



Progress Report '04

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EXPANDED MISSION AND INCREASED IMPACT LEADS TO NAME CHANGE FOR MINNESOTA GAY HOMICIDE STUDY

BY JOE SHULKA, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet uttered these famous words:

*"What's in a name?
That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet."*

In the case of roses and the occasional adolescent Montague, I would agree with Juliet. But in the case of organizations, names mean a great deal. The Minnesota Gay Homicide Study has learned this over the last five years.

Original Name Generated Some Confusion

Over the last several years, the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study has encountered difficulties with its name. When originally chosen, the name was intended to convey the location and mission of the organization. The founders wanted a name that was clear and wasn't a euphemism for the topic. But for many of the same reasons the name was chosen, MGHS also generated confusion and caused some difficulties.

Some of the most common questions regarded the word "gay." *Was this only a study of gay men? Were lesbians, bisexuals or transgender people included in the research?* Yes. "Gay" is used in the broadest context as it is in hundreds of organizations.

Were homicides that occurred outside of Minnesota included? Originally, only those in Minnesota and its border cities were included in our research, but our mission expanded in 2003 to include the entire United States.

Is the study going to end soon or will this be a permanent resource? The founders' intent was to create a lasting resource for the community and law enforcement. Research is a long-term investment whose ultimate impact is systems change. With the Minnesota study will likely be finalized, the Center will continue as a national resource.

So Why Change the Name Now?

In the life of a nonprofit organization, there are certain milestones. One of the first is the transition from provisional to permanent nonprofit status. This happens at the end of the fourth fiscal year by filing numerous legal documents. This paperwork also provides an excellent opportunity to update the IRS with any changes to the original application – including name changes.


In the fall of 2003, MGHS polled approximately 150 supporters and community leaders with a web-based survey asking for input on our name. Approximately 50 people responded. Although there was not overwhelming appeal of any one name, several key messages did emerge. The Board took these under consideration, and in late December passed a resolution to officially change the name from the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study to the Center for Homicide Research.

Will You Still Focus on GLBT Homicide?

Definitely. The Center for Homicide Research is a unique resource addressing the issue of GLBT homicide. Our focus will continue to expand the identification and understanding of homicide in the GLBT community.

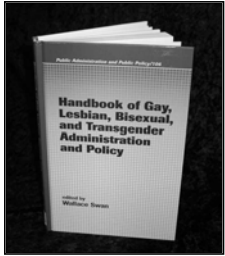
What Happens to the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study?

The important work of the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study continues as a program of the Center for Homicide Research. In fact, its work will be expanding in 2004. Donors and supporters can even designate contributions to this specific program.

We thank all our supporters and the community for your continued interest in our work. If you have questions, please contact me by e-mail at joeshulka@earthlink.net. 

NEW BOOK INCLUDES CHAPTERS ON HOMICIDE AND VIOLENCE BY CENTER RESEARCHER

A new book from publisher Marcel Dekker includes significant contributions by Center for Homicide Research's principal researcher Dallas Drake on criminal justice and homicide in the GLBT community. The book, *Handbook of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Administration and Policy*, edited by Wallace Swan, was published in January 2004.



Drake and other contributing authors have been working with Swan for more than two years to develop this comprehensive resource. Contributors include leading policy makers and researchers from across the United States. The book addresses issues of criminal justice and homicide in the GLBT community (by Drake/Swan and Drake respectively), human rights laws, transgender rights, health, and issues of youth and aging in the GLBT community.


"The writings of those on the front lines of administration are valuable for colleagues, staff, academicians, and policy makers."

U.S. Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin

Drake's two chapters in *Handbook* represent significant areas of research at the Center: homicide in the GLBT community and criminal justice issues. Both chapters provide a solid foundation for understanding of these unique issues for readers and policy makers.

In a chapter entitled "Criminal Justice Administration—A Survey of the Issues," Drake and Swan provide a context to understand issues relating to crime in the GLBT community, including efforts to criminalize GLBT behavior, privacy, hate crimes, intimate partner violence, drug use, and the criminal justice process as it affects GLBT people.

Drake's chapter entitled "Confronting and Managing GLBT Homicide and Its Associated Phenomena" is an overview of the complex issue of homicide and its related phenomena in the GLBT community. This chapter includes new data on the typology of GLBT homicides and its impact on the community. The chapter also includes an extensive list of national resources.

The 360-page *Handbook of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Administration and Policy* is available from Marcel Dekker publishing online at www.dekker.com or by calling (212) 696-9000. 

CENTER BEGINS COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT WITH MINNEAPOLIS POLICE DEPT.

The Center for Homicide Research and the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) are finalizing a new collaboration to develop a research database of homicides from 1990-2000 using MPD homicide files. CHR Principal Researcher Dallas Drake is the lead researcher on this new endeavor. This project is a major development, not only regarding GLBT homicide, but also concerning homicide nationally.

This research will help establish an incidence rate of GLBT homicide for the first time using official police records. It will also allow for detailed analysis of gay cases. Both gay and non-gay homicide data will be collected allowing for a control or comparison group. Although several large city police departments in the U.S. allow independent homicide research, it is believed that this is the first time that researchers will analyze and catalog gay homicide variables from original police records.

Minneapolis Police will also benefit as the department will be able to ask research questions that are not currently answerable from existing data. Homicide information is cataloged in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system. But the UCR data elements are based on the administrative desire to show labor productivity. They do not track very much information that is necessary to improve crime fighting capacity.

Many of the methods used to investigate homicides have never been empirically tested and as a result, homicide solvability may be positively or negatively affected. Drake continues to be in contact with national experts on solvability in an effort to construct the best research plan possible for investigating these issues.

"This collaboration is really cutting edge. Other national researchers are excited about the detail that this project will provide. We are pleased that Minneapolis Police are partners in advancing this important work."

Principal Researcher Dallas Drake

Drake is also interested micro-level social interactions of these homicides. In particular, he has constructed questions concerning the expressive actions of the offenders, sometimes referred to as "signature behaviors" by criminal profilers. These include actions and behaviors that were unnecessary for the commission of the crime and may reflect the offender's internal needs. Drake believes it may also help us to understand violence in general and that violence may (in many cases) be the result of a communications disorder.

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CENTER INTERN PRESENTS AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Longtime CHR intern and recent University of Minnesota graduate Joseph Riemann recently presented a paper on solvability at the annual meeting of the Homicide Research Working Group (HRWG). HRWG is an international professional association of homicide researchers.

Riemann's paper, *Perceptions and Procedures: A Research Study of the Solvability Rates of Gay Homicides in Minneapolis*, 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. Solvability of a homicide is the rate at which an offender is charged with a murder. Basically it is a litmus test of how well local law enforcement is doing on solving homicide cases.

The surprising finding was that there was no significant difference in the solvability rates between gay and nongay cases. Riemann's data was obtained from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study database. His work will also appear in the proceedings of the conference. 🏠

CHR RESEARCH PROJECTS

There are a variety of research projects being undertaken by volunteers in addition to the identification and analysis of GLBT homicide cases since 1969. All projects involve GLBT incidents or are instrumental to developing a knowledge base for GLBT homicide research.

Dallas Drake – Missing Victim Homicides
Bridget Graw – Intimate-Partner Homicide
Barb Hutchins – Fairness in Sentencing
Barb Hutchins & Dallas Drake – Knife Weapon Homicide
Scott Kaiser – Street Crime Communication Systems
Kris Larson – Crime Scene Staging
Phil Miner – Male Prostitution and Homicide
Joe Riemann – Solvability of Homosexual Homicide
Joronne Williamson – Gang and Drug Homicide

CHR RESEARCHER SERVES AS PROGRAM CHAIR FOR HOMICIDE CONFERENCE

Dallas Drake, CHR principal researcher, served as program chair for the 2004 summer meeting of the Homicide Research Working Group. During the year-long position, Drake solicited abstracts for presentations, reviewed proposals, organized the conference program, and led the sessions at the 2004 HRWG conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The conference draws homicide researchers from across the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe. 🏠

SPACE – THE NEXT FRONTIER

The Center for Homicide Research has been fortunate to operate from donated space in a house over the past five years. This has enabled more resources to be used for direct research, data collection and analysis, and training. But the donated space is quickly filling up.

As the research has expanded, the materials, resources and case files have grown considerably. Even with much of the data being stored electronically, paper and books take up a great deal of space. Currently, the Center for Homicide Research occupies approximately 500 square feet of a 1,400 square foot house. The Center currently has four work stations, three computers, over a dozen 4-drawer file cabinets, and an extensive library of books and hard-to-find research materials all in three small rooms. At times, up to five volunteers work simultaneously in the same rooms.

As the research expands, additional cases are identified, and as more people volunteer for the Center, space has become a premium. In 2005 the Center aims to raise sufficient funds to move into office space that better meets its growing needs. Anyone with information on approximately 1,000 square foot of available space should contact Joe Shulka at joeshulka@earthlink.net. 🏠

NEW WEBSITE TO LAUNCH

With the formal adoption of a new organizational name also comes a new and expanded website. In mid-July the Center for Homicide Research will launch its new site at www.CHRonline.org. 🏠



CHR researcher Dallas Drake (l) and intern Joe Riemann (r) with Mark Marsolais, Northern Kentucky University, and his cadaver dog, Kurt – a Belgian Malamut, following a demonstration at HRWG on the use of specially trained dogs to locate human remains.

UM STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE LEARNING AT CHR


In the spring of 2004 two students were accepted at CHR from the University of Minnesota sociology department as part of service learning. UM students are encouraged to seek volunteer learning experiences in the community as a part of their course participation. While the Center does not pay for their service, students do receive extra credit for their work.



University of Minnesota
service learning student
Joronne Williamson


At the Center, they learn about the basic mechanics of the research process as well as an introduction to some of the projects that are underway. At the end of their volunteer participation, students submit a five-page paper to their instructor outlining how their learning has contributed to their coursework.

The two participants in the spring of 2004 were Nenise Smith and Joronne Williamson.

Students or faculty wishing to be involved with the Center as part of a service learning project should contact principal researcher Dallas Drake at dallas.drake@mindspring.com. 


BOARD POSITIONS AVAILABLE

The Center for Homicide Research is seeking applications for expanded positions on its Board of Directors. Interests in research, social justice, or criminology are helpful, but not required. People of color, women, and transgender people are encouraged to apply. Experience in fundraising, research, finance, communications, criminal justice, and/or community relations are helpful. Previous experience on nonprofit boards is not required.

For more information, contact Joe Shulka, CHR Board President, at joeshulka@earthlink.net. 

INTERESTED IN INTERNING OR VOLUNTEERING WITH US?


A variety of opportunities are available for people interested in assisting with the research and operations of the Center for Homicide Research.

For more information, contact Joe Shulka, CHR Board President, at joeshulka@earthlink.net, or look for list of opportunities on the new CHR website in mid-July. 


MINNEAPOLIS POLICE COLLABORATION Continued from Page 2

The research will be conducted under strict confidentiality agreements to protect privacy. All of the data collected at MPD will be protected through precautions mandated by state and federal law, as well as standard ethical practices of sociological research.

The data collected will eventually be prepared and portions will be placed in the public domain at the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This will enable other researchers to analyze this data and develop public policy or improve investigative techniques. Center Researchers recently toured their facility which has become the central depository for crime data in the United States.

The Minneapolis homicide project is expected to take two to three years and is very labor intensive. Much groundwork was necessary to prepare for such a project including the preparing of a confidentiality contract and access agreement. Data collection work is expected to begin the week of July 5th. 

GILL FOUNDATION CHALLENGE GRANT SUCCESSFUL

In July 2003, the Colorado-based Gill Foundation offered the Center for Homicide Research a challenge grant to raise \$2,500 in new or increased donations from individuals in one year. Thanks to our generous donors, CHR completed this challenge in just 6 months. 

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR HOMICIDE RESEARCH

The Center for Homicide Research is an independent, volunteer-driven, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the capacity of the GLBT community, criminal justice professionals, and law enforcement to become more effective in identifying, solving and preventing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender homicides.

Research began in 1992 and incorporated in 1999 as a nonprofit organization called the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study. In 2004, the name was changed to the Center for Homicide Research.

The mission of the Center for Homicide Research 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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