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FOCUSED RESEARCH YIELDS MANY NEW CASES

by Emily Babcock, Research Intern

During the summer of 2005, 12 undergraduate and graduate student interns at the Center for Homicide Research focused their efforts on identifying and researching GLBT homicide cases in the Upper Midwest. Nearly 2,500 hours of research yielded materials and information on 233 GLBT homicides since 1969.

Wisconsin was studied first, making it only the second of fifty states to be systematically searched for the most complete and accurate data on GLBT homicides. Two of the most effective search methods used by the Center are GLBT newspapers and publications, and archival materials from established GLBT organizations. Unfortunately, most newspapers and organizations do not have an index or catalogue of homicide cases. To even begin the research, interns developed an exhaustive list of news publications and organizations in Wisconsin from 1969 to present that may have materials of interest. This list included 171 publications and organizations, 31 of which were specifically GLBT.

The interns narrowed their research to three main GLBT publications: *Wisconsin In Step* (published from 1984-2004), *Wisconsin Light* (1987-2002), and *Out!* (1982-1987). These three sources were chosen because they are the largest GLBT news sources of Wisconsin and the most available. Unfortunately, no single place had a complete set of these publications.

In order to acquire as many issues as possible, interns used the Quatrefoil Library in Saint Paul, the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Archives, and Don Schwamb's collection for the Milwaukee LGBT History Project. Together, these three sources accounted for 88% of the entire inventory for the three publications. In order to obtain the rest of the publications, additional sources will be undertaken at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee archives.


In total, 758 issues were examined over a two month period. Each GLBT homicide news record or report was systematically photocopied, coded and filed. In total 233 GLBT homicide victims were located from 482 news articles. Approximately one-third of the GLBT homicide victims identified during the research were new to the Center's database of GLBT homicide victims.

Because these Wisconsin newspapers served as regional news sources, both Wisconsin homicides and cases from other states were identified. Of the cases, 67 victims were from Wisconsin and 166 were from other states.

Locating homicide victims in GLBT news sources is just the first step. The next step involves gathering additional information from electronic archives such as Lexis-Nexis and News Library, along with public criminal justice information. Through this process, additional GLBT homicide cases were found.

In order to make the Wisconsin homicide files complete, the Center is requesting Wisconsin death records for justifiable and criminal homicide, and the court records of the offenders.

Research on North Dakota and South Dakota has only reached the preliminary stages of the strategic search procedure. Searches have been conducted for GLBT news sources in those states with limited results. Additional research is needed.

Special thanks to Jean Tretter of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Archives, Quatrefoil Library, and Don Schwamb of the Milwaukee LGBT History Project. Without these resources and individuals, this research could not be undertaken. 

Interested in being a research intern or volunteer? Learn more at www.CHRonline.org

Research Factoid

12 research interns spent over 2,500 hours reviewing and analyzing GLBT newspapers and court records to identify 233 new GLBT homicides in the Upper Midwest and the nation.

INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS LEARN SKILLS AND ADVANCE MISSION

One of the core values of the Center for Homicide Research is to create expertise in the community about issues related to homicide and violence involving gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. One of the most effective ways is through our internship program. The Center provides interns and volunteers with a unique learning opportunity, connects them with experts in the field, and engages them in ground-breaking research.

The Center wishes to acknowledge these researchers for their service in 2005.



Emily Babcock attends the St. Mary's University in Winona. Emily is a psychology and criminal justice double major, with a political science minor. She worked full-time for the Center for Homicide Research during the summer of 2005 as part of the Higher Education Consortium of Urban Affairs' Partners Internship Program. She led the Center's efforts in the collection and analysis of GLBT homicide cases in Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Lynnea Fedyk is a graduate from Hamline University with degrees in Anthropology and Criminal Justice. She also holds a certificate in forensic sciences. Lynnea also interned with the Innocence Project and in the crime lab at the St. Paul Police Department. During her internship, she gathered from various court houses and analyzed legal documents and police records of offenders identified in GLBT homicides in Minnesota.



Kaitlin Keith is a graduate of the University of Minnesota-Duluth with degrees in Sociology and Criminology. Working 75% time this summer, Kaitlin played a key role in the analysis of archival newspapers and other research materials to identify and research GLBT homicides in the Upper Midwest.

Trevyn LaBlanc is a full-time student at Metropolitan State University pursuing a degree in Gender Studies and a minor in Women's Studies. He recently completed an internship at the Minnesota Capitol as a legislative page. Trevyn worked on several projects including research on serial homicides, transgender victimization, GLBT homicide offenders, and GLBT homicides in San Francisco. He is now preparing for the LSAT and deciding where to attend law school.



Erin Lease is an honor student pursuing degrees in psychology and sociology with an emphasis in crime, law and deviance. Erin was involved in the analysis of archival newspapers, as well as conducting research to identify and analyze GLBT homicides in the Upper Midwest.



Rebecca Lucero is a third-year law student at the University of Minnesota Law School. While in law school, she has worked with the Criminal Expungement Clinic. In addition to working at the Center, Rebecca also worked with the Workers Rights Center. She was very involved in the collection and analysis of GLBT homicide cases in Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota during her internship.


Robert Sanberg is a junior at the University of Minnesota pursuing a double major in sociology and psychology. Robert grew up in a family of lawyers and plans to attend law school and become a trial attorney. He participated in the collection and analysis of GLBT homicide cases in the Midwest, and gathered court documents and police records of offenders. Robert is also very skilled in computers and helped improve the Center's electronic databases.



Joe Van Thomme is pre-law at the University of Minnesota pursuing degrees in philosophy and anthropology. Joe has an interest and passion for social activism and community service. His internship involves identifying and analyzing GLBT homicides and he is conducting original research on staging in homicide crimes.

William "Bob" Vollmar is a law student at the William Mitchell College of Law. Bob has an interest in criminal law, especially how the criminal justice system deals with homicide incidents. As part of his internship, he located and analyzed court documents and police records of Minnesota GLBT homicides.



The Center would also like to thank Erin Schneider, Drew Pearson, Elizabeth Sanberg and Scott Rasmussen for their involvement during the summer and fall of 2005. 

Hurricane Katrina Devastates CHR Volunteer

Long-time CHR volunteer researcher Dorothy "Dede" Burandt of New Orleans lost her home and a loved one in the devastation and flooding following Hurricane Katrina. Even while displaced, she reported to the Center that the first post-Katrina homicide in New Orleans was gay-related. Our thoughts and support are with her and her family as they recover from this disaster.

Interested in Becoming a Volunteer or Know Someone Who Wants a Great Internship?

The Center for Homicide Research is taking applications for volunteer position and internships beginning in early 2006. College credit may be available. For more information on becoming involved, contact Dallas Drake at 612/331-4821 or by e-mail at dallas.drake@mindspring.com. Learn more online at www.CHRonline.org.

ARSON HOMICIDE IN GLBT CASES EXPLORED IN NEW PAPER

The Center for Homicide Research is pleased to announce that a scholarly article has been submitted to the journal *Homicide Studies* for publication in 2006. The paper, co-authored by CHR Principal Researcher Dallas Drake and Senior Crime Analyst Carolyn Rebecca Block, Ph.D. of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, focuses on the relationship between arson and homicide.

Although it might seem like an unlikely research topic, Drake says that a series of rare events led to this unique project. In 2001 the Center was contacted about a high profile gay homicide case that involved the use of fire as a lethal weapon. Investigators were trying to determine the prevalence and meaning of fire in homicide cases. Drake soon learned that only one paper has been written on arson-homicide in the United States, and it contained strong implications about the significance of fire in cases of GLBT homicide.


26% of all arson-homicides included homosexual or bisexual victims
Sapp and Huff, FBI

In that paper, Sapp and Huff, FBI researchers, determined that 26% of all arson-homicides included homosexual or bisexual victims. In addition, they found that 33% of offenders in arson-homicides were homosexual or bisexual. The Sapp and Huff data were drawn from VICAP, a nationwide data information source under the jurisdiction of the FBI designed to collect, collate, and analyze crimes of

violence - specifically homicide. VICAP, however, is not a representative sample of homicides.

In 2001, Drake was approached by Carolyn Rebecca Block, Ph.D. of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority who proposed an analysis of arson-homicides using data from the Homicides in Chicago dataset, one of the largest and most comprehensive datasets on violence in the United States containing information on nearly 23,000 homicides in Chicago from 1965 to 1995. The Drake & Block paper is the result.

Unfortunately, no variable was able to provide definitive data on GLBT homicides from the dataset. However, a variable did exist that included "gay relationship." This variable was limited because it does not identify all GLBT cases. Research using this variable on only the "gay relationship cases" indicated there is no difference between gay and non-gay arson-homicides. In an important development, the final paper explains that due to the coding limitations, it is not possible to conclude anything definitive about GLBT homicide based on this variable and this dataset.

To address this issue, the Center for Homicide Research's dataset of GLBT homicides in the U.S. does contain variables that can identify arson-homicide cases. Further research using the Center's data will be undertaken when the dataset is more complete. 


ANALYSIS OF TRANSGENDER HOMICIDES CONTINUES

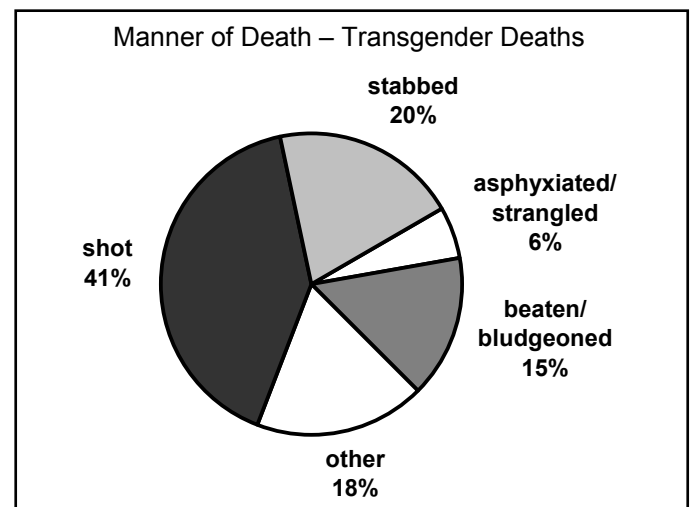
Understanding homicides involving transgender victims and offenders are an integral part of the work of the Center for Homicide Research. To date, no scientific research on transgender homicide has been undertaken in the United States. There are, however, numerous published lists of deceased transgender victims. Unfortunately, these lists are incomplete.

To understand the impact and scope of homicides involving transgender individuals, scientific and methodical research must be undertaken. The Center has undertaken considerable research on several of the larger lists that are available, including several that have been reproduced widely on many web sites.

The Center's database of GLBT homicide incidents contains over 125 variables, including nine transgender-related variables, more than any other category. Previous research on homicide and lethal violence has typically not included any transgender-related information and has dropped this topic as "problematic." Because of the complex circumstances involved in violence and homicides involving transgender people, our detailed data will produce the most usable information for the community.

The Center for Homicide Research has invested hundreds of hours processing, researching and verifying information related to transgender homicide incidents. During the summer of 2005, the Center employed its first transgender research intern. Part of his self-determined research project was to catalog and research suspected cases of transgender homicide.

At present, the Center have identified and cataloged over 3,000 homicide cases involving GLBT people in the United States. Transgender homicides currently compose approximately 7% of our dataset. It should be noted, that the research on GLBT homicides and the representation of transgender homicide cases is incomplete. 



Data Source: Transgender Day of Remembrance U.S. cases only

CONTRIBUTORS

Leadership Circle

Brook Glaefke
ADC Foundation
Otto Bremer Foundation
Gill Foundation
Higher Education Consortium of Urban Affairs
Minnesota State Bar Foundation
PFund Foundation
Joe Shulka & Dallas Drake * †
Target Commercial Interiors †

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Jacqueline Gohdes
Paul Harris in memory of Gary Matson
Heather Stocking
Bob Vollmar
Darrel Waters

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B. R. Simon Rosser, Ph.D., M.P.H., L.P.,
University of Minnesota Medical School
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Milwaukee LGBT History Project
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Mark Thompson
Jean Tretter,
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Minnesota Archives
University of Minnesota Law School
University of Minnesota – Duluth
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
University of St. Thomas
Kim Vogt, Ph.D.,
University of Wisconsin – La Crosse
William Mitchell College of Law

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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 GLBT homicide through sound empirical research, critical analysis and effective community partnerships.

**CENTER FOR
HOMICIDE RESEARCH**
3036 University Avenue SE Suite E
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 331-4820
www.CHROnline.org