

MINNESOTA GAY HOMICIDE STUDY

PROGRESS REPORT 2001

December 2001

MGHS Researcher Presents at International Conferences

Dallas Drake, principle researcher and cofounder of the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study, presented research findings at two international conferences this year. In June, Drake presented a paper at the Homicide Researcher Working Group's (HRWG) annual conference. HRWG is an off-shoot of the American Society of Criminology. The paper, "Dataset Construction in Homosexual Homicide Cases: Shedding the Political Issue of Motive" was the first time the subject of gay/lesbian/bisexual and transgender homicide research was presented at such a conference. Attendees included researchers from as far away as Europe and Australia, and from across the United States.

In November, Drake presented at the American Society of Criminology's Annual Conference. His paper, "Homosexual Homicide and Arson: Is There a Connection?" attempted to describe how and why arson is related to gay homicide at such high rates.

The work of the Study drew great interest from homicide researchers and criminologists at these presentations. ■

Training and Education About Homicide Was Major Focus in 2001

One of the goals of the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study is to educate people about GLBT homicide. This year, volunteers from the Study delivered nearly 20 educational presentations, seminars or lectures. Sessions ranged from formal presentations at professional conferences, to classes for law enforcement personnel and students, to community forums on hate crimes and violence, to events for the GLBT community.

In addition to formal presentations, MGHS principle researcher Dallas Drake provided case reviews of active homicide investigations where a GLBT homicide is suspected, and provided resources and references to others working on these homicide investigations.

Throughout our work, the Study is bringing the issue of gay homicide to the forefront of discussions about aggression and lethal violence. The Study is also challenging long-held beliefs about GLBT homicide among law enforcement and in the gay community. These beliefs have hampered understanding and impeded investigations. ■

Research to Identify Additional GLBT Homicide Cases Continues

MGHS volunteers spent much of the hot summer months at Quatrefoil Library researching GLBT homicide cases. Quatrefoil Library in St. Paul holds perhaps the state's most complete collection of gay press, including original copies of long-running newspapers such as *Equal Time* and *GLC Voice*, and lesser known publications such as *The Uptown Voice* and *Gayvue* from as far back as the early 1970s.

Although the original publications exist, there are no indexes. Thus, in order to find potential GLBT homicide cases, volunteers from the Study must read every page of every publication. About two-thirds of the more than 30 publications are now complete.

Volunteer researchers will continue their work at Quatrefoil during the winter months. Researchers then intend to conduct similar research on materials at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota and at the Minnesota Historical Society.

MGHS is looking for interested volunteers to assist with this effort. Training is provided. The Study is also looking for individuals who may have complete sets of local GLBT newspapers and missing publications that are not in any of the archives. For more information, contact Joe Shulka at 612/827-4658 or via e-mail at joeshulka@earthlink.net. ■

Analysis of Newspaper Reports Yields Valuable Findings

The gay community has long felt that coverage of GLBT homicides differs from that of non-gay homicides. In the summer of 2001, MGHS researchers and volunteers used a technique called "content analysis" to review 12 GLBT homicides as reported in both the gay and mainstream press. MGHS researchers hypothesize that homicides of GLBT people are not overtly identified in the mainstream press, yet language and certain phrases used by the media can help identify these cases.

This research was the subject of a presentation titled "Lost and Found: Analyzing Identified Cases of Homosexual Homicides in Support of a Strategic Search" at the Sociologists of Minnesota annual conference in October. ■

MGHS Researchers Analyze Existing Data on Crime

One of the major challenges the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study faces is collecting information on identified GLBT homicides. Although it would seem logical that information on gay homicides would be collected by law enforcement, it is not. Information in official records is inconsistent. Even tabulating the number of gay homicides does not occur consistently on a local, statewide or national basis.

This was confirmed in the summer of 2001 when Minnesota Gay Homicide Study researchers analyzed two of the largest crime databases available: the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's Homicides in Chicago (1965-1995). These valuable databases became available to Study volunteers following training at the Homicide Research Working Group's annual conference. Both databases are used extensively by criminologists to identify patterns of crime in America. Although these are arguably two of the best databases available, neither accurately identifies GLBT victims or offenders.

According to the FBI's own statistics, only three homosexual homicides occurred in 1998 in the entire United States (the most recently released year of reporting). The Chicago database revealed 109 potential cases over a 30-year period. The Minnesota Gay Homicide Study has so far identified over 125 cases in Minnesota over the last 30 years.

Study researchers are also analyzing existing studies to determine variations in how gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender homicides are committed. Initial analysis reveals that there are significant differences in the ways GLBT people are victimized, which have not been discovered by previous researchers.

This issue will be the subject of future presentations and educational sessions. ■

Minnesota Gay Homicide Study Wish List

Volunteers to assist with research of gay press, to be members of focus and discussion groups, to assist with short-term research projects, and/or assist with mailings and administrative tasks

Access to issues of the gay press that is not available at existing archives (in private possession)

Newspaper or press clippings of GLBT homicide cases

Cases of new (standard 8½ x 11") copier paper

34¢ stamps

2001 MGHS Presentations and Educational Sessions*

PRESENTATIONS

April 16; *Death Investigation: Sexual Asphyxia*; Police and Community; Normandale Community College; Bloomington, MN

May 3; *Understanding GLBT Homicide and the Need to Study It*; Philanthrofund Foundation Community Giving Seminar, Minneapolis, MN

May 18; *Laramie Project* Panel Participant, (Matthew Shepard Murder) Illusion Theater; Minneapolis, MN

June 14-15; *Alternative Strategies for Data-set Construction*; Qualitative Research Conference; University of St. Thomas; Minneapolis, MN

June 22-25; *Data-set Construction in Homosexual Homicide Cases: Shedding the Political Issue of Motive*. Homicide Research Working Group; Orlando, FL

October 1; *Researching Homosexual, Bisexual, and Transsexual Homicide*; University of St. Thomas; Master's Program, School of Education; St. Paul Police Headquarters; St. Paul, MN

October 5; *Community Response to Terrorism*; [for GLBT community leaders] Cosponsored with OutFront Minnesota; Minneapolis, MN

October 18; *Hate Groups Operating in Minnesota*; Hate Crimes panel presentation; Uptown YWCA, Sponsored by YWCA; Minneapolis, MN

October 18-19; *Lost and Found: Analyzing Identified Cases of Homosexual Homicides in Support of a Strategic Search*. Sociologists of Minnesota; Bloomington, MN

November 1; *Death Investigation: Sexual Asphyxia*; Crime Scene Investigation School; [regional school] Minnesota P.O.S.T. certified; Burnsville, MN

November 6-10; *Homosexual Homicide and Arson: Is There a Connection?* American Society of Criminology; Atlanta, GA

EDUCATIONAL TABLES

March 14-18; OutFront Leadership Conference; Brainerd, MN

July 21; Rochester Pride Festival; Rochester, MN

August 25; La Crosse Pride Festival; La Crosse, WI

CONFERENCES AND EDUCATION SESSIONS

April 4-7; Midwest Sociologists Society Conference; St. Louis, MO

May 17; Grotto Foundation Workshop; St. Paul, MN

June 22; FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Data Workshop; Orlando, FL

September 6-7; Midwest Regional Homicide Conference; Bloomington, MN

October 11; 15th Annual Minnesota Council of Nonprofits; St. Paul, MN

*as of November 15, 2001

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