

**COLLABORATION WITH ILLINOIS HOMICIDE EXPERTS FORMALIZED,  
ARSON-HOMICIDE RESEARCH UNDERWAY**

In the fall of 2002, the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study signed a contract with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority to collaborate on homicide research. The result of this collaboration will be research using the Authority's comprehensive database of homicides and the expertise of both the Authority and the Study.

The collaboration allows the Study to have high-level access to the complete homicide data managed by the Authority, as well as its resources and personnel expertise.

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is an independent state agency that is charged with grants administration and auditing of the state of Illinois' criminal history records information system. The Authority also works on the development and operation of computerized management information systems for criminal justice agencies across Illinois. One of the nation's most detailed databases, Homicides in Chicago, is managed by the Authority.

The first product of this collaboration will be research on the prevalence of arson and homicide in Chicago. Coauthors of this research are Dallas Drake of the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study and Carolyn Rebecca Block, Ph.D. of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

Dallas Drake is the principle researcher and co-founder of the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study. Drake is a retired professional firefighter with almost 25 years of experience. As a homicide researcher, Drake has presented across Minnesota and the U.S. on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender homicide issues.

Carolyn Rebecca Block is a senior analyst at the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. She received her Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Chicago. Dr. Block has published extensively on crime and criminology. Dr. Block advises policymakers, researchers and the public on the use of data for decision making. She is principal author of a major study of domestic violence, the Chicago Women's Health Risk Study. She has also won the Criminal Justice Statistics Association award for excellence in research

Drake and Block's joint research seeks to shed light on the under-researched topic of arson-associated homicides. The goal of the research is to detect patterns and identify behavioral profiles of adult arsonists who use fire as a criminal weapon during a homicide, or as a method of destroying or degrading crime scene evidence.

Drake and Block presented their findings at the American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting in October 2002. Their paper, *An Evaluation of Arson-Associated Homicides in Chicago - 1965 to 1995*, will be published in the journal *Homicide Studies* in 2003.

Research using an existing dataset like Homicides in Chicago enables MGHS researchers to better understand the advantages and limitations of current datasets. This is extremely helpful as the Study further refines its dataset of LGBT homicides in Minnesota from 1969 to the present.

The collaboration with the Authority is also assisting the Study in the development of its variables and operational standards for its homicide database of Minnesota Gay Homicide Study. The creation and review of this "codebook" is a critical step in the development of the Minnesota database. By using existing databases that have rich data, the Study's researchers can better develop LGBT homicide information that will be of use to researchers, law enforcement and the gay community.

One of the goals of the Study's research is to create data that will be useful, fact-based and complete. Unfortunately, most LGBT homicide information that is available now is anecdotal and incomplete.

Although the Drake-Block paper does not focus exclusively on LGBT arson-homicide, analyzing the LGBT homicide cases are a critical component of the research. This will be the first time that the Authority's homicide data has been analyzed for trends in LGBT arson-homicide. This research will have great impact our understanding of arson-homicide and the potential relationship between the use of arson and LGBT homicides. ☪

## **VOLUNTEER PROFILE: DOROTHY BURANDT MURDER OF A FRIEND SPURS LOUISIANA WOMAN TO ACTION**

**D**orothy Burant first contacted the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study in the spring of 2002. Dorothy was searching the Internet for information about gay homicide. Dorothy was feeling frustrated. One of her oldest and dearest friends had been murdered. She felt she needed to do something.

Initially, Dorothy contacted the Study for assistance to advocate for her friend's case. Her friend, a prominent New Orleans painter, artist and gallery owner, was found beaten to death in his home in March 2002. There was no sign of forced entry. There were few leads. Time, she felt, was running short.

As part of a case review, Minnesota Gay Homicide Study principle researcher Dallas Drake gave Dorothy advice on working with the New Orleans police and advocating more effectively on her friend's behalf. Through subsequent e-mails and telephone conversations, Dorothy became more interested in the work of the Study.

In early summer, Dorothy offered to assist the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study with its research on the development of a national database of LGBT homicide cases. Dorothy volunteered to research cases in Louisiana. As a local, Dorothy would have much easier access to newspaper archives and other records. Dorothy received training in the Study's procedures and record-keeping remotely, using both e-mail and telephone. As is customary, Dorothy signed the Study's confidentiality agreements.

Since then, she has identified numerous potential cases in New Orleans and across Louisiana and the South. Her work has been an invaluable addition to the Study's research.

***"I think that if one wants to make a difference, it takes action – not lip service."***

***Dorothy Burandt***

Dorothy is divorced and the mother of two grown sons. She had a career in the telecommunications industry at AT&T in New Orleans. She was very active in her union, was Vice President of the Communications Workers of America Local 3450, and served on several local and national leadership teams. When she left AT&T in November 1999, Dorothy was on the Business National Leadership Team. Dorothy is currently on voluntary lay-off to care for her mother who has Alzheimer's.

Dorothy continues to advocate on behalf of her murdered friend. As yet, no one has been charged with the crime. ❧

## **COLLABORATION AND INFORMATION SHARING – TWO KEYS TO SUCCESS**

**I**n addition to active research and identification of LGBT homicide cases, the Minnesota Gay Homicide also provides resources to law enforcement, criminal justice professionals, and the gay community on homicide issues.

Recently, the Study has been approached by Canadian and British law enforcement professionals for resources about gay homicides. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police initially approached the Study through its website looking for information on LGBT homicide research. An internal working group of the RCMP is looking to educate themselves and their colleagues on the subject of gay homicide. They are looking for assistance in developing a bibliography of existing research and resources.

Fortunately for the RCMP, the Study has developed an extensive bibliography of books, research papers, crime data, and literature on the subject. Study volunteers are assembling these materials for the RCMP. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is the Canadian equivalent of the FBI.

A similar request came to the Study in the summer of 2002 from the Police College of the United Kingdom. Researchers at the Police College, like their Canadian colleagues, are seeking to develop internal resources on the issue of gay homicides. The Study provided the British researchers with information to assist in their efforts.

In both instances, as well as numerous other requests from within the United States and Minnesota, the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study is playing a key role in the education of the law enforcement community. In addition, the Study is helping shape other research to include gay homicide. ❧

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## **HOMICIDE CASE DATASET DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES – CODEBOOK BEING CREATED**

**O**ne of the most critical elements of a dataset of crime information is the codebook. A codebook is a manual for categorizing and formatting all the information in dataset. The codebook details all the possible permutations of all the variables in the dataset, and explains the rationale for making decisions on choosing the appropriate variable. The codebook helps ensure that there is consistency throughout the data.

Researchers from the Study are currently reviewing several widely used codebooks for existing datasets. They have begun to develop the variables and data fields for the gay homicide cases, and have drafted a codebook.

This codebook is currently being reviewed and revised by several other researchers and law enforcement professionals. ❧

## 2002 PAPERS, PRESENTATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS

The year has been very busy for the volunteers and researchers at the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study. In addition to its ongoing research, Study volunteers presented findings both locally and nationally to researchers, sociologists, and members of the LGBT community. Study volunteers also were present at numerous gay pride festivals in the Midwest.

### PRESENTATIONS

#### March

*GLBT Homicide: From Research to Public Policy*; University of Minnesota, Friends & Allies, Centennial Hall; Minneapolis

#### April

*Researching Homosexual, Bisexual, and Transsexual Homicide*; Deviant Behavior class; College of St. Benedict/St. John's University; Collegetown

*Lesbian Homicide: Theoretical Frames in a Strategic Search*; Panel; Midwest Sociologists Society Conference; Milwaukee, WI

*Homosexual Homicide: Analyzing Research Barriers as a Form of Problem Solving*; Midwest Sociologists Society Conference; Milwaukee, WI

#### May

*Characteristics of Robbery in Homosexual Homicide*; [Poster Session]; Homicide Research Working Group; St. Louis, MO

#### June

*Lost and Found: Analyzing Identified Cases of Homosexual Homicides in Support of a Strategic Search*; Qualitative Research Conference; University of St. Thomas; Minneapolis

#### September

*GLBT Homicide: Preliminary Findings, Research Process and Public Policy Implications*; Out in the Valley, Stillwater

#### November

*Arson-Associated Homicides in Chicago: Searching for Glitter in Ash*; American Society of Criminology; Chicago, IL.

*Incidence of Firearm Homicide Among Lesbian Victims*; Homicide Research Working Group, Chicago, IL.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

#### March

OutFront Minnesota Conference, Brainerd

#### April

Professional Issues Conference, Fargo, ND

#### June

Twin Cities Pride Festival, Minneapolis

#### July

Rochester Pride Festival, Rochester

#### August

Pride Along the Mississippi; La Crosse, WI

South Central Minnesota Pridefest; Mankato

### CONFERENCES/TRAININGS ATTENDED

#### January-May

Mini-MBA in Nonprofit Management – Center for Nonprofit Management, University of St. Thomas; Minneapolis (in-kind donation of tuition)

#### March

Sociology Institute – University of Minnesota; Minneapolis

#### April

Fargo Professional Issues Conference; Fargo, ND

Midwest Sociologist's Society Conference; Milwaukee, WI

#### June

Homicide Research Working Group; St. Louis, MO

Qualitative Research Conference; University of St. Thomas; Minneapolis

#### August

Death Investigation & Eyewitness Evidence Seminar; Milwaukee, WI

#### September

How Nonprofits Can Thrive and Survive in Uncertain Times; Roseville (in-kind donation of seminar fee)

#### November

Building a Better Board – Gill Foundation; Grand Rapids

American Society of Criminology; Chicago, IL

### Is Your Group Interested in Learning about the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study?

Volunteers from the Study are available to speak to groups about LGBT homicide issues and our work as a formal presentation, guest lecturer for a class, or a featured speaker for a meeting or get-together. Presentations can be as short as 10 minutes or as long as 2 hours. For more information, contact the Study at [mngayhomicide@earthlink.net](mailto:mngayhomicide@earthlink.net).

## 2002 CONTRIBUTORS AND SUPPORTERS

### FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

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*Thank you!*

### ABOUT THE MINNESOTA GAY HOMICIDE STUDY

The Minnesota Gay Homicide Study is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the capacity of the LGBT community, criminal justice professionals, and law enforcement to become more effective in identifying, solving and preventing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender homicides in Minnesota.

Begun in 1992 and incorporated in 1999 as a nonprofit, the MGHS is an independent, community-based response to LGBT homicide.

The mission of the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study is to promote greater knowledge and understanding of the unique nature of LGBT homicide through sound empirical research, critical analysis and effective community partnerships.

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