Ground-Breaking Native American Homicide Research

In 2015, The Center for Homicide Research received a $5,000 grant from Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians) to document historical Native American homicide within the state of Minnesota prior to 1930 and to investigate the role of food access in these homicides.

Despite frequency of historical homicides in the Native American community, there is very little in-depth documentation or analysis of these events, and much of this history is preserved only in oral histories of native elders and in difficult-to-locate documents. The funds from this grant will be used for costs associated interviewing native elders, acquiring historical records and literature, training for research staff on Native American history and culture, and advertising.

The genocide of American Indians prior to 1930 occurred against a backdrop of their daily struggle to obtain food. Many battles among American Indian tribes occurred due to fighting over limited food resources, and many white settlers systematically destroyed food sources as a tool of violence against Native Americans. With the modern-day understanding that hunger is a major motive of homicide, this study will investigate the role of food access in the development of lethal violence among Native Americans prior to 1930.

Though the primary objective of this study is to collect raw data and draw conclusions between food access and homicide, a secondary objective is to observe any correlations or similarities between historical Native American homicides and the high homicide rates among Native populations today.

This study will begin mid-May 2016 and continue through August 2016 in addition to the center’s other research projects.
A Great Homicide Research Teacher: Homicidal Sadist, Jesse James

Before digging in as a researcher at Center for Homicide Research, new interns must develop a knowledge-base in a variety of topics including victimology, social and forensic psychology, criminology, and investigative analysis. While the accumulation of this knowledge may seem like a daunting task at first glance, interns are encouraged to learn and explore these topics in context by conducting a historical research study.

As an introduction to homicide research, spring 2016 interns Hailey Johnson and Leo Loza researched notorious homicidal sadist, Jesse James. Because of the wealth of literature and documentation regarding James’s life, as well as the general consensus that Jesse James was indeed a criminal, Johnson and Loza were able to research James’s life with little political construal while in the learning process. Under the guidance of Principal Researcher and Executive Director of The Center for Homicide Research, Dallas Drake, Johnson and Loza began this study by collecting information on James’s childhood, major social influences, and life events, among other topics.

After analyzing the collected data, they continued this forensic study of a violent offender by hypothesizing that James’s violent criminal behavior as an adult was a result of the normalization of violence and trauma in his childhood. To support their argument, they delved into past research regarding the effect of violence and trauma in childhood development and how the victimology and criminology of James’s offences relate to their hypothesis. They are currently finalizing a research paper containing their findings and arguments, which will be published on the Center for Homicide Research’s website.

With a new foundation of knowledge and continuing education in topics regarding homicide, Johnson and Loza will begin working on some of the center’s current research projects like the Historical Native American Homicide and Food Study and GIS Crime Mapping.

GIS Intern:
Kasia Plawiak

The Spring 2016 semester brought research intern Kasia (Ka-sha) Plawiak from Wroclaw, Poland.

Kasia has bachelor’s degrees in Computer Science and International Business, and she is currently pursuing a masters degree in IT Management from St. Mary’s University of Minnesota.

As GIS and Data Analyst Specialist at CHR, she spent much of her time mapping the locations of different types of homicide and analyzing their special distribution for patterns.
CHR Receives $40,000 Donation

Alen Braun of the Alen Braun Fund at the Minneapolis Foundation has made a $40,000 donation to The Center for Homicide Research.

Braun is a long-time major donor of CHR, and we are grateful for his continued generous support. The proceeds from the donation will be used for administrative and research activities, as well as special projects.

To donate to the Center for Homicide Research, please visit www.homicidecenter.org/donate.
CHR ALUMNA WINS MAJOR RESEARCH AWARD

Center for Homicide Research alumna, Ashley Mancik, was awarded the Homicide Research Working Group’s 2015 Richard Block Award for an outstanding thesis/dissertation.


Since interning at CHR, Mancik has obtained an M.A. in criminology and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Delaware. She presents her research on macro-level causes and correlations to homicide and homicide clearance rates at regional and national conferences.

Additionally, she is an intern with the Dept. of Justice in Washington, D.C. and is a teaching assistant for an undergraduate statistics lab at the University of Delaware.

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