to loss of their job. Unresolved grief can increase the frequency and intensity of medical conditions and their associated costs.

Drake continues saying, "All these have a trickle-down effect leading to less revenue for education and social services." The stress and deficit of economic constraints is artfully interwoven to produce the triggers of violence. Wealth in the form of economic power helps build human rights. 

Field Epidemiology: Homicide in North Minneapolis

The origin of the first homicide cluster in North Minneapolis dates back to the early 1960s. This finding, discovered through an epidemiological research approach called field epidemiology.

There is general agreement that homicide is an epidemic, both on a broad scale and within specific communities. The term "epidemic" means there is an

elevated and sustained level of whatever is under study. Since lethal violence first became viewed as a public health problem, Center researchers began applying principles of epidemiology, a method commonly used in public health research. They used this to identify an original cluster of homicides in North Minneapolis. The application of this new tool to investigate an old problem allowed the Center to focus in on the area's first cluster, occurring in July of 1961.

Researchers were then able to identify the next twenty cases for closer analysis. They will build on this information to explore how cases at the origin may be connected, one to another. Identifying these linkages might be a key to preventing future homicides. There is still much more work to be done now that the initial phase of identifying the original cluster is complete.

One early discovery is about the role family violence played in the development of the homicide problem. Thirty-five percent of killings were of intimate-partners, both male and female perpetrators. In addition, justifiable homicides (self-defense) scattered neatly into one cluster revealing an exacerbation of the violence problem.

Typically citizens are caught off-guard when violence erupts, but justifiable homicides show that violence had elevated to the point where people were mentally predisposed to defend themselves --readiness. What researchers found was a cluster of justifiable homicides within the incipient development of the overall homicide problem, but also just preceding the civil unrest of the 1966 & 1967 period.

Going back to the past will aid in a better understanding of events today. Tracking the origin and formation of a cluster helps expose how homicides spread one to another. It also may hold key insights into how homicide can be prevented. While debate rages about the causes of homicide, to date no single factor has definitively been tied to the development of a homicide problem. Homicide, although it impacts poor and disadvantaged persons more often, also occurs occasionally within the wealthy class, a fact that discounts poverty as a causative agent. 

Have You Seen Us?

Center intern Chuck Lee is the author of a blog to help find missing people and solve cold-case homicides. His work transforms information into a user-friendly format. It also synthesizes the many parts of each story to make them more understandable. Center staff are helping identify cases to publish. URL is: www.manyremember.blogspot.com/. 

Intern Profile: Kayla Vogel

Kayla Vogel came to the Center as a junior at the University of Minnesota in October of 2012. Originally from Sturgeon Bay, WI, Vogel majors in Sociology: Law, Crime and Deviance, and also in Psychology. She will be graduating this spring.



Vogel's quiet demeanor should not be mistaken for lack of interest in homicide. Her specialty at the Center rests on LGBT dismemberment cases. Dismemberment has been part of the research agenda for over six years, but with little success to show for it. This is partly due to the psychological difficulty presented by this subject matter.

Vogel's supervisor would commonly ask her, "aren't you bothered by this stuff?" to which she would reply, "no, I find it really rather intriguing." Some might find this work creepy, but Vogel's pre-college experience as a volunteer with a domestic abuse center in Door County prepared her well for her research at the Center.

After Vogel's initial semester and a little time off to regroup, she began showing up in the research center's library. Often she would quietly appear and depart, nearly without notice.

It is not unusual for students to intern here for as long as two years. But Vogel's tenure is causing others to take notice. Vogel first learned much about the processing of data and constructing of databases. She then was trained in homicide coding. Her interest really caught fire when training sessions began to focus on sex-related homicides. At first it wasn't apparent that there was a link, but as she continued to mull it over, gender differences and other patterns began to become more apparent.

After composing two large databases, one LGBT and one a comparison dataset, Vogel is finally hammering out her long-awaited findings. She is driven and persistent, with a steady forward gaze. For now she's letting the data speak for itself. We call it Grounded Theory, just like Vogel. 

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The Center for Homicide Research is an independent, volunteer-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the capacity of the community, criminal justice professionals, and law enforcement to become more effective in identifying, solving and preventing homicide.

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