



Home Office

Gay homicide victims in England and Wales: helping the police with their enquiries

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they reflect Government policy).

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Special Interest Series Paper No 17

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Colin Richardson and all the police forces involved for providing the data.

We are particularly grateful to Andy Feist for his comments and guidance throughout the duration of this work. Pat Mayhew and Jonathan Smith made helpful comments on early drafts. We also wish to thank the project reviewers, Dallas Drake, co-founder and vice president of the Center for Homicide Research, Minneapolis and Professor Robert Gilchrist from the Statistics, Operational Research and Mathematics (STORM) Centre, London Metropolitan University for their valuable comments. Finally, we would like to thank those members of the project steering group, and in particular Ian Saunders and John Watts from the Gay Police Association, who made valuable contributions to the final report.

Samantha Leahy and Nicky Miller are members of Research Development and Statistics (Crime Reduction and Community Safety Group). Brian Francis is Professor at Lancaster University's Centre for Applied Statistics.

Executive summary

Background

Our understanding of the nature and extent of homicides involving gay victims is limited. The available research evidence has focused on either building typologies or has otherwise concentrated on the characteristics of hate-related offences.

This study aims to assist those working on homicide investigations involving gay victims, by considering the relationship between the characteristics of the victim, the circumstances of the offence, and the characteristics of the offender. In doing so, this research aims to provide a more detailed understanding of homicides involving gay victims in England and Wales and identify patterns that may be of use to an investigator.

The study draws on information from 120 police case files on gay homicide victims between 1980 and 2001. Because a victim's sexual orientation is not routinely recorded on the Homicide Index, it was necessary to use a database based on court reports and press coverage to identify gay homicide victims. Although the study sample is unlikely to be fully representative of all gay homicide victims, it does provide the best available picture of this type of offence.

The nature and extent of homicides involving gay victims in England and Wales

Combining cases obtained from the study sample with additional cases from the Homicide Index indicated that there were a minimum of 84 gay victims of homicide in England and Wales between 1995 and 2001, an average of 12 per year. These cases account for approximately 1.5 per cent of all homicides in the period (or 2.5 per cent of all adult male victim homicides). This percentage can only, however, be considered to be a minimum estimate, partly because of the problems around establishing victim sexual orientation in homicide cases.

For the study sample as a whole (1980-2001), details on a total of 120 cases were collected. The main findings are as follows:

- A total of 27 cases (23%) involved multiple offenders. Victim ages ranged from 17 to 78 years (with a median age of 44 years); suspect ages ranged from 15 to 60 years, with a median age of 24 years. Eight cases were part of two linked series of offences.
- Although the scope of the study included female victims, all the victims that made up the study sample were male. Other US studies have found relatively low numbers of female gay homicide victims.
- The victim knew the suspect in the majority of cases (60%). Familial relationships accounted for only one per cent of all cases compared with sexual partners (24%) and acquaintance/friends (36%). In the remaining cases, the victim and suspect were strangers (40%).
- Blunt force trauma and stabbing were the most frequent methods of killing in these cases (each accounting for 28% of cases).
- A small proportion of cases (7%) was classified as motivated by homophobia. Dispute and rage-related homicides were the most common motivation in the gay victim sample (34%). Offences with a sexual

element accounted for 28 per cent of the total. The definition of 'offences with a sexual element' is broader than solely sexually-motivated offences. It includes other cases where sexual activity was a central part of the offence (for instance where the suspect alleged the victim made an unwanted sexual advance against the suspect).

Analysing the data to help investigator decision-making

Solved cases were subjected to a more detailed analysis to explore whether it was possible to infer offender characteristics from information about the offence and the victim. Given the small number of cases available for analysis, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the results, but the main findings were as follows.

- *Offender-victim relationship.* The probability that the offender was a stranger to the victim was found to be greater if *both* property/personal possessions were missing from the victim, *and* the location of first contact between offender and victim was in a public space (e.g. a pub or an open area). If these two characteristics were present in a case, a stranger relationship was predicted in 77 per cent of cases.
- *Offender age.* The probability that the offender was under the age of 29 years was greater if the location of first contact prior to the offence was in a public place. The odds of an offender being under 29 years were three and a half times greater if the location was public as opposed to private.
- *Relationship status.* If the victim was in a relationship (but not necessarily with the offender), and injuries were sustained to the face, head or neck, then the analysis predicted that about 90 per cent of offenders would be in a relationship.
- *Offender sexual orientation.* If sexual activity had occurred with the victim, combined with injuries to the face, head, or neck and with no evidence of the use of restraints, the analysis predicted that 98 per cent of offenders would be gay. However, where no restraints were used, there was no evidence of sexual activity but there was evidence of injuries to parts of the body other than the face or neck etc., this revealed close to a 50-50 split between gay and heterosexual offenders. Although this combination appears to provide little guide to investigators over the likely sexual orientation of the offender, it may still have investigative value by highlighting the need to keep an open mind over the likely sexual orientation of the offender.

Recommendations

- These findings should be disseminated widely through appropriate channels (in particular the Serious Crime Analysis Section) to assist future investigations or reviews of gay homicide victim cases.
- The analysis should be tested on a separate dataset of gay homicide victims.
- Any future mainstream revisions to the Homicide Index data collection form should incorporate the routine recording of victim and suspect sexual orientation.

Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	i
Executive summary	ii
List of tables	v
List of figures	vi
List of case studies	vi
1. Introduction	1
Related research	2
Methodology	4
Structure of the report	7
2. Describing the sample of gay homicide victims	8
The overall characteristics of gay homicide victims in England and Wales	8
The study sample	10
Victim and suspect characteristics	14
3. Analysing the data to help investigator decision-making	18
The sample	18
What does the investigator need to know	18
Results	21
4. Conclusions	26
Overall offence and offender profile	26
The potential value to the investigator	26
Recommendations	28
Appendix 1	29
References	31

List of tables

	Page
1.1 Key features of the gay homicide victim sample	7
2.1 Characteristics of gay homicide cases from the study sample and the Homicide Index 1995-2001	9
2.2 The age and relationship profile of gay homicide victims and suspects: composite sample, 1995-2001	10
2.3 Victim and suspect relationship	11
2.4 Method of killing in the study sample cases	12
2.5 Motivations underlying homicide	13

2.6	Sexual orientation of the suspect	16
3.1	Predicted variables within the gay victim sample	19
3.2	Explanatory variables that were found to have a statistically significant relationship with a predicted variable	20
3.3	Percentage of offenders aged 29 years and under and 30 years and over for each explanatory variable	21
3.4	Percentage of offender and victims that were either known to each other or were strangers for each explanatory variable	22
3.5	Percentage of offenders who were gay or heterosexual by each explanatory variable	23
3.6	The probability that the offender is gay given certain combinations of explanatory variables	24
3.7	Percentage of cases where the offender was single or in a relationship by each explanatory variable	25

List of figures

	Page	
2.1	Age of victims	15

List of case studies

	Page
Case study no. 1	13
Case study no. 2	14
Case study no. 3	16

1 Introduction

Little is known about the number of gay¹ homicide victims in the UK. Whilst the Home Office Homicide Index² (HI) records a large amount of information on the characteristics of victims, the sexual orientation of the victim is currently not routinely recorded.³ The lack of comprehensive recording of sexual orientation in official statistics makes it difficult to assess both the extent and nature of homicides of gay people.

Investigators dealing with cases involving a gay homicide victim may face a number of specific investigative challenges. A critical initial question for investigators is whether the sexual orientation of the victim played an important part in the circumstances of the offence; this can bring with it a number of difficulties around the focusing of the enquiry. Secondly, given that gay homicide victims probably account for a small proportion of all homicides (this is later explored in more detail), investigators rarely have the opportunity to develop the appropriate decision-making skills to effectively investigate the offence (Smith and Flanagan, 2000); there are parallels with the investigative problems associated with other less common types of homicide (e.g. sexually motivated child homicide) (Adhami and Browne, 1996). Finally, as with serious offences against other minority groups, the investigation of homicides with gay victims requires particularly sensitive handling. This is both in terms of engaging individuals from those communities to assist in the investigative process, and in providing reassurance to communities who may feel that one of their members has been targeted. The importance of considering the community impact of very serious offences has been highlighted as a key part of good practice in investigative management and is recognised in ACPO guidance for senior investigators (ACPO, 2000). Furthermore, reflecting specific concerns about this area of homicide, the Metropolitan Police Service has identified *homophobic* homicides as one of 12 strategic areas of homicide requiring a tactical response.

Understanding more about the characteristics of homicides involving gay victims is likely to assist the police in a number of ways. First, it will provide investigators with a more detailed understanding of the complexities surrounding this crime type. Secondly, it should help police forge better links with communities which, historically, have had less than effective relations with the police (HMIC, 2000).

The key objective of this study was therefore:

- to assist investigating officers in the investigation of homicides involving gay victims, by considering the relationship between homicides involving gay victims, the circumstances of the offence, and the characteristics of the offender.

1. The term 'gay' refers to a person whose primary sexual attraction is to people of the same sex. The term is more commonly applied to men although many women do self-identify as 'gay'. For the purposes of this study, the term 'gay' will be employed to refer to both men and women, unless otherwise specifically stated.

2. The Homicide Index is an administrative database that collects details of individual incidents initially recorded by the police as homicide. A useful overview of the Homicide Index can be found in Francis *et al*, 2004. A review of the Homicide Index undertaken in 2001 proposed a revised data collection form including additional questions on sexual orientation of victim and offender (Mayhew, 2001).

3. The sexual orientation of the victim and suspect is only identified through the victim/offender relationship category as either 'homosexual/ex homosexual relationship – long-term' or 'homosexual relationship – casual'. It should be noted that this category is only relevant when the victim and suspect are in such a relationship with one another.

Related research

There is a relatively substantial literature on non-fatal violence towards gay people. One of the main themes has been the greater probability of gay people being victimised (Berrill, 1986, 1992; Mason and Palmer, 1996). An early study by Sagarin and MacNamara (1975) developed a theoretical framework (which was not particularly empirically based) describing eight reasons why gay people may have a high probability of becoming victims of crime. These were:

- being likely to be in possession of items of value;
- frequenting areas of high crime;
- being perceived as physically weak;
- having little access to law enforcement or people in power;
- being unlikely to use law enforcement agencies;
- engaging in activities which may be manipulated by offenders;
- participating in high-risk activities; and,
- receiving little social support from other members of society.

However, estimating the risk of victimisation among gay people is problematic, in part, because there is no accurate data on the proportion of gay people in the general population. This issue is returned to in Chapter 2.

Much of the research examining gay people's experience of crime has focused on crimes motivated by hate towards the gay person (e.g. Mason and Palmer, 1996; Taylor, 1991; Garafalo and Martin, 1991). A study in Edinburgh that examined gay men's experience of violence and harassment found that members of the gay male population were four times more likely to be the victim of violence compared with heterosexual males (Morrison and Mackay, 2000). However, not all of these incidents were motivated by homophobia. A third of men surveyed felt that the violent incident was not related to their sexual orientation.

Motives can be difficult to disentangle and perceptions may be misplaced. Some studies have emphasised the need to distinguish between incidents where the attack is an expression of hatred due to the victim's sexual orientation and incidents where homophobia is expressed during an attack, but may be an additional feature rather than the primary motivator. Garafalo and Martin (1991) looked at a number of cases of violence against gay people that were thought to be motivated by hate. In a high proportion of the cases studied, they found that homophobia was often one factor in the complex motivation for committing the offence (implying that some attacks would have been committed regardless of sexual orientation). Moreover, Derbyshire (1994, cited in Morrison and McKay, 2000) examined male gay victims' perceptions of why a physical assault had taken place. While some victims felt the initial motive for the attack may have been hatred of them as gay men, offenders also exploited opportunities to remove personal possessions and money.

There is a limited amount of research devoted specifically to gay homicide victims. This is largely due to the absence of comprehensive codes on victim sexual orientation within official data collection tools, combined with the problem of establishing the sexual orientation of homicide victims (these issues are discussed in more detail below). One of the few attempts to build up a picture of the extent and nature of gay homicide victims in the UK was undertaken by Colin Richardson, former editor of *Gay Times*. Media and court reports were used to compile a list of homicides of gay men and lesbians in the UK. In the US, one of the foremost attempts to map gay homicide is being undertaken by the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study. This has measured the incidence of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender victims of homicide in Minnesota and its border cities

since 1992. The study is still on-going but it has identified a range of types of gay homicide including mercy killings, domestic abuse homicide, sexual homicide, cult homicide and homicide as a result of criminal enterprise.

The development of offence typologies is a common theme in the international research on gay homicide victims. A study, conducted in New South Wales (Mouzos and Thompson, 2001), compared 29 gay hate-related homicides of men with 454 other male victim homicides between 1989 and 1999. The definition of hate-related was broad, with three main scenarios identified. The first was when an offender approaches a gay man in a public setting and lures him into a private setting, for drinks or sex. The offender then claims the victim made a sexual advance, therefore attempting to avoid criminal responsibility.⁴ This also includes allegations of sexual advances resulting in violence between friends. In the second scenario a stranger offender goes to known 'cruising' areas with the intent of 'queer-bashing'. The third scenario is a random attack on a man who is assumed to be gay.

Geberth (1996) developed a five-type classification system of gay homicides based on his observations as an investigator in New York.

- The first type was characterised by sexual activity and extreme violence. It involved extensive injuries directed towards the throat, chest and abdomen.
- A second type involved anal rape. It was suggested that these homicides may also be brutal and are usually characterised by using some sort of ligature placed around the victim's neck as a way of controlling them.
- The third type involved sadomasochism or bondage activities being carried out prior to the death.
- In the fourth type men posed as casual sexual partners in 'cruising areas' in order to rob the victim.
- The final type was characterised by a homophobic offender who targets the victim because of his sexual orientation.

Geberth's classification is somewhat problematic, however, because there seems to be a degree of overlap between the five types. For instance, sexual activity or assault occurs in at least three types. In addition, there are few details about which behaviours were evident in the different types of offence or how frequently they co-occur.⁵

A general limitation with these attempts to build typologies is the extent to which the studies are comprehensive of all gay homicide victims. As the findings from the Minnesota study suggest, it is likely that other types of gay homicide exist but are not included in the sample of cases examined (Dallas Drake, personal communication). For example, Sagarin and MacNamara (1975) claim that a common type of gay homicide is between gay partners as the result of an argument, jealousy, or in the termination of the relationship. Furthermore, research in San Francisco between 1991 and 1992 found that gay men were more likely to be killed by their partner than in a homophobic attack. Specifically, one-third of the gay men murdered were killed by their partners and one-third were killed by an individual recorded as their 'roommate' (Patrick Letellier, Personal Communication).

4. This has been referred to by some as the 'gay panic defence' and was defined by Comstock (1992) to be an act of self defence combined with the psychological disorder of gay panic as a result of a sexual advance by the victim which causes the offender to react with violence.

5. A further issue with Geberth's classification is that it is largely based on anecdotal observations rather than empirical research.

Even within the narrower territory of hate-related gay victim homicides, clarifying motive is problematic. A recent study by Tomsen (2002) examined 74 cases of homicide (occurring between 1980 and 2000) in New South Wales where the sexual orientation of the victim was considered a significant contribution in fatal incidents (in other words, they were considered as anti-gay killings). The 74 cases included the 39 gay hate killings considered in the Mouzos and Thompson (2001) study (above). Although Tomsen confirmed that many of these homicides were indeed motivated by the evident homophobia of the offenders, he concluded this did not 'reflect the complexity of the motives for many of the fatal attacks'. He argued offenders could also be considered to be preoccupied with attaining a heightened male status for themselves and with policing the acceptable patterns of public male sexual identity.

Other research has suggested that homicides with gay victims are qualitatively different to the killing of other men. Bell and Vila (1996) compared the injuries of male gay homicide victims with a sample of male heterosexual victims. They found gay homicide victims tended to receive more violent injuries and had more cases of 'overkill'⁶ than heterosexual victims. However, it should be noted that research has revealed 'overkill' in other types of homicide (e.g. between intimate heterosexual partners) (Cazanave and Zahn, 1992; Campbell, 1992). Mouzos and Thompson (2001) also found a number of differences between gay hate-related homicides and other male homicides (although it is important to note their focus on hate-related gay homicides). Their findings showed that a gay victim was more likely than a heterosexual victim to:

- be killed in a place of residence;
- be older than the offender;
- be unmarried; and
- have consumed alcohol prior to the offence.

In short, the research literature to date is a mixture of broader studies on violence against gay people, with a more limited literature on gay homicide victims. While it has tended to highlight homophobic violence (and several studies have focused exclusively on this), the evidence suggests that the motivation of offenders and circumstances of the offence are in practice, more complex.

Methodology

Case selection

For this study, the criterion for case selection was a homicide case in which the victim was gay,⁷ regardless of gender. Information on homicide cases in England and Wales⁸ is routinely collected through the Homicide Index (HI). Coverage of gay victims is, however, problematic. There are two main issues with the identification of gay victims from the HI.

- First, since they were introduced in 1995, the current codes of: 'homosexual relationship – casual' and 'homosexual relationship – long-term' mean that it is only possible to identify gay victims who are in a relationship with the suspect; gay victims who are killed by strangers, relatives and acquaintances are not identifiable.

6. There is some debate over how 'overkill' should be defined. The overuse of the word in media and popular culture has undoubtedly contributed to this confusion. In their study, Bell and Vila quantified the number and extent of injuries (multiple causes of death, mean number of injuries and mean number of different body sites with injuries).

7. See Footnote 1 for a definition of gay and the study sample section for a more general discussion on the difficulties in assigning sexual orientation to homicide victims.

8. The Home Office Homicide Index (HI) and the Office for National Statistics collect information on homicide.

- Secondly, there appears to be a discontinuity in the way that victims in same sex relationships have been recorded. The two codes 'casual' and 'long-term' were introduced in a revision to the coding frame in 1995. Prior to this, however, only a single code was used – 'homosexual relationship – casual'.

An examination of HI cases 1982-1994 showed that there were 42 male victims coded as 'homosexual relationship – casual'. However, in the period 1995 to 2001, when the dual codes were in operation, only 14 were recorded as in a casual relationship, with 34 victims in a long-term relationship. This may reflect genuine changes in the profile of gay homicide victims. However, it might also reflect the limitations of a single code prior to 1995 or indeed changes in the broader public attitudes to gay people and their relationships in more recent times. Regardless, these observations raise questions over the longer-term consistency of the 'homosexual-casual' classification across the two periods.

The fact that the HI does not identify gay victims in acquaintance and stranger homicides, as well as concerns over the consistent identification of same-sex relationships within the HI, suggested that a different mechanism for identifying a broad array of gay homicide victim cases was needed. As noted, a helpful database was developed by Colin Richardson, formerly editor of *Gay Times*. This was started in 1988⁹ and was derived from a mixture of newspaper reports (both local and national) and details of court proceedings. The database aimed to cover all types of homicide of gay men and lesbians regardless of motive or circumstance. In 1999, at the time of data collection, the database held details of 220 cases. Information held on the database included details of the victim, offence and suspect (where known).¹⁰ This database provided the main source of cases for subsequent analysis.

Coverage and limitations of the data

There are two main problems in identifying gay victims of homicide.

- As outlined above, the victim's sexual orientation is selectively recorded within the current HI coding frame, only as part of the victim-suspect relationship. This means that only a proportion of gay homicide victims can currently be identified.
- Even if a coding frame was introduced which accurately coded victim sexual orientation, the critical issue is how to establish sexual orientation. Most research into sexual orientation relies on self-definition. This is clearly not feasible in homicide cases, and it will often require an informed judgement from the senior investigator as to the precise sexual orientation of the victim. This is frequently complicated. It may rely on partial behavioural information from friends or relatives, who may not be aware of the victim's sexual orientation; not all victims will be openly gay. Additionally, investigators may be reluctant to suggest that a homicide victim was gay without clear-cut evidence to support this.

Most of the analysis that follows, and all of the regression analysis in Chapter 3, is derived from cases identified through the *Gay Times* database. While it has its own biases (see below), the database nevertheless includes reasonable numbers of stranger, acquaintance and gay partner homicides.¹¹ Given that victims are only coded as 'gay' if they are in a same sex relationship with the suspect, cases identified from the HI will not be at all representative of the gay homicide victim population. Consequently, it was felt that cases derived from the *Gay Times* database provided the fullest available picture of the various types of gay

9. Some pre-1988 cases are covered within the database.

10. It should be acknowledged that the accuracy of the data supplied through the *Gay Times* was not guaranteed and cross referencing with the Homicide Index did reveal a number of inconsistencies (i.e. missing data, misspelt names, etc.).

11. See section on case details for how victim/suspect relationships were defined.

homicide victims. These data will be referred to throughout the report as the 'study sample'. In Chapter 2, however, the study sample is supplemented with HI cases from the 1995-2001 period (inclusive), when the HI enhanced its classification of gay homicides, to give us as comprehensive a picture of gay homicide victims in these seven years.

It is important to acknowledge, that while the study sample is likely to give a more representative account of gay homicide victims, it will be subject to its own biases. First, given the fact that some of the cases were identified through media coverage, there may be a bias towards more high-profile offences. The inclusion of cases drawn from court reports may over represent the proportion of solved cases. Furthermore, given the observations above on the problems of classifying a homicide victim's sexual orientation, the sample may be biased towards those victims who were more openly gay.

Case collection

The process of case selection was as follows:

- access to the database agreed with Colin Richardson;
- all cases were cross referenced with HI to check accuracy and identify further details of the case; and,
- forces were then approached for case files. This yielded additional cases that met the criteria (including several post-1999 cases).

Police forces were then asked to allow researchers access to information on cases identified in their areas. A total of five researchers participated in the data collection exercise. A pre-designed proforma was used to collect data which contained 67 different types of information on the characteristics of the offence, victim and offender and if known, the possible motivation. The type of information collected included the following:

- victim and suspect characteristics – age, sex, ethnicity, occupation, etc.; and
- offence characteristics – method of killing, location and time of first contact, location and time of murder, vehicle use, position of body, extent and nature of injuries to the victim, who found the body, whether the victims clothing had been removed and so on.

Case attrition

From the 220 victim names originally supplied, a total of 149 victims (from 29 forces) were identified on the Homicide Index. The remaining cases could not be matched due to a combination of factors. In some cases this was due to insufficient information from the original dataset (i.e. lack of victim/suspect details).¹² However, in other instances, cases may not have been matched because either they were not recorded or possibly the force had not forwarded the details of the homicide to the Home Office. From these 149 cases,¹³ files for a total of 24 could not be found by the relevant police force. A further 14 were subsequently excluded because they either lacked sufficient detail on a range of the information sought (nine) or there was indication from the files that the victim was not gay and it appeared that the victim had been mistakenly described as meeting the criterion (five). Finally, through the course of data collection, forces identified nine additional cases that met the study criteria. The final sample therefore contained 120 cases with gay homicide victims, collected from 23 police forces.

12. Francis *et al* (2004) identified difficulties in matching names to the Homicide Index due to misspelling and so on.

13. An offence or 'case' when referred to in this study may involve more than one victim. A single case is where one or more victims are killed at the same time or in close succession. A homicide series has been classified as more than one homicide occurring over an extended period of time.

Case details

Although there was no formal decision taken to exclude female victims, with one exception, all victims in the sample were male.¹⁴ It is not possible to say whether this means that lesbian homicide victims are rarer or whether there are other biases present, but there seems to be some evidence that homicides involving lesbian victims are relatively infrequent (New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, 1994).

Table 1.1 Key features of the gay homicide victim sample

Offences:	There were 120 cases of homicide. Eight of these cases were part of two homicide series. Ninety-three cases had a single victim and single suspect (a). Twenty seven cases involved more than one suspect (two to eight suspects). The date the offences were committed ranged from 1980 to 2001. The date the crime was committed was not known for two cases.
Victims:	A total of 120 gay victims. All victims were male. The age of the victim ranged from 17 to 78 years.
Suspects:	A total of 154 suspects. Two suspects were females. The age of the suspect ranged from 15 to 60 years.

(a) One case did involve two victims, but this case involved one heterosexual female victim who was later excluded (see footnote 14).

The information collected on incidents of homicides with a gay victim was subsequently coded and transferred to a database for analysis.

A combination of descriptive and multivariate techniques were used in order to categorise the sample of gay homicides, the circumstances surrounding the offence and the characteristics of the suspect.

Structure of the report

Chapter 2 describes the basic features of the gay homicide victim sample, including characteristics of the victims, suspects and circumstances surrounding the offence. Chapter 3 offers a wider exploration of the details of the offences with an emphasis on features which might assist the police to investigate such cases. Finally, the report concludes in Chapter 4 with a summary of the main points and a list of recommendations.

14. One female victim was excluded from the analysis. This homicide was part of a double murder. The female victim was the mother of a male victim who was gay and there is no indication that the female victim was gay. The male victim, however, was left in the sample.

2 Describing the sample of gay homicide victims

The overall characteristics of gay homicide victims in England and Wales

The best estimate of the number of gay homicide victims in England and Wales comes from combining data from the study sample with cases categorised in the Homicide Index (HI) under the relationship headings of 'homosexual – casual' and 'homosexual – long-term', for the period 1995-2001. Those cases in the study sample covering the period prior to 1995 were excluded from the analysis. A total of five cases were common to both the study sample and the HI; all duplicate cases were removed. Finally, since the study sample contained only male victims, any female victims identified on the HI were excluded (n=3).

In total, for the seven-year period 1995 to 2001, a total of 84 male gay homicide victims were identified (44 cases from the study sample and 40 cases from the HI). This equates to approximately 1.5 per cent of all homicides in England and Wales (n=5,562) and 2.5 per cent of all adult male homicides (n=3,315) in the same time period. This figure can of course only be considered to be a minimum as there will be other cases where the victim's sexual orientation has not been identified (or recorded in either dataset).

The figure of 2.5 per cent might suggest that gay men are at a lower risk of being a victim of homicide than heterosexual males (assuming that say five per cent of adult males are gay). This would seem to contradict the more general findings on the higher risk of victimisation identified in Chapter 1. However, identifying risk of victimisation in this area is difficult. First, these estimates are minimum figures and understate the actual number of gay homicide victims. Secondly, to establish whether or not gay men are at greater risk of homicide than heterosexual adult males would require accurate data on sexual orientation amongst the general population. At present there are no data available to accurately identify this. A further problem is that the gay male population is not evenly distributed; the larger cities (London, Manchester) as well as some resorts (Brighton) tend to have a higher proportions of gay residents than elsewhere (personal communication, Colin Richardson).

Table 2.1 summarises the main characteristics of the two samples. Given that the HI coding frame only identifies gay homicides involving a sexual partner, these accounted for all the additional HI cases (out of the 40 cases, 31 were classified as long-term relationships and nine were classified as casual relationships). The study sample accounted for 52 per cent of all identifiable gay homicide victims between 1995 and 2001. In terms of coverage, it is worth noting that the study sample accounted for just under one-third of *all* known sexual partner homicides (identifying 16 out of a possible 56 in the time period). Predictably, the study sample includes a more diverse range of victims suspect relationships including friend/acquaintance and stranger offences. Beyond this it is difficult to comment on how representative the study sample is. However, it is important to point out that from an investigative perspective, the diversity of the study sample is likely to better reflect the experience of investigators tackling these cases.

Table 2.1 Characteristics of gay homicide cases from the study sample and the Homicide Index 1995-2001

Victim/suspect (a) age	Study sample Percentages		Additional Homicide Index sample Percentages	
	Victim (n=41)	Suspect (n=41)	Victim (n=40)	Suspect (n=40)
29 and under	10	64	18	35
30-39	17	22	35	43
40-49	42	15	13	15
50-59	20	-	20	8
60 and over	12	-	15	-
Total	100	100	100	100
Method of killing	(n=44)		(n=40)	
Sharp instrument	34		45	
Blunt instrument	23		15	
Strangulation	11		13	
Suffocation	2		8	
Other	30 (b)		20 (c)	
Total	100		100	
Relationship	(n=43)		(n=40)	
Stranger	37		-	
Acquaintance, friend	26		-	
Sexual partner	37		100	
Family member	-		-	
Total	100		100	
Outcome(d)	(n=44)		(n=40)	
Convicted	75		90	
Other	25		10	
Total	100		100	

Note: Percentages may not always sum to 100 because of rounding; - = no value

(a) Where there were more than two suspects in a single case, the 'lead' suspect has been identified and other suspect details have not been included in the analysis (see Chapter 3 for a fuller explanation).

(b) Refers to cases where multiple methods were used.

(c) Refers to the HI categories 'hitting or kicking', 'causing to fall', 'poisoning', 'arson' and 'other'.

(d) A case was coded as convicted if it resulted in a conviction for murder, manslaughter or other lesser offence. 'Other' includes those cases where proceedings are still pending, the suspect committed suicide or the outcome was unknown.

There was a marked difference between the age profile of the two samples. The suspects in the study sample were predominantly young, with 64 per cent aged 29 years and under. By comparison, only one-third of suspects in the additional HI cases were in this age range. In terms of victims' ages, the study sample was generally much older with 42 per cent aged between 40 and 49 years; overall, almost three-quarters of victims were aged over 40 years. The general age profile of victims and suspects was broadly similar among the additional HI cases. This is perhaps to be expected given that the additional HI cases were made up entirely of offences in which the victim and suspect were in a relationship.

Further analysis revealed that the profile of victims in each sample who were killed by a sexual partner was broadly similar. The mean age of victims killed by their sexual partner was 47 years in the study sample and 44 years in the HI sample. A greater difference was found for the corresponding figures on offender age: the mean age was 40 years in the study sample and 34 years in the HI sample.

Table 2.2 combines the two data sets to give an overall profile of known gay homicide victims during the period.

Table 2.2 The age and relationship profile of gay homicide victims and suspects: composite sample, 1995-2001

Age of victim/suspect	Victim (n=81) Percentages	Suspect (n=81) Percentages
29 and under	14	49
30-39	26	32
40-49	27	15
50-59	20	4
60 and over	14	-
Relationship	Percentages (n=83)	
Stranger	19	
Acquaintance, friend	13	
Sexual partner	68	
Family member	-	

Note: Percentages may not always sum to 100 because of rounding; - = no value

For the composite sample, age of suspect was typically younger than that of victims. Almost half of all the suspects in the composite sample were aged 29 years or under. In contrast, just under two-thirds of all victims were aged 40 years or over. The composite analysis suggests that only around 19 per cent (n=16) of suspects in gay homicide victim cases are strangers. Whilst sexual partners account for the majority of suspects (n=56), this is unsurprising given that the HI data *only* codes victims and suspects as gay if they are in a same sex relationship.

The following sections concentrate solely on the victim-suspect characteristics of the study sample for the entire period, 1980-2001.

The study sample

Relationship between victim and suspect

Given the small sample size, it was decided to limit the number of victim-suspect relationship categories to only four:¹⁵ stranger, acquaintance/friend, sexual partner, and family member. These are briefly described below:

- a *stranger* was defined as a person not known in any capacity to the victim prior to the offence;

15. The Homicide Index from 1995 has a total of 24 categories including a category for relationship not known.

- an *acquaintance/friend* was an individual known to the victim through contact either casually or on a more consistent basis either socially, domestically or through business;
- a *sexual partner* of the victim takes precedence over the previous two categories and could either be present or previous. Husband and wives of victims and casual sexual partners were also included under this heading; and
- a *family member* or other relative includes both step and/or adopted parents/children.

Table 2.3 illustrates, where known, the type of relationship between the victim and each suspect found in this sample (n=147). There were seven cases in which the suspect and victim relationship was not known.

Table 2.3 Victim and suspect relationship (n=147)

Victim-suspect relationship	No.	Percentages
Stranger	58	40
Acquaintance/friend	53	36
Sexual partner (a)	35	24
Family/relative	1	1
Total (b)	147	100

Note: Percentages may not always sum to 100 because of rounding.

(a) This is made up of two main groups: casual sexual partners (n=13) and partners in a long-term or established relationship (n=22).

(b) Excludes seven suspects where the relationship with the victim was not known.

For the full study sample (covering the period 1980 to 2001), the victim knew the suspect in the majority of cases (61%). Familial relationships accounted for just under one per cent of the total compared with sexual partners (24%) and acquaintance/friends (36%). In the remaining cases (40%) the victim and suspect were strangers.¹⁶

It is useful to compare this to the overall profile for all adult male victims¹⁷ on the HI (1995-2002).¹⁸ Homicides where the victim and suspect were strangers were less common on the HI as a whole, occurring in 27 per cent of cases (n=707), compared with just under 40 per cent in the study sample.

Method of killing, cause of death and injuries sustained by the victim

Table 2.4 illustrates the method of killing in the study sample. It shows that blunt force trauma (28%, n=34) and stabbing (28%, n=33) were both identified as the most frequent methods of killing. Multiple methods were used in 26 per cent of cases (n=31). Quite a different pattern emerged for all male victims of homicide. In cases of adult male homicide identified on the Homicide Index (1995-2002), a blunt instrument was used in only ten per cent of cases (n=372). By contrast, a sharp instrument was the most frequent method of killing, occurring in 36 per cent of cases (n=1,364).

16. If the victim and suspect were sexual partners, they are considered as known to each other. In one case where the suspect and victim had engaged in sex, there is some evidence to suggest this may have been a 'one night stand' and so could arguably be classified as strangers although in the present analysis they were classified as known to each other.

17. An adult male was classified as over 17 years for the purposes of this study. This age was selected because it corresponded to the youngest victim in the gay victim sample. There were, in total, 3,873 homicides recorded that met this criterion, although the precise N will vary from table to table due to missing data for particular fields. All percentages presented in the following analyses are based on known data only; in other words, missing or unknown cases are excluded.

18. The 1995-2002 Homicide Index was, at the time of writing, the period for which the latest statistics were available and so have been used throughout the remainder of the report.

Table 2.4 Method of killing in study sample cases (n=120)

Method of killing	No.	Percentages
Blunt force trauma	34	28
Stabbing	33	28
Manual strangulation	2	2
Ligature strangulation	12	10
Suffocation	4	3
Multiple methods	31	26
Other	4	3
Total	120	100

Note: Percentages may not always sum to 100 because of rounding.

Head and facial injuries occurred in 21 per cent of cases (n=25), which is consistent with the frequency of which blunt force trauma was recorded as the method of killing. The injuries to the victim were located in multiple areas in 64 per cent of cases (n=77). This does seem to be consistent with existing studies that have found extreme injuries and overkill within gay homicide (Mouzos and Thompson, 2001). In their sample, however, although multiple injuries were found in a high proportion of the homicides, only about a quarter of cases (n=29) were described as 'overkill' (which they defined as homicides where more force was used than was necessary to kill the victim).¹⁹ However, it should be remembered that Mouzos and Thompson (2001) focused on a narrower sample of victims than this study.

Motivation

As noted in Chapter 1, establishing the motivation of suspects can be particularly difficult, even after a suspect has been apprehended. The police may often be relying on the suspect's account, which for many reasons may not truthfully reflect their 'actual' motivation at the time of the offence. In some instances, the account may seem truthful to the suspect but it may be to explain socially unacceptable behaviour (see Revitch and Schlesinger, 1989). In other cases, the suspect may simply have no interest in telling the truth. In addition, the case files did not routinely record a suspect's (perceived) motivation and so where motivation was not identified by the investigating officer, it was left to researchers to attempt to categorise the motive, where the relevant details were provided. While in some cases the background of the suspect, characteristics of the offence and other evidence all pointed to the same motivation, in others the suspect's testimony appeared to be at odds with other factors; in these cases, determining motivation was much less straightforward.²⁰

Motivation was classified into four categories.

- *Homophobic* homicide refers to those cases where the evidence suggests, or it is the view of the investigating officer, that victimisation has occurred because the offender is anti-gay.

19. Commonly, overkill can be defined in two ways. First, where more force is used than that which is necessary to kill the victim. Secondly, where multiple methods are used. In the present study, only those cases that involved *extensive* injuries were categorised as overkill.

20. For example, in one case, a suspect claimed that the stabbing followed numerous sexual advances by the victim during a weekend. However, the suspect also stole £1,000 from the victim's safe and had previous convictions for robbery suggesting that robbery may have been the primary motive.

- *Dispute and/or rage-related* homicide included those cases that arose from accusations of infidelity, jealousy or revenge, fights or other such disturbances where there was no homophobic element.
- *Financial gain* refers to those cases in which the primary motivation was perceived as financial.
- *Sexual element* cases included those cases where sexual gratification was considered to be the primary motivation of the homicide. However, it is important to note that this category goes beyond offences which were solely sexually motivated; cases where the suspect alleged the victim made an unwanted sexual advance against the suspect were also included in this category. Also included were those cases where the suspect had engaged in sexual activity with the victim, only to become 'disgusted' with themselves after the act.

It is possible that some overlap in the above may exist. With these caveats in mind, out of the 120 cases, motivation was identified in 95 (79%)²¹ cases and these are illustrated in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Motivations underlying homicide (n=95)

Motivation	No.	Percentages
Dispute/rage	32	34
Financial gain	29	31
Sexual element	27	28
Homophobic	7	7
Total (a)	95	100

Note: Percentages may not always sum to 100 because of rounding.
 (a) Excludes 25 cases for which the motive could not be determined.

The table shows that where motivation was known, dispute/rage-related homicide comprised one-third of all cases. Although the HI uses different codes, in those cases for all adult male victims in which the circumstance was known, over half (64%) were labelled as rage/quarrel or jealousy/revenge.

Financial gain was the second most frequent motivation in gay homicide victim cases, occurring in 31 per cent of the sample. Tomsen (1994) argued that the high rates of robbery in gay homicide victim cases may be due to the view that gay people are considered 'easy targets' (see case study 1).

Case study 1

The suspect approached the victim at a train station where it was agreed they would go back to the victim's flat. The victim probably thought he had made a 'pick up'. The suspect, however, specialised in robbing gay men at knife point making them believe it was a successful pick up. The police thought that in this case, the victim was resistant and so the suspect stabbed him five times. The motivation in this case was classified as financial gain.

A homicide defined as having a *sexual element* occurred in 28 per cent of cases (n=27) in the study sample. Of these, only eight homicides could be classified as having sexual gratification as a primary motive. It is worth noting that these eight homicides were made of two linked series (one suspect responsible for three homicides and the other responsible for five). The remaining 19 cases involved instances where either the

21. In the remaining cases, the motivation could not be ascertained either due to missing information in the available case files or because the SIO could not identify a motive.

suspect panicked after an alleged sexual advance had been made against him, or claimed to have become 'disgusted' with himself after having sex with the victim. These last two types of circumstance could be considered as unique to gay homicide victims. Comstock (1992) and Tomsen (1994) referred to the first of these as the 'gay panic defence'. The panic defence has been used as a legal defence (although it does not exist in formal law) to claim that the attack was due to a pathological condition which decreases criminal responsibility. In this sample, 18 per cent of suspects (n=13) were known to have used the panic defence in court.

Although much research on gay victims of crime has focused on hate crime, only seven per cent of cases in this sample were recorded as motivated by homophobia. Two examples are shown below.

Case study 2

Case example 1: *The suspect was walking through a park with friends when he stated that 'queers' hung around the park and that he was going to 'get them'. The suspect attacked a gay person by repeatedly kicking and stamping on him.*

Case example 2: *The suspect who was 'sleeping rough' was approached by the victim who offered him a bath and coat. The suspect decided at this point to kill the victim because he was a 'poof'. Once back at the victim's flat, the victim undressed and the suspect retrieved scissors and knives from the kitchen and proceeded to stab the victim 22 times.*

While homophobic homicide as a primary motive represents only a small proportion of the study sample, the two cases described above, and the others defined as such, were generally extremely violent. This is consistent with some US-based studies which found that homophobic homicides often involved extreme brutality (e.g. Taylor, 1991).

Victim and suspect characteristics

The age was known for 96 per cent of victims (n=115), and ranged from 17 to 78 years, with an average age of 45 years. As Figure 2.1 illustrates, those aged between 40 and 49 years represented the largest concentration of victims (36%) with a further 24 per cent aged between 50 and 59 years.

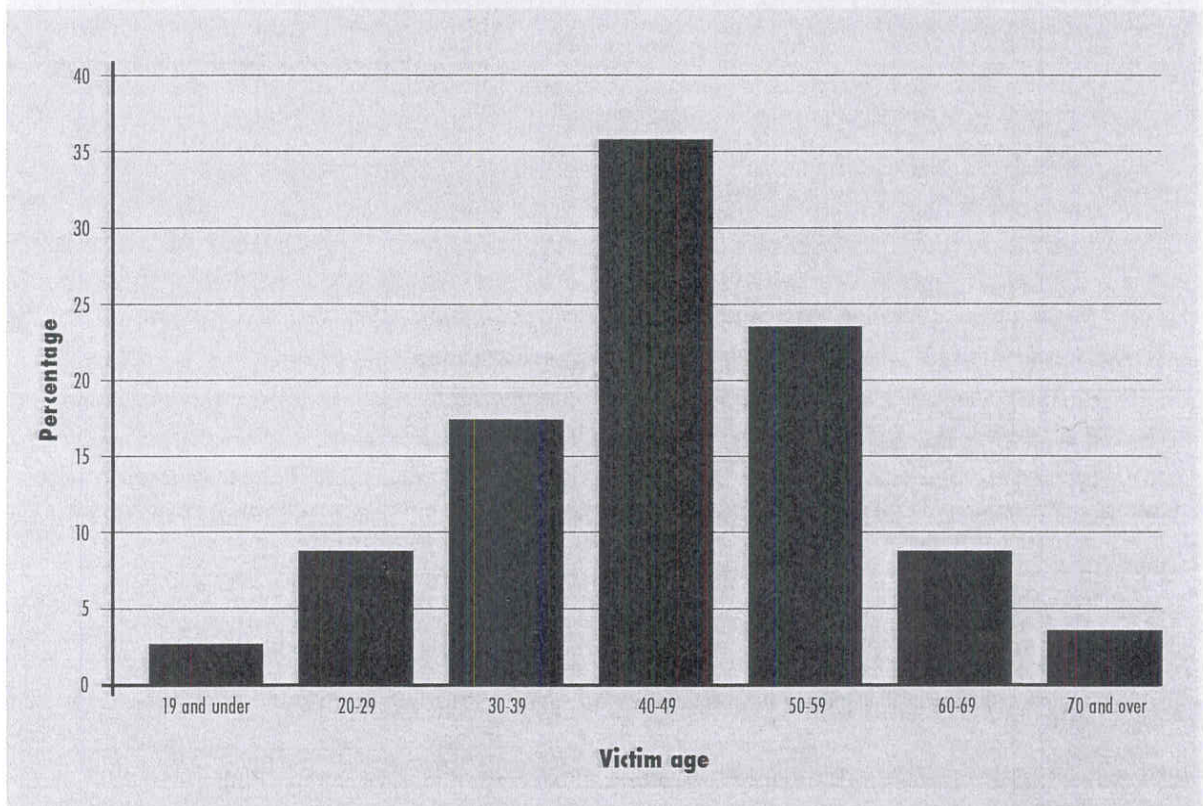
If this group is compared to all adult male homicide victims in England and Wales, the gay homicide victims in the sample tend to be older. Out of 3,873 adult male victims of homicide between 1995 and 2002 (where age was known), the average victim age was 39 years.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, suspects were male (99% of suspects, n=152). Only two suspects were female.²² Suspects were identified in all 120 cases in the study sample, although in 15 cases suspects had not been convicted. In total, the suspect age was known for 140 out of the 154 suspects²³. These ranged from 15 to 60 years of age with the average suspect age being 26 years and over three-quarters (76%) aged under 30. In contrast, data from the HI (1995-2002) indicated that the age of the suspect in all adult male victim homicides tended to be older than in the study sample. Of 3,411 suspects where their age was known, the average age for all adult male suspects was 30 years.

22. It should be noted that in each of these cases, the women were suspects in a multiple offender homicide.

23. The number of suspects is greater than the number of cases due to the existence of offences with multiple offenders.

Figure 2.1 Age of victims (n=115)



Victim sexual orientation

Although the sample cases were recorded as having a gay victim (see section on case attrition in Chapter 1), the process of classifying the sexual orientation of the victim and suspect was not straightforward. For victims, the difficulty was that the confirmation of sexual orientation relied heavily upon friends', families' or witnesses' accounts. In some cases, however, this was problematic because some individuals might not have been open about their sexual orientation. This is a general issue that reflects the coding of gay homicides. In some cases, whilst family and friends thought the victim was heterosexual, the victim's lifestyle practices (e.g. attending openly gay pubs, etc.) suggested a different orientation. Conflicting accounts were present in the case files and although each case was considered carefully, the classification relied on subjective accounts that may or may not be wholly accurate.

Information on the sexual orientation of the victim in the final sample was known or *thought to be known* in all cases. In the majority of cases (n=102), the victim was considered to be openly gay. In a further three cases the victim was openly bisexual (and were included in the final sample). In the remaining cases, the victim was *thought* to be gay but there was some uncertainty. For example, in some cases (seven) the victim was thought to be heterosexual (by friends or relatives) but there was evidence that the victim had had sex with men. Finally, in a further seven cases, the police officer in charge had identified the case as involving a gay person although there was little evidence to support this from the case files accessed by the research. Although ideally it would have been preferable to look for some additional material to support the SIOs' assertions in these cases, it was decided to include all of these cases in the analysis.

Suspect sexual orientation

The sexual orientation of the suspect was also difficult to classify. For a high proportion of suspects (24%, n=37), sexual orientation was simply not recorded in the case files. Indeed, there may be some non-response bias that means that heterosexual offenders are over-represented within the missing data.²⁴ The problem of classifying the sexuality of the suspect is further compounded by the use of the gay panic defence and more general issues around suspects admitting their actual sexual orientation (personal communication Colin Richardson). For all these reasons, the figures cited in Table 2.6 need to be treated with considerable caution. Where the suspect's sexual orientation was known or thought to be known *and* was recorded in the case files (n=117), a total of 33 per cent of these suspects (n=38) were described as openly heterosexual. A further 32 per cent (n=37) were described as openly gay and nine per cent (n=10) were openly bisexual. For the remaining suspects (n=32), there was some uncertainty regarding their sexual orientation.

Table 2.6 Sexual orientation of the suspect

Sexual orientation of suspect	No.	Percentages
Openly gay	37	32
Openly heterosexual	38	32
Openly bisexual	10	9
Claims to be heterosexual but evidence of gay sex	29	25
Possibly gay	3	3
Total (a)	117	100

Note: Percentages may not always sum to 100 because of rounding.

(a) Excludes 37 suspects for whom sexual orientation could not be ascertained from the case files.

As Table 2.6 indicates, out of the 117 suspects where the sexual orientation was known or thought to be known, almost a fifth claimed to be heterosexual although there was evidence (from witness statements or in the investigating officer's case summary) that the suspect had had sex with other men. In a further three per cent of cases, although there was no clear evidence that the suspect was gay, some evidence existed that suggested there was a possibility that this may have been the case. An example of each scenario is described below.

Case study 3

'Claims to be heterosexual' case example: *The victim had recorded in his diary having sex with the suspect on earlier occasions and had described him as 'a very nice bi'. However, the suspect denies this and maintains he was heterosexual.*

'Possibly gay' case example: *Suspect was known to visit gay areas and associate with gay men. He was invited back to the victim's flat for sex. The suspect killed the victim en route home. There is a possibility that the victim and suspect engaged in sex prior to the homicide.*

24. The evidence on sexuality of the suspect had to be inferred from information held in case files. It is conceivable that the heterosexuality of the offender was either assumed and therefore not specified in the case papers, or that enquiry teams simply did not seek this information.

Other victim and suspect characteristics

Several other victim and suspect characteristics are worth noting from the study sample. For example, the majority of victims were single (77%). The data also showed that in 27 per cent of cases, the site of first contact between the victim and suspect (i.e. on the day/night when the homicide occurred) was in the victim's residence and in just over a quarter of all cases (26%) consensual sexual activity had taken place between the victim and suspect. In addition, the homicide scene was the victim's residence in over half of all cases (57%). A total of 27 cases (23%) in the study sample involved multiple suspects. This is broadly in line with the figures for all adult male homicides where 25 per cent (n=863) involved two or more suspects.

About a third of all victims (32%) and suspects (36%) were impaired by drink at the time of the offence. Indeed, in 31 per cent of cases, the first contact was in a leisure or entertainment area, of which 12 per cent were specifically regarded as gay entertainment areas (i.e. a gay pub or club). In addition, a further 14 per cent of first contact between victim and suspect occurred in another area that was classed as gay (i.e. an area in a park). The majority of homicides occurred at night (80%) and in half of the cases, the suspects stole items of value from the victim (51%).

Outcome of the case

In total, 105 out of the 120 cases (88%) resulted in a conviction (i.e. a suspect was convicted of homicide or a lesser offence). In ten cases the suspect was acquitted. In a further two cases, proceedings were still pending at the time of the offence while the outcome was unknown in three cases. This compared with 76 per cent (2,290) of all adult male victims of homicides on the HI resulting in a conviction for murder or a lesser charge, excluding cases where proceedings were pending. However, this is one area where the comparison with the HI data is somewhat less valid, since a proportion of presently undetected cases will go on to be solved. The all adult male victims figure of 76 per cent is much closer to the outcome for the subset of the more recent cases described in Table 2.1 (75%).

The next chapter will attempt to examine in more depth the characteristics of a sample of solved cases and identify relationships between variables in a way that generates potentially useful guidance to investigators.

3 Analysing the data to help investigator decision-making

The sample

Since we are now only interested in analysing those cases in which an offender has been identified, the sample is limited to those cases that resulted in a conviction. This includes cases in which offenders had been convicted of murder or a lesser offence in relation to the homicide (i.e. manslaughter). Where there was more than one offender who was involved in a homicide, a single lead offender was identified. The single lead offender was classified by one of two methods. Either:

- the offender who was convicted of the more serious crime (i.e. murder took precedence over manslaughter); or, where this was not the case,
- the offender that came first in the list of offenders in the HI.²⁵

Finally, in cases that comprised a series of linked offences, only the first detected homicide in the series was included in the sample. Cases that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the analyses. This gave 100 cases for analysis.

What does the investigator need to know?

An investigator faced with an undetected crime needs to identify potential suspects. Throughout the course of an investigation, a number of suspects and/or lines of enquiry may arise. In cases where the identity of the suspect is not readily apparent, a variety of information may enable the prioritising of suspects or lines of enquiry (see for instance, Feist and Newiss, [unpublished] and Thomas *et al.*, 2004). Such information might include:

- suspect characteristics (e.g. sex, age, race); and
- the relationship between the victim and suspect.

Work by Francis *et al.* (2004) used the less detailed information held on the HI in a way which can usefully be applied to more common types of homicide. However, for homicides which have less common characteristics (such as those with gay victims), a somewhat more focused analysis is likely to generate more useful guidance for investigators running live investigations. In particular, this chapter explores whether it is possible to infer suspect characteristics from information about the offence and victim.

The predicted and explanatory variables

The approach used draws on previous work by Davies, Wittebrood and Jackson (1998) and Aitken *et al.* (1995). The general technique is to use offence and victim variables from solved cases to predict the likely characteristics of unknown suspects using logistic regression.²⁶

25. The staff who compile the Homicide Index make this judgement, and place the lead offender first in the list of offenders for any particular case.

26. For more information on this technique, see Aitken, Connolly, Gammerman, Zhang, and Oldfield (1995).

'Predicted' variables are variables that may be predicted by knowledge of other 'known' (explanatory) variables within the offence. For example, it may be possible to predict suspect age by whether a weapon was used in the offence. In this study the predicted variables were selected on the basis that they were unlikely to be known by, and would be of potential value to, the investigator. The range of *predicted* variables selected is described in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Predicted variables within the gay victim sample

Predicted variable	Definition
Offender characteristics (a)	Offender age (29 years and under; 30 years and over)
	Offender sexual orientation (gay or heterosexual)
	Offender's relationship status (single or in a relationship)
Relationship between victim and offender	Stranger or known

(a) It should be noted that ethnicity was not included as a predicted variable because out of the 81 cases in the gay victim sample in which the offender's ethnicity was known, the offender was white in 80 of these cases.

The *explanatory* variables used in this study broadly fall into the following two categories:

- victim characteristics; and
- offence details.

The aim of the analysis was to predict each of a set of offender characteristics using suitable sets of victim and offence characteristics (the explanatory variables). A three-stage process was employed, which is described below.

Initial cross-tabulations

First, each of the explanatory variables was cross-tabulated with each of the predicted (i.e. offender) variables. This enabled variables to be re-coded where appropriate; re-coding of both explanatory and predicted variables was necessary because in their 'raw' form, there were simply too many categories within individual variables and too few cases to provide meaningful analyses. Many of the variables were re-coded into two or three category variables. The re-coded variables (along with definitions) are shown in Appendix 1.

Tests of significance

A series of cross-tabulations was then undertaken between the *re-coded* explanatory and predicted variables. A statistical test²⁷ was then performed to establish if there was a statistically significant relationship between the expected and predicted variables. Those explanatory variables showing either significance at the five or ten per cent²⁸ level were flagged – these are listed in table 3.2 (below). This enabled the large number of explanatory variables to be reduced to a smaller subset since with so few cases it was not possible to use all explanatory variables in the logistic regression analysis.

27. Fisher's exact test (for 2x2 tables) or a chi squared test of independence (all others) were performed.

28. Additionally, due to small expected counts in a large number of cases that were significant at the ten per cent level, variables were included if an expected count of five or more was present in more than half of the cells.

Table 3.2 Explanatory variables that were found to have a statistically significant relationship with a predicted variable

Predicted variable	Significant explanatory variable
Offender age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Location of first contact between offender and victim (a) ● Attempts to conceal the body ● Multiple injuries to the victim ● Relationship status of the victim
Offender and victim relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Location of homicide ● Items missing from scene ● Location of first contact
Offender sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time of homicide ● Use of restraints ● Sexual activity between victim and offender ● Injury pattern
Offender relationship status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Victim relationship status ● Items missing from scene ● Location of first contact between victim and offender ● Injury pattern

(a) Location of first contact refers to where the victim and suspect first made contact prior to the homicide (i.e. on the day/night of the homicide).

Logistic regression

For each offender variable, a logistic regression was performed. This used significantly associated variables identified above as the starting point for the set of explanatory variables in the regression.²⁹ For example, location of first contact, location of homicide and items missing were all found to be associated with offender and victim relationship. As a result, all three of these variables were entered into the logistic regression model for offender victim relationship. The aim of the logistic analysis was to find a small subset of variables that predict the offender variable well (with no other variables significantly improving the prediction). It also enabled statements to be made about each of the explanatory variables and their impact on the predicted variables (controlling for the effect of others).

The logistic regressions were complete case analyses, that is, only those cases with complete data on all of the possible explanatory variables were entered into the analysis. For some of the analyses, this reduced the number of cases substantially, and a note of caution needs to be made about conclusions based on so few cases. Additionally, the small number of cases means that the precision of the odds ratios produced by the analysis will be relatively wide.

29. Variables were removed from the regression using backward elimination from the main effects model, taking the likelihood ratio test statistic at the five per cent level as the criterion to determine whether a variable was removed or not.

Results

Offender age

Cross-tabulations between each of the explanatory variables and offender age revealed a number of associations. Using a chi squared test, the variables found to be significantly associated ($p < 0.05$) with offender age were:

- location of first contact between offender and victim (public or private);³⁰
- attempts to conceal the body (yes or no);
- multiple injuries to the victim (yes or no); and
- relationship status of the victim (single or in relationship)³¹

Table 3.3 illustrates the percentage of offenders in the sample aged 29 years and under by each relevant explanatory variable.

Table 3.3 Percentage of offenders aged 29 years and under and 30 years and over for each explanatory variable

Explanatory variables		% of (principal) offenders aged 29 years and under	% of (principal) offenders aged 30 years and over
Location of first contact between victim and offender (n=78)	Public	80	20
	Private	52	49
Attempts by the offender to conceal the body of the victim (n=99)	Yes	33	67
	No	77	24
Victim suffered multiple injuries (n=98)	Yes	77	23
	No	58	42
Victim's relationship status (n=93)	Single	74	26
	In relationship	36	64

Analysis revealed that in four out of five cases (80%) where the location of first contact was in a public place the offender was aged 29 years or under. If the location of first contact was private there was around a 50-50 chance of the offender being aged 29 years or under. From an investigator's perspective this information may not always be known during the course of an investigation; this may therefore limit the value of this analysis.

In the majority of cases where the victim had suffered multiple injuries (77%) or the victim was single (74%) the offender was also found to be aged 29 years and under. Finally, almost three-quarters of offenders who had made *no* attempt to conceal the body of their victim were 29 years or under.

By using logistic regression it was possible to identify which variables (location of first contact, attempts to conceal body, multiple injuries of victim and relationship status of victim) were the best predictors of offender

30. A public place includes a leisure or general entertainment area including outdoor open spaces. A private place includes a residence, car, or workplace.

31. 'In relationship' can include both married and unmarried victims.

age. Location of first contact between the offender and victim emerged as the best predictor of offender age compared to the other three variables, which were not significant once location of first contact was included in the regression. The analysis (n=78) revealed that the odds of a case having an offender aged 29 years and under is over *three and a half times* greater if the location of first contact is public compared to private.

Offender and victim relationship

Offender/victim relationship was divided into two categories: 1) where the offender and victim were known to each other; and 2) where they were strangers. Using a chi squared test, the explanatory variables found to be significantly associated ($p < 0.05$) with offender/victim relationship were:

- location of homicide (public or private);
- items missing from scene (yes or no); and
- location of first contact (public or private).

Table 3.4 Percentage of offenders and victims that were either known to each other or were strangers for each explanatory variable

Explanatory variables		% of victims and offenders who knew each other	% of victims and offenders who were strangers
Location of homicide (n=93)	Private	70	30
	Public	42	59
Items missing (n=79)	Yes	47	53
	No	79	21
Location of first contact (n=77)	Private	84	16
	Public	42	58

Analysis revealed that in the majority of cases where the location of first contact (84%) and location of homicide (70%) was in a private place, the victim and offender were known to each other. Analysis revealed that in almost 80 per cent of cases where items had *not* been taken, the victim and offender knew each other.

The results of this logistic regression analysis can be expressed in two ways: as a set of odds ratios; and as a table of estimated proportions of cases that would have a stranger offender, given the combination of offence and victim. Items missing and location of first contact both emerged as important predictor variables in the logistic regression analysis. It was found that the odds of a stranger homicide (n=56) are:

- nearly seven times greater if items are missing compared to not missing; and
- nearly eight times greater if the location of first contact is public compared to private.

Finally, the logistic regression predicts that in about 77 per cent of cases where items are missing and the location of first contact is public, the offender is a stranger to the victim. This falls to six per cent if items are not missing and the location of first contact is private.

Offender sexual orientation

When cross-tabulations between each of the explanatory variables and offender sexual orientation were performed, four associations emerged as significant. These were:

- time of homicide (day or night);
- use of restraints (yes or no);
- sexual activity between victim and offender (yes or no); and
- injury pattern (face/head/neck or injuries to other parts of the body) ($p < 0.1$).

The percentage of offenders in the sample who were gay by each relevant explanatory variable is shown below.

Table 3.5 Percentage of offenders who were gay or heterosexual by each explanatory variable

Explanatory variables		% of offenders who were gay	% of offenders who were heterosexual
Time of homicide (n=66)	Night	71	29
	Day	30	70
Offender used restraints on the victim (n=78)	Yes	36	64
	No	70	30
Sexual activity had taken place between victim and offender (n=66)	Yes	88	12
	No	54	46
Injury pattern (n=82)	Head/face/Neck	87	13
	Injuries to other parts of the body (a)	63	37

(a) All but two cases involved some injury to other parts of the body; only two cases record no injuries.

If the homicide occurred at night then the offender was gay in 71 per cent of cases. The cross-tabulation also revealed that if restraints were not used, the offender was gay in 70 per cent of cases. Finally, it was found that if sexual activity had taken place, in 88 per cent of cases the offender was gay. However, if sexual activity did not take place then there was almost an equal chance that the offender was gay or heterosexual.

The logistic regression analysis revealed that use of restraints, sexual activity between victim and offender and injury pattern were all good predictors of the sexual orientation of the offender. The odds ratio produced by the analysis (n=64) revealed the following:

- the odds of a case having a heterosexual offender increase by 38 times if restraints are used, compared to restraints not being used;
- the odds of a case having a gay offender increase 11 times if there is a sexual act; and
- the odds of a case having a gay offender increase by five times if injuries are to the face/head/neck only.

Secondly, the model predicted the *probability* of a case having a gay offender based on values of the explanatory variables. Certain combinations are illustrated in table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6 The probability that the offender is gay given certain combinations of explanatory variables

Combination of explanatory variables	% of cases that offender is gay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No restraints used ● Injuries to face/head or neck ● Sexual activity between victim and offender 	98
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No restraints used ● Injuries to other parts of the body ● Sexual activity between victim and offender 	92
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No restraints used ● Injuries to head, face or neck ● No sexual activity 	85
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No restraints used ● Injuries to other parts of the body ● No sexual activity 	51
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restraints used ● Injuries to other parts of the body ● No sexual activity 	3

Within the sample, the most common combination was *no* restraints used, *no* sexual activity, and injuries to other parts of the body (i.e. *not* the head, face and neck). This combination occurred in just over 55 per cent of the cases examined, and the analysis predicts that these cases have a close to 50/50 split between gay offenders and heterosexual offenders. Although this combination appears to provide little guide to investigators over the likely sexual orientation of the offender, it may still have investigative value by highlighting the need for investigators to keep an open mind over the likely sexual orientation of the offender.

Other combinations of characteristics may be more informative for investigative purposes. For example, if restraints *are* used, the most common scenario in the sample combined this with *no* sexual activity and injuries to other parts of the body. In this case the analysis predicted only three per cent of offenders would be gay. In contrast, sexual activity combined with injuries to the face, head or neck and with *no* evidence of restraints pointed strongly towards a gay offender (the analysis predicting that nearly 98 per cent of offenders would be gay).

Offender relationship status

There was only one significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) with offender relationship status and that was victim relationship status. Items missing, location of first contact and injury pattern, however, were also included in the logistic regression analysis (these variables were significant at $p < 0.1$).

The cross-tabulations between each of these explanatory variables with offender relationship status are shown in table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Percentage of cases where the offender is single or in a relationship by each explanatory variable

Explanatory variables		% of cases where offender is single	% of cases where offender is in a relationship
Items missing (n=73)	Yes	89	11
	No	71	29
Location of first contact (n=69)	Public	90	10
	Private	71	29
Victim relationship status (n=84)	Single	89	11
	In relationship	46	54
Injury pattern (n=88)	Face, head or neck	56	44
	Injuries to other parts of the body	88	12

In almost all cases of homicide where the victim was single the offender was also single (89%). Similarly, if the location of first contact was in a public place then the offender was single in just over 90 per cent of cases. Where the injury pattern on the victim was to the face, head or neck there was about an equal chance that the offender was single or in a relationship. However, if the injuries were to other parts of the body then the offender was single in 88 per cent of cases. Where items were not missing, there was slightly over one chance in four that the offender was in a relationship; however this dropped to one chance in nine when items were missing.

In the logistic regression analysis, victim relationship status and injury pattern emerged as the best predictors of offender relationship status compared to items missing and location of first contact. The odds ratios produced by the analysis (n=57) revealed the following:

- the odds of a case having an offender in a relationship is about 13 and half times greater if the victim is in an established relationship compared to the victim being single; and
- the odds of a case having an offender who is single is also over 13 and half times greater if the injury pattern was to other parts of the body compared to victim injuries to the face, head or neck.

Second, the model predicted the probability of a case having an offender who was single. If the victim was in a relationship *and* the injury pattern was to the face, head or neck then the analysis predicts that almost 89 per cent of offenders would be in a relationship. In contrast, if the injury pattern was to other areas of the body and the victim was single, then the analysis predicts that the offender was in a relationship in only four per cent of cases.

4 Conclusions

Although relatively rare, homicides involving gay victims can cause senior investigators particular investigative problems. While it is difficult to talk with confidence about the relative risks of victimisation, the combined research evidence suggests that victimisation patterns for gay people are particularly complex. In this sense, there may be a range of potential offence circumstances surrounding any gay homicide with consequent complications in identifying groups of offenders or prioritising lines of enquiry.

The relative rarity of this type of offence also needs to be considered – perhaps less than three per cent of all adult male victim homicides in England and Wales involve gay victims. Consequently, even long-established investigators will only encounter a handful of cases within their careers. To these complicating factors must be added the appreciation of a very limited research base, and one which hitherto has tended to focus on hate-related homicides. This analysis has confirmed that these account for only a small proportion of gay homicide victims (although this is not to deny the anxiety that these particular offences cause to the gay community). The partial and potentially inconsistent recording of victim sexual orientation has probably been an issue here, serving to constrain both our general understanding of gay homicide victims, as well as acting as an inhibitor for more in-depth and investigation focused research.

Overall offence and offender profile

The composite analysis of the study sample and Homicide Index (HI) data suggests that only around 19 per cent of suspects in gay homicide victim cases are strangers. Friends or acquaintances and sexual partners account for the bulk of the suspects in gay homicides.

In terms of the suspect profile of gay homicide victims, the study sample revealed that about one-third of suspects were openly heterosexual. Caution needs to be exercised here because of the methodological problems in accurately assigning suspect sexual orientation. In terms of age, almost three-quarters of suspects in the study sample were under 30 years of age. The victim age profile was, however, markedly more mature. The composite analysis, however, revealed a slightly different pattern. In the HI sample (where only cases were included if the victim and suspect were in a relationship), a high proportion of both suspects and victims were in the *same* age range. Critically, both this study and other research suggest homophobic homicides account for less than ten per cent of all offences.

The potential value to the investigator

This study should help investigators understand better the complexity around gay homicide cases. For instance, while the research focus has hitherto been around homophobic homicides, these represent only a small part of all gay homicides. Understanding the victim's sexual orientation may well be an important feature of the offence for SIOs. However, as noted, this is not necessarily a simple piece of information to identify. It is therefore important for SIOs to keep an open mind on victim sexual orientation, especially where the available information to support a particular 'lifestyle' is less than clear cut.

The principal investigative value of this work is the potential for SIOs faced with harder to solve gay homicides to consider the probable characteristics of a suspect on the basis of crime scene or victim-related information.

The main highlights of the regression analysis are around what can be inferred from crime and victim information for four key characteristics: offender-victim relationship; offender age; offender relationship status; and offender sexual orientation. The findings can be expressed in two ways. First an odds ratio that is expressed as the relative odds of an offender having a particular characteristic on the basis of the presence (or, conversely, the absence) of particular victim or offence characteristics. Alternatively, it can be expressed as a probability, given the combination of different victim-offence variables, that the offender will have a certain characteristic. The two outcomes are used interchangeably in the following.

- *Offender-victim relationship.* The probability that the offender was a stranger to the victim was found to be greater if *both* property/personal possessions were missing from the victim, *and* the location of first contact between offender and victim prior to the homicide was in a public space (e.g. a pub or an open area). If these two characteristics were present in a case, a stranger relationship was predicted in 77 per cent of cases.
- *Offender age.* The probability that the offender was under the age of 29 years was greater if the location of first contact was in a public place. The odds of an offender being under 29 years were three and a half times greater if the location was public as opposed to private. Of course a constraint of this analysis is that the location of first contact may not be known to investigators in all cases (or at least, not known to the investigative team at the earlier part of an enquiry).
- *Relationship status.* If the victim was in a relationship (but not necessarily with the offender), *and* injuries were sustained to the face, head or neck, then the analysis predicted that about 90 per cent of offenders would be in a relationship.
- *Offender sexual orientation.* If sexual activity had occurred with the victim, combined with injuries to the face, head or neck along with no evidence of the use of restraints, the analysis predicted that 98 per cent of offenders would be gay. However, where no restraints were used, there was no evidence of sexual activity but there was evidence of injuries to parts of the body other than the face or neck etc., this revealed close to a 50-50 split between gay and heterosexual offenders. Although this combination appears to provide little guide to investigators over the likely sexual orientation of the offender, it may still have investigative value by highlighting the need for investigators to keep an open mind about the sexual orientation of the offender.

Not all of these findings are of equal value to investigators in gay homicide cases. In some instances, the combination of explanatory variables will not be present to permit an effective prioritisation of suspects. In other instances, the information required to help prediction may simply not be known to investigators. This is a particular issue in relation to the 'location of first contact' variable that appears in two of the predictive outcomes. In some cases, the point of first contact between victim and offender prior to the offence will be known. In others, however, it will not be known to investigators. However, given the predictive value of establishing place of contact, initial lines of enquiry might focus on locating where this took place in cases where the offender's identity is unknown.

Of course, probabilities are not certainties. The findings will give an indication of likelihood but they do not provide a cast-iron guarantee that, given a particular combination of circumstances, the offender will have specific characteristics. The findings should, however, be helpful in either challenging or confirming lines of

enquiry given the particular circumstances of a case. In some investigative contexts, the regression findings may actually point to pursuing particular suspect sets (i.e. suspects with shared characteristics) or seeking information from particular communities.

There are other caveats to this study. First, the analysis has been undertaken on a small dataset. Moreover, the current sample of gay homicide victims is unlikely to be representative of *all* gay homicides, but may more accurately describe the population of harder-to-solve cases within which most investigative effort is focused. It would be desirable to repeat the study on an independent dataset (and, notwithstanding cross-national differences, the impending completion of the Minnesota study would provide an ideal opportunity to undertake this). While appropriate caution needs to be exercised when interpreting the findings, this work should provide a useful contribution to the understanding of this particular homicide type.

The research certainly makes a strong case for routinely recording victim and offender sexual orientation in homicide cases. The fact that these variables have not been comprehensively recorded has probably limited research in this area. The revisions to the Homicide Index that were recommended (and indeed piloted) after the Homicide Index Review (Mayhew, 2001) included the recording of victim and offender sexual orientation on the revised Homicide Index data collection form.³² However, it should be recognised that simply providing the right kind of coding frame is only part of the solution to this problem. Investigators, and those charged with completing administrative datasets on homicide, often face a challenge in accurately establishing a victim's sexual orientation and it is important not to overlook this fact.

What is still not clear from this study is the extent of female gay homicide. No cases of lesbian homicide were identified in the study sample and only three cases were apparent on the HI. It was hard to ascertain the extent to which this was an artefact of the data collection process (although the *Gay Times* dataset did not exclude victims by gender) or a reflection of the fact that fewer lesbian women become victims of homicide. Inevitably, the more routine and accurate recording of victim sexual orientation would provide a fuller picture of the extent of gay and lesbian homicide in England and Wales.

Recommendations

- That these findings are disseminated widely through appropriate channels (in particular the Serious Crime Analysis Section) to assist future investigations or reviews of homicides involving gay victims.
- That the analysis is tested on a separate dataset of gay homicide victims.
- That any future mainstream revisions to the Homicide Index data collection form incorporate the routine recording of victim and offender sexual orientation.

32. The revised HI form has been piloted in eight forces.

Appendix 1

Re-coded predicted and explanatory variables

Variable	Definition
Sex of victim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Male ● Female
Victim age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 29 and under ● 30 and over
Victim race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● White ● Other
Victim relationship status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Single ● In relationship – includes couples who are married but also those in short- or long-term relationships
Victim employment status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employed ● Unemployed
Victim vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vulnerable – includes cases where the victim had some mental/ physical disability or where they were drug or drink impaired ● Not vulnerable
Offender details	
Offender age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 29 years and under ● 30 years and over
Sex of offender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Male ● Female
Offender sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heterosexual ● Gay
Offender race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● White ● Other
Offender employment status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employed ● Unemployed
Offender relationship status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Same as for victim
Offender vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Same as for victim
Offence details	
Body position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Face up ● Face down ● Other
Naked or partially naked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes ● No
Method of killing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stabbing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blunt force ● Other ● Multiple methods
Use of restraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes – refers to restraints used in the course of the homicide and could include blindfolds or gags ● No
Sexual activity between offender and victim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes – this refers to sexual activity (either consensual or not) immediately prior to the homicide ● No
Items missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes – includes both personal items and items of value taken from the scene or victim by the offender ● No
Weapon use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes – this includes all instances of any item that was used to inflict intentional harm on the victim ● No
Victim and offender relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Known – includes friends/casual acquaintances as well as relatives. ● Stranger – person not known in any capacity to the victim prior to the offence. This also includes someone the victim has perhaps seen before but does not know e.g. regular shopkeeper
Injury pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Face, head or neck ● Other (e.g. torso, legs)
Multiple injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes ● No
Overkill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes – an extreme level of violence above that which is necessary to cause death was deliberately exerted against the victim and not as a result of strong victim resistance ● No
Time of contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Day ● Night
Time of homicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Day ● Night
Time of body deposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Day ● Night
Location of first contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public place ● Private place
Location of homicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public place ● Private place
Cause of death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strangulation ● Multiple ● Head/face ● Stab ● Other

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