

2003 IS YEAR OF HARD WORK, DISCOVERY AND SUCCESS

Looking back on the year 2003, it seems a blur of activity and accomplishments. It has been four years since the founding of the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study. This year the hard work of the many volunteers, collaborators and supports really began to bear fruit.

Joint Task Force Collaborates with MGHS to Assist in Investigation of Serial Homicide Cases

In the spring, MGHS researcher Dallas Drake worked hand-in-hand with a multi-agency task force made up of law enforcement officials from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the state police from several eastern states, and officials from local jurisdictions in New Jersey and New York to shed light on an active investigation of a serial homicide suspect. The MGHS national database of LGBT homicides, MGHS resources, and Drake's expertise in both LGBT culture and homicide investigation, helped the task force identify additional possible homicide victims, expand their scope, and further the investigations of "cold cases."

MGHS Helps New Zealand Investigators Solve Gay Homicide

In late July, after a prominent gay man in New Zealand was killed, but the investigator did not think that the man's sexuality was an aspect important to the homicide. It was never even considered. However, after learning of the case, the director of a New Zealand-based sexuality training organization contacted the detective to discuss the case. He had read the MGHS website and shared with him the 11 "markers" of a gay homicide developed by MGHS. These resources and discussions with MGHS researcher Dallas Drake led the New Zealand detective to take the investigation in another direction, and make an arrest.

Training for Law Enforcement Expands

MGHS trainers have been actively sharing their expertise on gay homicide with law enforcement professionals. MGHS provided intensive trainings at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, at the Lambda Community Center in Sacramento, California; at University of New Orleans in New Orleans, Louisiana; and with the Seven Rivers Resource Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Community Education on Gay Homicide Increases

MGHS provided trainings for community members at universities across the Upper Midwest, including University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, Southwest State University in Marshall; and UM-Duluth. Trainings and education for the LGBT community and youth were offered in New Orleans, Sacramento, La Crosse, Wisconsin; and in Minnesota in Rochester, Duluth and Minneapolis.

MGHS Research Locates 2,300 Gay Homicide Cases

MGHS researchers and interns have been pouring over documents and online resources throughout the year, and these efforts have yielded a somber milestone – the 2,300th homicide case identified by MGHS. Rooms full of materials have been researched, catalogued and coded. Once-hidden cases have been found. Names not spoken in decades have been read aloud. Faded photographs and yellowed newspaper clippings have been located. Data have been coded, analyzed and entered. The work is far from complete.



Intern Joe Riemann holds a stack of "raw" homicide cases.

Researchers estimate that there may be 6,000-7,000 cases nationally since 1969, the birth of the Modern Gay Movement in America.

Research Breaking New Ground in the Field of Criminology

In addition to training law enforcement and community members, MGHS researchers are also advancing the field of criminology. MGHS volunteers presented two papers at national conferences in 2003, contributed resources to a forthcoming major work; and are continuing work on research papers focusing on weapon type, gender differences, and arson as it relates to gay homicide. ☛

WHY STUDY GAY HOMICIDE?

Researchers hear this question a lot at MGHS. At presentations and in the community, many people don't understand the motivation behind the work. Many believe that *there must already* be accurate information on homicides of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Not so – outside the MGHS research, no one anywhere has more comprehensive information on LGBT homicides in the U.S., not the FBI, not the Department of Justice, not state police.

Many wrongly believe that everything that can be learned about gay homicide can be learned by analyzing existing information on homicides. No so – the differences MGHS researchers are finding are striking.

We study gay homicide because homicide is the most severe of all crimes. Gay homicide can be the most extreme of all anti-gay hate crimes. The impact of a gay homicide is felt far beyond the immediate family or friends of the victim. A gay homicide has a terroristic effect on the gay community and its members. In the wake of a gay homicide, members of the gay community perceive a greater threat to their personal safety and well-being. In fact, gay people often become the targets of harassment and threats by individuals bolstered by the event of gay homicide.

MGHS is uniquely positioned to study gay homicide because GLBT anti-violence organizations are more focused on victim services, and rarely deal with homicide cases in comparison to other types of violence. MGHS provides a specialized, collaborative resource in homicide to support their existing work.

We study gay homicide because law enforcement and criminal justice professionals are often challenged to respond appropriately to members of the gay community. Potential biases by investigators and perceptions of the “homosexual lifestyle” can present significant challenges to an effective investigation. The critical days following a gay homicide are not the time to try to develop working relationships between the gay community and law enforcement. The criminal justice community needs accurate information and resources that help them be more effective in the investigation of homicide cases.

We study homicide because time is always short and money is always tight. Understanding the characteristics and phenomenon of gay homicide helps law enforcement and the gay community be more effective with scarce resources. MGHS helps people respond more quickly and be more efficient.

We study homicide because we aim to prevent gay homicides. Homicide is not a random phenomenon. Certain characteristics and behaviors put some people more at risk for homicide. We need to identify these traits in gay homicides so that we can develop effective risk-reduction strategies to prevent homicides and save lives. ☺

PERCEPTIONS AND PROCEDURES: A RESEARCH STUDY OF THE SOLVABILITY RATE OF GAY HOMICIDE IN MINNEAPOLIS

*By Joe Riemann, University of Minnesota
MGHS Intern 2003-2004*

I started working for the MGHS last spring. Principal researcher Dallas Drake helped me a lot with engaging the material and taught me much about the research process. During the summer I became very interested in researching Minnesota GLBT homicide cases and concentrated solely on completing the Minnesota data set. This led to my senior research paper on gay homicide solvability, which I have just completed for my graduation requirement at the University of Minnesota.

Solvability of a homicide is the rate at which an offender is charged with a murder, or the incident happened to be a murder-suicide. Basically it is a litmus test of how well local law enforcement is doing on solving homicide cases. While there is not a lot of literature on the subject, there have been many authors suggesting a lower solvability rate for murders involving gay victims.

For my research project, I compared the solvability rates of gay homicides that occurred in Minneapolis from 1989–1999 (25 total) to the solvability rates of the 669 non-gay homicides that occurred during those years. As it turned out that there was no significant difference in the solvability rates. This was a surprising finding because it is contrary to popular belief. I have many speculations about the reason for this finding, and hope to do a more extensive study on this subject sometime next year as I continue my work with the MGHS.

Homicide Clearance Rate for Minneapolis 1989-1999			
Sexuality	Number of Cases Unsolved	Number of Cases Solved	Solvability Rate
Non-Gay	231	438	66%
Gay	8	17	68%

** Data obtained from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the MGHS (2003).*

If it were not for the information obtained by the MGHS, this study and future studies like it would not be possible. When researching other studies and articles on the subject, I was amazed at the inadequacy of information available.

The work being done at the MGHS is truly amazing and will greatly impact both the academic and public communities. It has been a great experience working at the MGHS and I hope to contribute much more of my time and assistance long after my graduation in December. ☺

2003 PRESENTATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS

Presentations Delivered

January 31, 2003

Creating Safer Communities; University of St. Thomas; Minneapolis, MN

April 9, 2003

Finding Our Voices; Sponsored by Southwest State University; Marshall, MN

June 6, 2003

"Preventing Gay Homicide;" Sacramento Area LGBT Youth Group; Sponsored by Lambda Community Center; Sacramento, CA

June 7, 2003

"Evaluating Arson-Associated Homicide;" Dallas Drake and Carolyn Rebecca Block; Homicide Research Working Group Summer Meeting; Sacramento, CA

June 12, 2003

"Law Enforcement and Community Perspectives on Gay Homicide;" Sponsored by Lambda Community Center; Sacramento, CA

July 23, 2003

"Preventing GLBT Homicide in the United State: A Community Training;" New Orleans, LA

July 24, 2003

"Solving Homosexual Homicide—A Seminar for Police Investigators, Medical Examiners and Coroners;" University of New Orleans; New Orleans, LA

October 20, 2003

"Understanding Homosexual Homicide;" Sponsored by University of Minnesota-Duluth GLBT Services; University of Minnesota-Duluth, Duluth, MN

November 19, 2003

"Instrumental Gain or Expressive Rage: Characteristics of Robbery in Homosexual Homicides;" Dallas Drake, American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Denver, CO

December 6, 2003

"Solving Homosexual Homicide—A Seminar for Police Investigators", Sponsored by Seven Rivers Recourse Center, La Crosse, WI

December 6, 2003

Post-production Discussion on Gay Homicide following performance of *The Laramie Project*, Sponsored by University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, La Crosse, WI

Educational Tables

March 15-16, 2003

OutFront Minnesota Conference, Rochester, MN

June 5-8, 2003

Homicide Research Working Group Summer Meeting; Sacramento, CA

June 28-29, 2003

Twin Cities Pride Festival; Minneapolis, MN

July 19, 2003

Rochester PrideFest; Rochester, MN

August 20, 2003

Twin Cities Black Pride; Minneapolis, MN

MGHS RECEIVES CHALLENGE GRANT FROM GILL FOUNDATION

The Colorado-based Gill Foundation, a long-time supporter of the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study, has presented MGHS with an operating grant for 2003 plus a challenge grant for 2004. Gill Foundation is a \$200 million-endowed organization committed to securing equal opportunity for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Gill Foundation will match all new donations and any increased donations from existing contributors up to \$2,500. Contributions must be received by MGHS before May 30, 2004.

Double the impact of your donation—give generously! ☛

SNAPSHOT OF THE MGHS NATIONAL DATABASE

The MGHS national database of gay homicides contains over 2,000 homicide cases across the U.S. MGHS researchers estimate that, when completed, the database will encompass a 6,000-7,000 cases. The research to complete the database is far from complete, but there are some interesting trends that are emerging.

This is a listing of the ten states with the largest number of gay homicides from 1969 to the present.

California.....	172	Illinois.....	82
Florida	166	Georgia.....	68
Texas	136	Pennsylvania.....	47
New York	129	District of Columbia.....	45
Minnesota*	122	Massachusetts.....	40

*Data from Minnesota are the most complete of all the states. Number of homicides in other states may be underrepresented at this time.☛

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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 organization, the MGHS is an independent 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.

MINNESOTA GAY HOMICIDE STUDY

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