

5-2013

Painting the City Red: A Close Look at the Homicide Trends of New Orleans

Tatiana Obioha
University of New Orleans

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PAINTING THE CITY RED: A CLOSE LOOK AT THE HOMICIDE TRENDS OF
NEW ORLEANS

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

the Department of Sociology
of the University of New Orleans

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts, with University Honors
And Honors in Sociology

by

Tatiana Obioha

May 2013

Acknowledgments

First and foremost I would like to extend multiple thanks to Dr. Pamela Jenkins, Professor of Sociology, for agreeing to be my thesis advisor. This thesis would not have been completed without her help, guidance, and knowledge. I would also like to thank Dr. John Kiefer, Associate Professor of the Political Sciences, for agreeing to be my second reader.

Second, much gratitude and thanks must be extended to Lauryn Minter, Instructor of Record of the Department of Political Science. This thesis was started and completed with her help, editing, advice, and guidance. Motivation and encouragement was provided at all times, and I am forever grateful.

Lastly, I would like to thank God and my family for their help in the research process, unrelenting support, and encouragement during stressful times. This thesis is the result of my own work, but I surely could not have made it to this point without the named individuals. Again, many thanks and blessings!

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Abstract

New Orleans has had a consistently high homicide rate for around twenty years, but limited research has committed to discovering a successful solution to the pre- and post-Katrina crime problem. Prior research has been conducted to analyze whether the Southern “culture of violence,” poverty, income inequality, unemployment, gun ownership and legislation, gangs, and residential segregation affect homicide, but no study applies these factors to New Orleans. Using a case study analysis that applies these variables studied in prior research to New Orleans and information acquired from the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reports, correlations are made between homicide in New Orleans and poverty, income inequality, and residential segregation. Implications show that homicide is affected by multiple factors. All of these factors should be analyzed when homicide is the focus of the research because homicide is not a result of one or two variables.

Keywords: New Orleans, homicide, case study, economic factors, residential segregation.

INTRODUCTION

Homicide has no respect for geography, culture, social status, gender or race. Homicide is found in every society and punished accordingly, but some societies have a greater issue with combating it. Countries that have a high economic standing are interesting subjects of study. These countries arguably should have low rates of homicide due to the available opportunities for individuals to attain equitable economic standing amongst one another. Interestingly, the United States, although it has a high economic standing, ranks first as it relates to homicide (Beirne and Messerschmidt, 2011: 56).

In a global study conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, homicide is defined as the intentional killing of a human being by another and classified as the ultimate crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2011). This study conducted examined global trends in homicide, and intentional homicide was defined as the unlawful death purposely inflicted on a person by another person (UNODC, 2011). Although the contributing factors resulting in homicide differ across the globe, the end result is the same: a deceased individual. The global homicide rate is recorded, as of 2011, at 6.9 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants (UNODC). Fortunately, the United States' 2011 rate falls below the global average at 5.5, but this is an average (Federal Bureau of Investigation). There are multiple cities within the country that far exceed this number. One of particular interest is the city of New Orleans.

It is true that the Crescent City is well-known for its food, unique culture, Southern hospitality, Mardi Gras and music, but the city's crime problem, especially the homicide rate, has been a cause of concern for decades. It is common to watch the nightly local news and hear about a fatal shooting, a body found, or law enforcement continuing

a search for suspects involved in a recent murder. Finally, the rest of the country has taken notice, especially in the post-Katrina New Orleans.

Though the practice is not condoned by the FBI, New Orleans has received the “murder capital” title of the United States in the past (McLaughlin 2012). With a 2010 homicide rate of 50.9 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants (Uniform Crime Report), city leadership and law enforcement officials have worked towards decreasing the high rate of homicide through initiatives. For example, NOLA for Life is a 2012 murder reduction strategy that looks at gun violence, prevention programs, job and opportunity promoting, neighborhood rebuilding and involvement, and remodeling the NOPD (City of New Orleans 2012). Still, the question remains, what is causing such a high homicide rate?

This study aims to analyze New Orleans’ homicide problem through a case study that examines the impact of the cultural, social, and economic variables that potentially affect the city’s homicide rate. Despite the attention to the local problem, there is little to no data that looks at any factors that affect homicide specifically in New Orleans. There are, however, multiple studies that have examined the effects of the Southern “culture of violence,” economic factors such as poverty, income inequality, and unemployment, gun ownership and legislation, and gangs as well as residential segregation in relation to homicide rates. Previous research examined whether these factors affect homicide rates or violent crime on a national and international level, but they are also important for understanding the homicide issue engulfing New Orleans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The Federal Bureau of Investigation defined homicide as “the willful (nonnegligent) killing of one human being by another” (2008). This act must be accompanied by the individual’s conscious intent to kill or *mens rea* (Beirne and Messerschmidt, 2011: 281). Emile Durkheim in *Professional Ethics and Civil Morals* considered homicide to be one of the “supremely immoral acts” because it was a violation of the individual and society (1985: 110). As of 2004 the United States had the highest rate of homicide per 100,000 inhabitants at 5.5 which exceeded that of all technologically developed countries including France, Germany, and England/Wales (United Nations 2008b). The most recent FBI data reports the national homicide rate at 4.8 (2010). Homicide rates are affected by multiple factors, but these factors differ when looking at specific regions or cities. Literature has looked at the Southern “culture of violence,” economic inequality, poverty, gun ownership, gangs, and racially segregated neighborhoods as factors that affect homicide rates.

Southern culture of violence

Many researchers studied the consistently high homicide rates of the South in comparison to the other regions of the country in connection with the Southern “culture of violence.” Cultural factors and social norms found in the South stem from the frontier herdsman that moved into the region from their emigrant economies that were prone to lawlessness and political instability (McWhiney 1988; Fisher 1989). Men needed to develop a “culture of honor” to defend themselves, their masculinity and their property;

acts of retaliation were seen as retribution if one was insulted, attacked, or challenged in any wrongful way (Fischer 1989). There was also a lack of sufficient law enforcement, so these laws of retaliation were the law of the land (Gastil 1971; Brown 1969; Irleand 1979; McWhiney 1988). It is the norms that have persisted from this culture that are thought to affect the homicide rate.

The Southern “culture of violence” has been a topic of study for many years. Hackney (1969) and Gastil (1971) both used multiple regression analyses and concluded that the South’s homicide rates are a result of their cultural approval of violence. Loftin and Hill later replicated both studies, calling it the “Gastil-Hackney thesis.” They concluded that research limitations such as aggregation bias, multicollinearity, and interdependence amongst units of analysis found in the design led to inconclusive results (Loftin and Hill 1974). This study was also replicated in 1986 where researchers concluded that Southern homicide rates represent a source independent of poverty, economic inequality, or other demographic characteristics that Loftin and Hill attempted to use to explain the Southern homicide rates in their previous study (Huff-Corzine, Corzine, and Moore 1986).

There is no dispute that the South has higher homicide rates than other regions in the nation, but researchers have not agreed upon whether this is attributed to the cultural norms and values found in the South that create a “culture of violence.” Some researchers (Loftin and Hill 1974) have attempted to explain the Southern homicide rates contingent upon the higher levels of poverty found in Southern states as well. Research that has examined poverty as well as other factors that reflect the economy like unemployment and income disparity is discussed in the next section.

Economic Factors

Economic factors are also thought to impact homicide rates of the nation, specifically economic inequality, poverty, and unemployment. Studies examining economic inequality—the disparity found between the rich and poor in regards to wealth and income—from most researchers focuses on income disparity that show relative deprivation. Research studies poverty with a focus on the percentage of a population living in poverty which means at or below the federally determined poverty line. This shows absolute deprivation. Though unemployment was not widely tested, researchers appeared to define the term as though it was the percentage of the able-bodied population without jobs. All three factors are thought to have an impact on violent crime or crime in general due to the disadvantages that result from them in high or low degrees.

Poverty is thought, as well, to correlate with violent crime. Shaw and McKay's (1942) study provided social disorganization theory which says that areas that are in cultural transition due to the settling of immigrants with different cultural, moral, and conventional values that lead to success breed higher levels of crime (Biers and Messerschmidt, 2011: 131,133). This study examined juvenile delinquency and concluded that poverty was the most important promoting factor. Further studies have reaffirmed the positive, direct correlation of poverty to violent crime, specifically homicide (Sampson and Laura 1994; Messner and Rosenfeld 1999; Pratt and Cullen 2005; Pridemore 2002). Pridemore revisits the findings of his 2008 study in his 2011 study where he replicates and re-estimates the studies of Fajnzylber (2002) and Savoleinen (2000). He concludes that the poverty-homicide association holds when

controlled for economic inequality.

Through examination of relative deprivation (income inequality) and absolute deprivation (poverty line) which represent different levels of impoverishment, researchers Baron and Straus (1988) concluded that states with both greater poverty and economic inequality tend to have higher homicide rates. Some researchers have concluded that inequality accounts for a higher impact than poverty on violent crime (Blau and Blau 1982). Harer and Steffensmeier (1992) conducted their aggregate analysis where race was separated and income inequality strongly accounted for aggregate offense and arrest rates as well as white arrest rates, but the same was not found regarding black arrest rates for violent crime. Unemployment also contributes to impoverishment due to the dependence of a household receiving an income in order to be in good economic standing. Though unemployment has been studied in relation to crime, researchers concluded that there is a stronger positive correlation to property crime rather than violent crime (Long and Witte 1981; Chiricos 1987; Raphael and Winter-Ebmer 2001).

When examining the relationship between economic conditions and homicide, unemployment impacts property crime more so than violent crime, so it does not affect homicide rates. However, poverty and income inequality both affect homicide rates, but the research is more reliable when one is studied while the other is controlled. The next variable is a current issue in the political sphere as a result of current events.

Gun Ownership

The United States has the highest homicide rate of developed countries and one of the highest firearm ownership rates (Killias 1993; Hemenway and Miller 2000). Firearms, especially handguns, account for the majority of homicide weapons used.

Researchers studied the effect of gun ownership on the homicide rate in search for an answer that would support whether gun availability and ownership affect killings or whether it is just people. Other important research, though limited, is research that looks at the effects of gun legislation within states or smaller areas. It is possible that states with stricter gun control laws have lower levels of deaths by firearms in comparison to states that do not.

Though earlier researchers had attempted to study firearm ownership and density and its impact on homicide rates, the main problem was finding a reliable way to measure gun density (McDowall 1991). Despite this issue Zimring (1968) proposed the “objective dangerousness” hypothesis which states that firearm availability increases the number of homicides. Zimring based the hypothesis on two propositions: the frequency with which guns are used to commit crime is affected by variations in the availability of firearms across space and time; the risk of a homicide occurring increases with the use of a gun in a crime. Kleck’s (1979) aggregate level analysis concluded that there is an endogenous relationship between gun ownership and homicide: homicide increases as gun ownership increases and vice versa. Through empirical analysis McDowall (1991) concluded that firearm density is an important risk factor for determining homicide rates. These findings have been reaffirmed by Miller, Azrael, and Hemenway (2002) where the researchers examined cross-sectional time series data from 1988 to 1997 and concluded that the United States does have higher rates of homicide victimization in regions and states with higher rates of firearm ownership.

Few studies have been conducted to test the effectiveness of gun control legislation. Kwon, Scott, Safranski, and Bae (1997) used multiple linear regression

models of deaths in 1990 and concluded that gun control legislations' existence deters firearm homicides though the correlation is weak. Ik-Whan Kwon and Daniel Baack (2005) later concluded, using a multivariate linear regression analysis, that states with more comprehensive gun laws had lower firearm deaths than states with lax gun laws, but the measure of firearm deaths was also impacted by socioeconomic as well as law enforcement factors.

Evidence that supplied data for gun ownership at the city level were nonexistent for the previous research, but the consensus is that gun ownership has a direct, positive relationship with homicide rates. Yet, the relationship is the same when reversed. The debate of gun legislation effectiveness is still based on evidence that is fairly premature, but more current findings do support strict gun legislation decreasing homicide rates. Gangs, the next factor, also contribute to homicide rates and are notorious for their gun violence.

Gangs and Other Organizations

Another source of violence in the country has been a result of gang presence and activity. According to Cloward and Ohlin (1960), juvenile gangs are forms of delinquent subcultures that result from individuals not having access to legitimate means to success as well as disproportionate exposure to illegitimate means in working-class communities (Beirne and Messerschmidt 2011: 141). Currently, gangs primarily consist of male youths and adolescents that grew up together in the same neighborhoods that are usually of low-income (Vigil 2003). Studies examined the violent nature of gangs in relation to each other and members within one organization as well as other activities that also result in fatal violence.

Hagedom and Rauch (2004) analyzed qualitative interviews with gang members of New York City and Chicago and found that institutionalized gangs, interrupting the drug market cycle, and displacing gang members and drug users into existing drug markets elevate homicide levels. Existing gangs have claimed “turf” in their neighborhoods or public housing developments where their drug markets exist and thrive; these markets and the sellers are displaced when housing is demolished or law enforcement pressures the gang to fracture (Hagedom and Rauch 2004). Gang members are forced to find a new location which sometimes means invading other claimed territories which results in violent gang wars that are often fatal for the participants (Venkatesh et al 2004; Popkin 2000).

Respect and dominance are key features when researchers examine gangs. Insults or challenges of any verbal or physical kind can lead to violence. Gangs often partake in fatal violence that results from insults either made to the entire group or an individual—the latter would be taken as an attack on the group because one member is a representation of that group (Papachristos 2009). These actions are driven by necessary dominance and the “code of the streets”—a set of informal rules that govern behavior when looking to obtain respect but also regulate public interaction (Anderson 1999; Papachristos 2009).

Gangs contribute to violence on a large scale, but their specific contributions to homicide stem from territorial drug wars and the need to maintain or acquire dominance in a culture that is ruled by respect. These individuals have easy access to firearms and are required to defend themselves as well as whatever gang they affiliate themselves with. Since gangs are found to be formed in neighborhoods with children of the same

socioeconomic status, residential segregation is another factor to examine and its effect on homicide rates.

Residential Segregation

Racial inequality is still present in modern America where African American citizens are inflicted with adverse treatment or targeted by policies and practices that cause disproportionate negative effects for them as opposed to their white counterparts (Shelby, 2005:156). Residential segregation reflects this inequality where racial minorities are concentrated in areas like public housing developments or certain neighborhoods. African Americans know less about the homeownership process and also have homes going into foreclosure at higher rates than the general American population, but they are also met with problems that arise from the affordability/upkeep of a home as well as poor credit scores/rankings that halt the process (King, 2010: 34). Also, racial isolation is also “manufactured by whites through a series of self-conscious actions and purposeful institutional arrangements that continue today” (Massey and Denton, 1993: 4). These neighborhoods or public housing units have high levels of racial segregation, poverty, and economic disadvantage. Researchers have examined how these and other factors have contributed to homicide rates or violent crime overall.

Residential segregation, especially for black U.S. citizens, has persisted despite the passing of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and has created structural disadvantages for the “hypersegregated” communities where subcultures that debase employment, education and marriage values while emphasizing adverse behavior and attitudes of mainstream economic success emerge (Massey and Denton 1993; LaFree, Baumer, and O’Brien 2010). Segregation results from past actions that created neighborhoods and

areas of cities heavily concentrated with one or few racial groups. Schneider (2008) discusses how African Americans being excluded from the industrial workforce until the 1950s, after manufacturing jobs had been moved from the city to the predominately white suburbs or overseas, allowed for inner-cities where blacks remained to become areas where illegal activity offers reliable economic stability but also fosters high homicide rates. Wilson (1987) also spoke of black communities that suffer from high levels of poverty and disadvantage which produce high levels of crime due to the lack of sufficient resources to fight crime. Logan and Messner (1987) also state that high levels of segregation result in violent crime as a reaction to the segregation which causes feelings of resentment that can result in aggression that materializes into violent crime.

Though researchers have not found a direct effect on homicide, there is a positive correlation between segregation and violent crime (Feldmeyer 2010). Public housing also mirrors residential segregation, but Griffiths and Tita (2009) conclude that economic disadvantages found in the housing developments account for homicides where both parties are residents. Interestingly, Griffiths and Tita (2009) also found that nonresidents were more likely to commit homicide than residents of public housing units.

Public housing developments and neighborhoods with little to no racial diversity do exist despite the past efforts of Congress. These neighborhoods have contributed to the homicide rates in relation to the economic disadvantages that create their inability to combat crime, but the neighborhoods themselves are not the problem. Affluent communities which are predominately white do not have to concern themselves with this.

Conclusion

Previous literature on the effects of the aforementioned factors on homicide is

profuse, but there is a lack of literature that provides a comprehensive analysis of these factors. Also, there is little evidence that discusses homicide in New Orleans. This study will serve to fill the lack of both and add to the developing knowledge of the New Orleans homicide problem.

FRAMEWORK

The methodological framework for this study is a case study analysis. A case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin 1984: 23). Case studies can be conducted using interviews, field study, observation, surveys, and documentation review. Whatever tool used for data collection, the point of the case study is to gather evidence for the case(s) being studied. A case is “a phenomenon specific to time and space” (Johansson 2003). A case study serves as good methodology for this thesis in order to examine whether the variables discussed in the literature review are contributors to New Orleans’ homicide rates and if so, how.

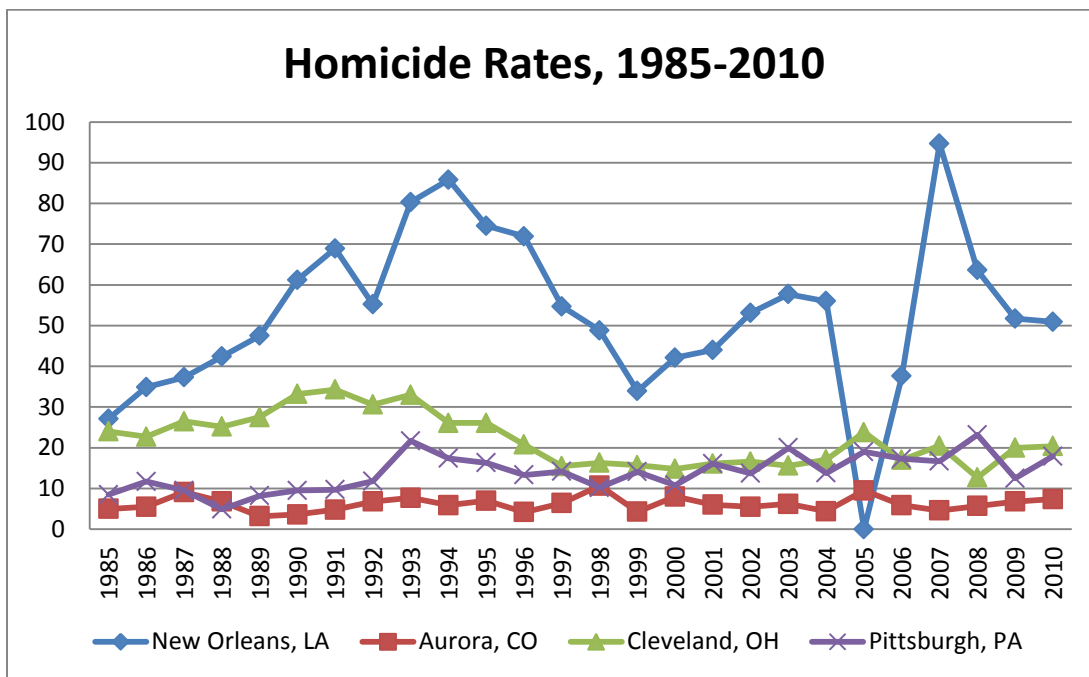
The case study will isolate the Southern “culture of violence,” poverty, economic inequality, unemployment, gun ownership and legislation, gangs, and residential segregation and relate each to the city of New Orleans and its homicide rates and trends. The interpretation of this case study’s findings will serve to add to the broader collection of data that discusses the unique homicide problem of New Orleans. These findings will also add to the broader collection of research on homicide rates in urban areas. The multiple variables approach allows for a greater depth of understanding the many contributing factors to the high homicide rates in New Orleans.

METHODOLOGY: CASE STUDY OF NEW ORLEANS

Southern “culture of violence”

Based on reviewed research, the Southern “culture of violence” is thought to affect the homicide rates of Southern agencies and explain higher Southern rates compared to rates from other regions in the United States due to norms of accepted violence. These norms will not be studied in this case study, but there is a necessary discussion of homicide rates that must be made in order to explain the limitations of the measure when comparing cities or regions that have been used in previous research. New Orleans’ homicide rates will be compared to three other cities; each city is from one of the three other regions in the United States and of similar population size range as New Orleans, 250,000 to 499,999 population coverage.

Figure 1: Homicide Trends, 1985-2010



Note: The 2005 homicide rate for New Orleans is not recorded in the Uniform Crime Report most likely due to Hurricane Katrina. All data is collected from the Uniform Crime Report. The homicide rate is measured per 100,000 residents.

These three cities were chosen randomly, but a main concern was finding a city that had a 2010 population comparable to New Orleans' at 343,829 (US Census Bureau). Aurora, Colorado; Cleveland, Ohio; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania had 2010 populations of 325,078; 396,815; and 307,630, respectively (US Census Bureau). This puts them all within a reasonable range of the 2010 New Orleans population, but Figure 1 shows that despite the range of populations, New Orleans still has the highest homicide rates of all the cities. There are several contributing factors that may result in New Orleans having the highest homicide rate of all the cities compared. These factors include but are not limited to: proximity to foreign borders, unemployment rates, racial diversity, poverty and the economic disadvantage that result, gang-related violence, etc. These findings in no way confirm the acceptance of violent norms in New Orleans, but they do support that New Orleans is a more violent city than others.

The homicide rate must not be fully depended upon to measure levels of violence due to the fact that the homicide rate is heavily influenced by population size. A city with a larger population but the same number of homicides will have a lower homicide rate. New Orleans' and Cleveland's 2010 populations are used as an example.

Table 1: New Orleans, LA and Cleveland, OH Data Comparison

	New Orleans	Cleveland
Population	343,829	396,815
Homicide Occurrences	175	81
Homicide Rate	50.9	20.4

Clearly, homicide occurrences tell a more reliable story of violence in a city. The number of homicide occurrences is more reliable due to the fact that it is an actual figure that is not affected by a population. Including the population decreases the scope of violence in the sense that it removes the focus from the number of victims and turns it into an average. This is what discourages the ranking of cities according to their homicide rates. Lists that have deemed New Orleans the “murder capital of the United States” have given this title based on homicide rate when there are other cities with lower homicide rates but more frequent homicide occurrences.

Poverty, Unemployment, and Income Inequality

For this section of the case study, New Orleans rates of poverty will be studied and examined based on the percentage of the population living below the federally determined poverty line. This will serve as a measure of absolute deprivation. Income inequality will be examined according to the distribution of income and subsequent gaps that emerge which would tell the socioeconomic standing of the city and its citizens. This will serve as a measure of relative deprivation. Unemployment will consist of the percent of the able-bodied population currently looking for work.

As of 2010, based on data collected from the American Community Survey from 2006-2010, Orleans Parish, which consists of seventy-two neighborhoods including New Orleans East, has 24.4% of the population living in poverty—with a margin of error of +/- 1%. This percentage exceeds that of the United States at 13.8% and a +/- 0.1% margin of error. Data lists the Fischer Development as the neighborhood with the greatest poor population with 84.4%, but the margin of error is +/- 34%. Lakewood has the lowest

poor population percentage with 1.0% and a +/- 1.6% margin of error.

The American Community Survey also provides data for the employment status of citizens of the city of New Orleans. According to the census data collected for 2010, an estimated 18,511 residents in the labor force are currently unemployed. This accounts for 7.1%--including a +/- 0.4% margin of error—of the city's labor force which is lower than the national data.

The income distribution of Orleans Parish as of 2010 in comparison to that of the United States with the margins of error in parentheses will be displayed in the table below. Data is provided by the American Community Survey (2006-2010).

Table 2: Income Distribution of Orleans Parish and the United States

Income Distribution	Orleans Parish (+/-)	United States (+/-)
Less than \$10,000	13.9% (1.5%)	7.2% (0.2%)
\$10,000-14,000	8.0% (0.8%)	5.5%
\$15,000-19,999	7.3% (0.5%)	5.3%
\$20,000-24,999	6.7% (0.6%)	5.5%
\$25,000-29,999	6.3% (0.6%)	5.2%
\$30,000-34,999	5.3% (0.6%)	5.3%
\$35,000-39,999	4.6% (0.4%)	4.9%
\$40,000-44,999	5.0% (0.4%)	4.9%
\$45,000-49,999	3.9% (0.5%)	4.3%
\$50,000-59,999	7.0% (0.3%)	8.2%
\$60,000-74,999	8.3% (0.5%)	10.3%
\$75,000-99,999	8.5% (0.5%)	12.3%
\$100,000-124,999	4.9% (0.6%)	7.8%
\$125,000-149,999	3.2% (0.4%)	4.5%
\$150,000-199,999	2.9% (0.4%)	4.4%
\$200,000 or more	4.2% (0.3%)	4.2%

Note: The margins of error for the US income distribution percentages are all 0%, excluding less than \$10,000.

This table shows that income distribution is skewed to the left which means income for the majority of the parish is low. Further use of this data will be explored when analyzing data for residential segregation and its impact on homicide.

Gun Legislation

Article 1, Section 11 of the Louisiana Constitution states the following: “The right of each citizen to keep and bear arms is fundamental and shall not be infringed. Any restriction on this right shall be subject to strict scrutiny” (2012). Louisiana RS 40:1379.3 is the statute that lists the qualifications, procedure, and limitations to Louisiana concealed handgun permits. The statute also provides a definition of a handgun, “a type of firearm commonly referred to as a pistol or revolver originally designed to be fired by the use of a single hand and which is designed to fire or is capable of firing fixed cartridge ammunition. The term ‘handgun’ shall not include shotguns or rifles that have been altered by having their stocks or barrels cut or shortened” (2011). Also, Louisiana concealed handgun permits are recognized in thirty-four of the fifty states while Louisiana recognizes the same permits from thirty-six states.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance funded an analysis in 2011 focusing on crime trends in New Orleans from April 2009 to May 2010, specifically homicide (Wellford, Bond, and Goodison 2011). Two hundred homicide cases were examined within this time period. Of those two hundred victims, 156, or 78%, were killed with a handgun. Twenty-four other homicides were committed with other firearms--shotgun, rifle, and unknown—which brings the total firearm homicide weapon percentage to ninety percent.

Gangs

According to Wellford, Bond, and Goodison’s (2011) analysis, two hundred

homicide cases were studied where the majority (60.5%) came from 2009 and the remaining 39.5% are from 2010. Out of the 200 cases only two victims had been involved with a gang or crew. A note provided in the analysis tells that a NOPD officer made the distinction that these are not the same as the structured gangs found in other cities; these are groups, sometimes with no more than three or four individuals, that assign themselves a name but are simply associated with their neighborhoods. Nevertheless, these are still criminal gangs.

This finding could not be supported with any more data, but this is important for New Orleans homicide research. The lack of structured gangs in New Orleans which are present in other cities with high percentages of homicides resulting from gang violence like Los Angeles and Oakland, CA and Oklahoma City makes New Orleans more unique in regards to its high homicide rates and their source. Though these gangs are not present, drug activity is present. Drug-related motive accounted for 28.5% of the 200 New Orleans homicides analyzed for the analysis (2011).

Residential Segregation

Spatial and economic factors will be analyzed in this portion of the case study. Wellford, Bond, and Goodison (2011) analysis of New Orleans concluded that police districts five and one, respectively, have the first and second highest homicide occurrences. The figure below shows New Orleans divided into the eight New Orleans Police Department Police Districts.

Figure 2: New Orleans Police Department Police Districts

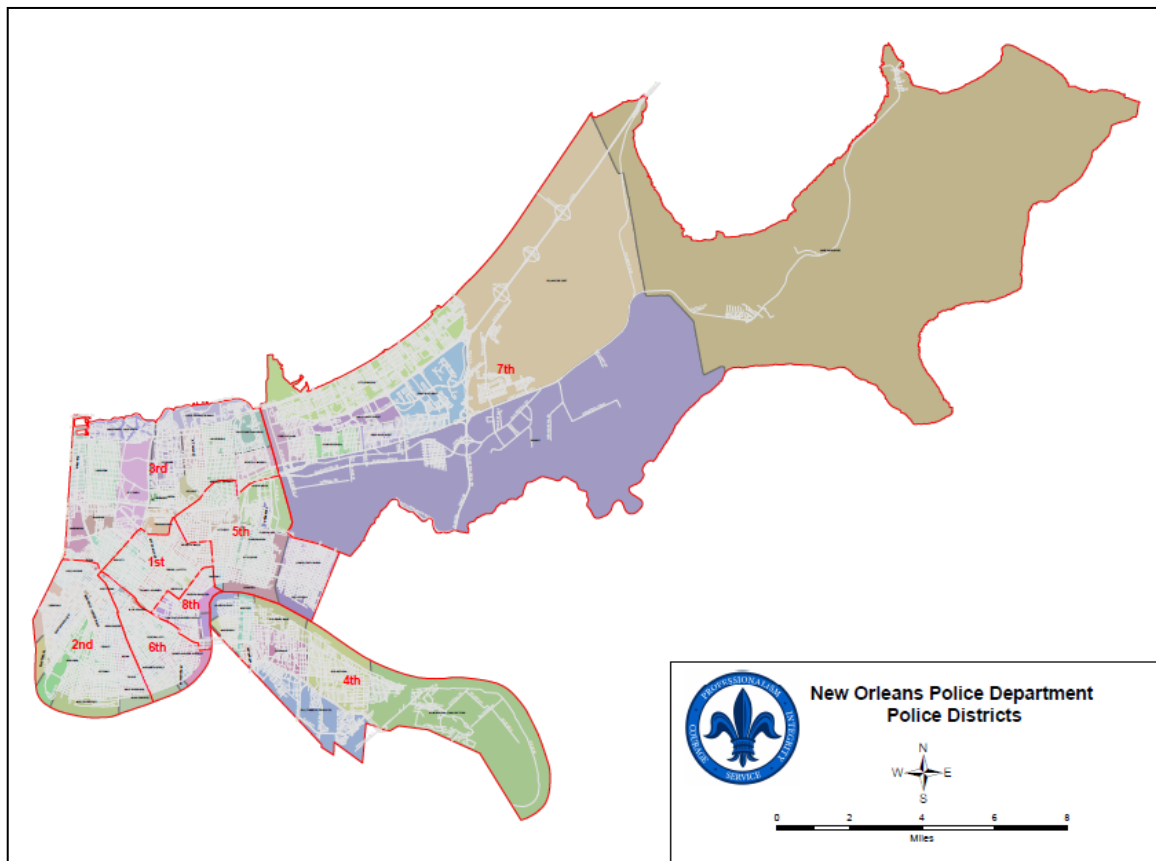
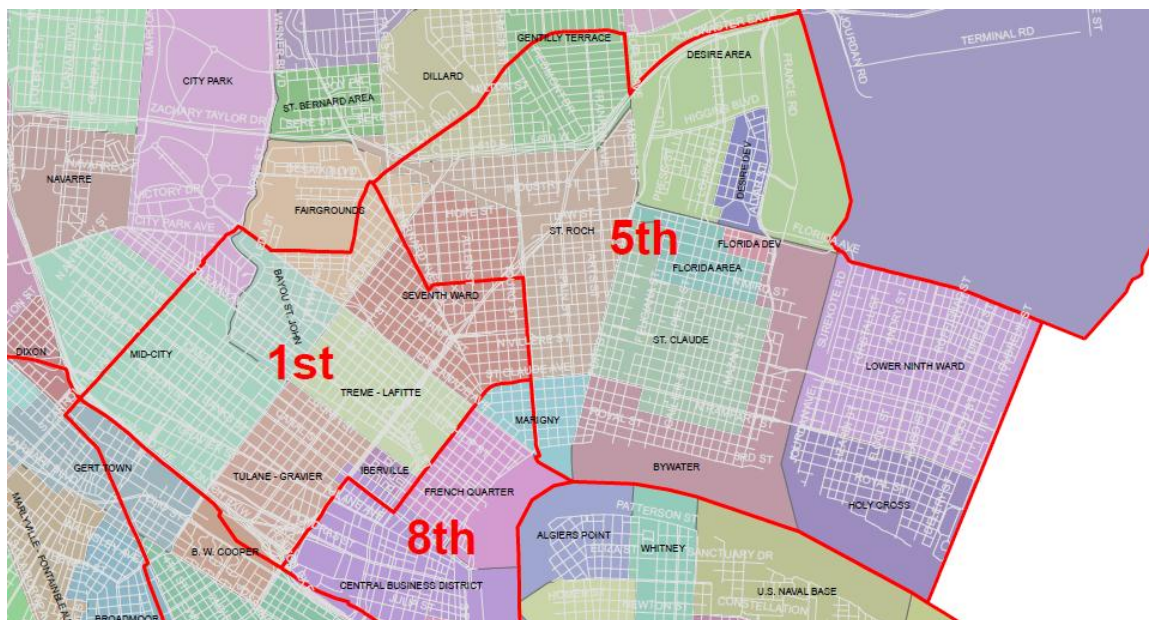


Figure 3: A Close-Up of Police Districts One and Five



Since Districts One and Five have been found to be the prevalent centers of homicide, analysis of the economic and racial characteristics of the neighborhoods found in these two districts is subject to scrutiny. The next tables will display the neighborhoods, whole and partial, found in the districts and their racial diversity, respectively.

Table 3: Neighborhoods of Police Districts One and Five

District One	District Five
Bayou St. John	Bywater
Fairgrounds	Desire Area**
Gert Town	Desire Development**
Iberville	Dillard
Mid-City	Florida Area
Seventh Ward*	Florida Development
Tulane/Gravier	Gentilly Terrace
Treme/Lafitte	Holy Cross
	Lower Ninth Ward
	Marigny
	Seventh Ward*
	St. Claude
	St. Roch

*The Seventh Ward appears in both districts.
 **Desire Area and Desire Development will be merged in Table 4, but they appear separate in the police district map.

Table 4: Racial Diversity of Neighborhoods in Police Districts One and Five

	Black or African American	White	Asian	American Indian	Other	2 race categories	Hispanic (any race)
Bayou St. John	49.0%	41.5%	0.9%	0.1%	0.4%	1.8%	6.5%
Fairgrounds	64.0%	28.0%	0.7%	0.2%	0.7%	1.6%	4.9%
Gert Town	87.6%	4.6%	0.9%	0.2%	0%	1.5%	5.2%
Iberville Dev.	96.4%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	2.0%	1.5%
Mid-City	55.0%	27.3%	0.7%	0.1%	0.3%	1.3%	15.2%
Seventh Ward	87.4%	6.6%	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%	1.2%	3.8%
Tulane/Gravier	71.2%	12.0%	3.7%	0.3%	0.5%	0.7%	11.6%
Treme/Lafitte	74.5%	17.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	1.4%	5.4%
Bywater	33.1%	56.1%	0.7%	0.4%	0.3%	2.6%	6.7%
Desire	95.3%	1.8%	0%	0.5%	0.2%	0.7%	1.5%
Dillard	91.3%	3.3%	0.4%	0.2%	1.1%	1.3%	2.6%
Florida Area	96.5%	1.2%	0%	0.1%	0%	0.5%	1.8%
Florida Dev.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Gentilly Terrace	77.8%	15.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.8%	1.6%	3.8%
Holy Cross	89.3%	6.9%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	1.0%	2.1%
Lower Ninth Ward	95.5%	1.8%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.8%	1.5%
Marigny	12.7%	75.5%	1.6%	0.8%	0.2%	2.4%	6.8%
St. Claude	81.1%	14.0%	0.6%	0.2%	0.1%	1.0%	3.1%
St. Roch	86.8%	7.0%	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%	1.2%	3.8%

Note: Data is for the year 2010 and from the American Community Survey.

Based on the data in Table 4, in regards to homicide, the racial majority of the

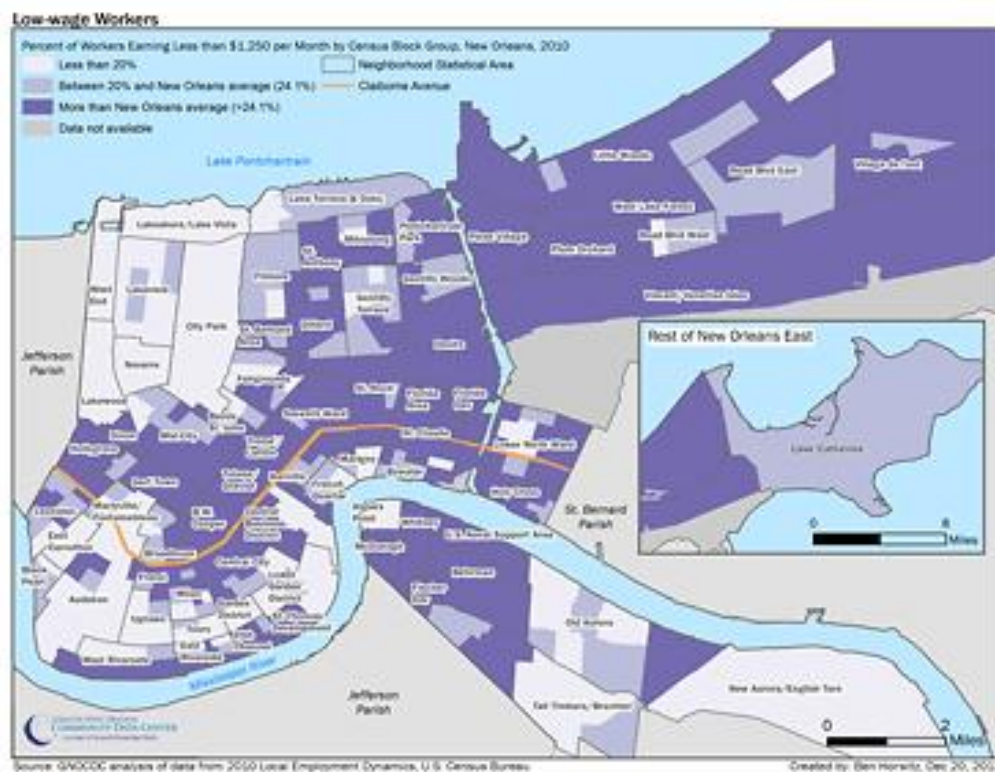
neighborhoods are African American which gives enough support to show that homicide victims are mainly of this race. In regards to residential segregation, the racial diversity found within these neighborhoods is extremely low. All of the neighborhoods, excluding Bywater and Marigny, are predominately African American which attests to failed integration of the races. This does not mean that high homicide rates are caused by the lack of racial diversity, but more affluent families or communities that are usually white moving into these districts would allow for better resources to combat crime or prevent it. Other neighborhoods in the Greater New Orleans area found in gated communities with higher socioeconomic standing that are seen to have little violent crime like Old Metairie are examples of this statement made earlier by Wilson (1987).

Table 5: Population in Poverty in Neighborhoods in Police Districts One and Five

	Population in Poverty	Margin of Error (+/-)
Bayou St. John	17.0%	6.7%
Fairgrounds	20.7%	6.5%
Gert Town	36.7%	11.5%
Iberville Dev.	70.9%	15.9%
Mid-City	37.3%	8.5%
Seventh Ward	44.1%	6.5%
Tulane/Gravier	37.3%	15.2%
Treme/Lafitte	38.0%	10.2%
Bywater	24.4%	9.8%
Desire	37.8%	22.7%
Dillard	19.6%	8.4%
Florida Area	43.5%	17.8%
Florida Dev.	N/A	N/A
Gentilly Terrace	16.1%	6.1%
Holy Cross	29.9%	13.8%
Lower Ninth Ward	29.1%	14.0%
Marigny	9.4%	3.6%
St. Claude	46.7%	10.6%
St. Roch	33.9%	10.6%

Based on the data collected from the 2010 American Community Survey shown in this table, the majority of the neighborhoods of Police Districts One and Five have 2010 poverty rates above that of the 2010 national rate at 20.1 (American Community Survey 2010). These are the neighborhoods with a greater concentration of low-wage earning workers (see Figure 4 below). There is a relationship to be made between homicide and poverty in the city of New Orleans. Orleans Parish where these districts are located does not have an even distribution of income.

Figure 4: Low Wage Earners of New Orleans



According to the data collected in this case study, residential segregation allows

for the best analysis of the homicide problem in New Orleans. Not only does this variable allow the specification of the neighborhoods that comprise the areas of the city's highest homicide rates, but it also forces an individual to look at the factors that affect these neighborhoods that may not be found in others. These factors are mainly economic due to the opportunities and resources that money provides to a community. A lack of such resources fosters a healthier environment for crime to ensue as well as criminals being able to easily get away with illegal activity.

With collected residential data, one can easily distinguish the pool from which victims, and possibly offenders, originate. These individuals are racially and economically homogeneous, so the root of the problem lies within the communities; nevertheless, it is necessary to identify external forces that potentially add to the problem. The relationships made in this study imply that external forces like economics do augment the problem.

CONCLUSION

This case study served to fill a void in the research that examines New Orleans homicide as well as a comprehensive analysis of the cultural, economic, and racial factors that impact homicide within the general scope. There is very little research on New Orleans homicide despite the fact that the issue is prevalent and fear-invoking to many residents and outsiders. Relationships found within the study should shed light on basic questions that an individual may have.

Relationships made within the case study were not surprising. New Orleans homicide rates are related with poverty, residential segregation and income inequality. Also, New Orleans serves as a good example to display high, Southern homicide rates, but one must be cautious with these statistics. Homicide rates are not reliable measurements of violence. Numbers of homicides that are reported in a designated agency are more reliable in their depictions because they are not skewed by population unlike the homicide rate. Overall, these findings challenge the crime narrative.

The crime narrative is the basic criminological description of how crime occurs. This narrative has a victim, an offender, and the hero. The usual depictions are the victim as a white female; the offender a black male; and the hero a white male police officer. In regards to New Orleans homicide this crime narrative does not apply. Both the victims and offenders are predominately black males, and there are no heroes to be found. It is likely due to the relationships found amongst the variables and homicide, especially economic disadvantage in neighborhoods, that solutions or attempts of such remain ineffective. Though this case study is short, researchers can still use the information as groundwork for future research.

Future research that looks at New Orleans homicide now has a starting point, especially in terms of literature that starts this case study. There are multiple theories that are thought to impact homicide; some are addressed in the literature review. Mainly, the application of all of the discussed variables will serve to broaden the scope of homicide research. Future researchers can look at this study and see that focusing one or two variables is not necessary.

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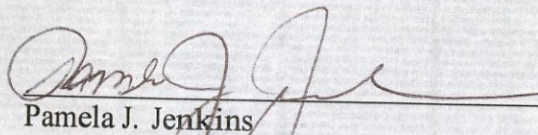
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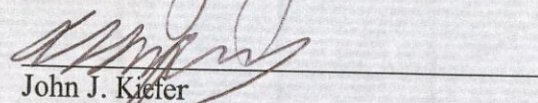
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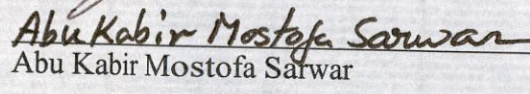
APPROVAL SHEET

This is to certify that Tatiana Nneka Obioha has successfully completed her Senior Honors Thesis, entitled:

Painting the City Red: A Close Look at the Homicide Trends of New Orleans

 _____ Director of Thesis
Pamela J. Jenkins

 _____ Second Reader
John J. Kiefer

 _____ for the University
Abu Kabir Mostofa Sarwar Honors Program

May 1, 2013
Date