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## ABSTRACT

# THE INFLUENCE OF AUDIENCE PRESENCE ON CASES OF VICTIM PRECIPITATED HOMICIDE

By

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Major Department: Criminal Justice and Criminology

Victim precipitated homicide is a phenomenon generally credited to the seminal work of Marvin Wolfgang (1957, 1958, 1967). While a limited number of studies have been conducted supporting this concept, limited understanding exists of the event dynamics of homicidal transactions in general and victim precipitated homicides in particular. In this study, the presence of an audience and alcohol impairment are treated as catalysts that influence the dynamics of the homicide event. It is hypothesized that homicide events are more likely to take shape as victim precipitated transactions when audience members are present. It is further hypothesized that the victim's consumption of alcohol serves as a moderator between the presence of an audience and victim precipitated homicide. These hypotheses were tested using a dataset of 473 homicides occurring in Dallas, Texas from 1988 to 1997. The author found support for the first hypothesis postulating that the presence of an audience increases the odds of a victim precipitated homicide, but found little support for alcohol as a moderating factor. Potential theoretical and policy implications and future research are discussed.

THE INFLUENCE OF AUDIENCE PRESENCE ON CASES OF VICTIM PRECIPITATED  
HOMICIDE

BY

DONALD EDWARD HUNT

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in the  
Andrew Young School of Policy Studies  
of  
Georgia State University

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
2014

## ACCEPTANCE

This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Thesis Committee. It has been approved and accepted by all members of that committee, and it has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in the Criminal Justice and Criminology department in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies of Georgia State University.

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## Dedication

For Codi Kay.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Marvin Wolfgang (1958, 1967) is generally credited with performing the first systematic and empirical study of homicide; his Philadelphia cohort study is widely credited as one of the most comprehensive and impactful inquiries into the nature and dynamics of lethal violence. Based on a sample of 588 homicides occurring between 1948 and 1952, Wolfgang (1958) advanced the notion of the victim-offender overlap, found that a significant portion of victims possessed criminal histories, and established that alcohol was a fundamental contributor in a sizeable portion of the examined homicides. Contrary to popular belief, it was shown that the majority of homicide offenders and victims are members of the same race and exhibit non-stranger relationships (Wolfgang, 1958). Finally, Wolfgang (1958) introduced the idea of victim-precipitation to characterize those cases where the victim initiated physical force against the offender which, ultimately, led to the victim's death. Nearly one quarter of the cases in Wolfgang's (1958) study were deemed to be victim precipitated homicides (VPHs).

Since Wolfgang's (1958, 1967) study, much of the homicide literature has focused on the two main actors in the homicide incident, either the victim or the offender. There have been studies focusing solely on homicide victims (Burton, 2004; Curtis, 1974; Dobrin, 2001; Ezell, & Tanner-Smith, 2009; Felson & Messner, 1998; Luckenbill, 1977; Martinez, 1996; Piquero, MacDonald, Dobrin, Daigle & Cullen, 2005; Singer, 1986; Smith & Brewer, 1992; Sobol, 1997) as well as those focusing only on homicide offenders (Batton & Jensen, 2002; DeLisi & Scherer, 2006; Griffiths & Tita, 2009; Hannon, 2005; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; McCall, Land, & Parker, 2010; Messner & Rosenfeld, 1997; Muftić & Baumann, 2012; Smith & Zahn, 1999). The victim-offender overlap, or notion that criminal histories are prevalent among members of both groups of actors, has also seen an increasing number of empirical analyses (Broidy, Daday, Crandall,

Sklar, & Jost, 2006; Decker, 1995; Muftić & Hunt, 2013; Pizarro, 2008; Pizarro, Zgoba & Jennings, 2011; Regoeczi, 2000; Singer, 1981). The offender and victim, however, are not necessarily the only two actors in a homicide. Audience members are commonly present at a homicide scene. To date, relative to studies of homicide offender and victim dynamics, only a small body of research has focused on the audience and its influence on the homicidal event (Anderson, 1999; Cooney, 2008; Polk, 1999; Sacco & Kennedy, 2002). And no research has been done on the relationship between the presence of an audience and VPH events. It is the intent of the current study, therefore, to add to that body of literature by exploring the influence that the mere presence of an audience has on VPHs in particular and, possibly, homicidal events in general.

This study places center stage the various actors of the homicidal event and explores the manner in which these persons shape the criminal transaction. When considering each of the actors involved in lethal violence, Sacco and Kennedy's (2002) *The Criminal Event: Perspectives in Space and Time* presents a solid framework from which to begin. Sacco and Kennedy (2002) broke down the criminal event into, among other things, an analysis of the victim, offender, victims and offenders collectively, and the bystanders observing the event. In their evaluation, and of particular importance to this current study, they assert that "bystanders and witnesses ... play a role in defining the events that become crimes," stating further that, "they may diffuse a violent situation or they may actually promote violence" (Sacco & Kennedy, 2002, p. 53).<sup>1</sup> The main point of their argument was that a violent criminal event is more than simply the interactions between the offender and the victim; bystanders and witnesses (i.e. the audience) also have influences on whether the event turns criminal or violent. This notion is

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<sup>1</sup> Sacco and Kennedy (2002) also add the dimension of the police response into the mix, but less as an actor and more as a means of prevention.

important in that the audience presence characteristic of a victim precipitated homicidal event is a key characteristic to understanding the entire homicidal event. This understanding further drives law enforcement preventative and response procedures to lethal violence in addition to creating public policy. In addition, this characteristic has much broader theoretical and policy implications across violence in general, not just violence that ends in a homicide.

While in everyday vernacular, the terms audience and bystanders may be used synonymously, they are regarded in scholarly literature as separate and distinct concepts. The term audience is reserved for the individuals merely present at the crime scene (outside of the victim and offender) regardless of any active participation, encouragement, or intervention they might have in the event. In contrast, the term bystander is assigned a separate meaning and specifically describes persons who are present at a violent event that have an inhibitory or inflammatory effect in incidents involving confrontation (Darley & Latané, 1968). To this end, the term “the bystander effect” is used to capture the mediation and intervention of third parties on the criminal event. The term was coined by Darley and Latané (1968), who found an inverse relationship between the size of a crowd and their likelihood of bystander intervention. Criminologists have since explored this phenomenon with affirmative results (Felson, 1978, 1993; Silberman, 2001), finding that larger numbers of bystanders yielded a lower likelihood of the dispute being broken up.<sup>2</sup> While these findings are important to scholarly literature on the whole regarding bystanders, the bystander effect concept is beyond the scope of this examination for two specific reasons.

The first reason the bystander effect is not a more intricate part of the study is that it cannot be tested given the data at hand. The second reason for the exclusion of a bystander

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<sup>2</sup> To the author’s knowledge, there is no scholarly literature testing the impact of crowd size and escalation of violence.

effect model is that the current study is only interested in the influence of the presence of an audience on VPHs, not the actions of the audience. While there have been studies evaluating audience actions as an explanation of whether or not violence between two people materializes, the mere presence of that audience (regardless of their actions) has not been systematically examined. Exclusion of the bystander effect in this study allows for a targeted contribution to the literature in this area. Henceforth, the term audience will be intentionally utilized to avoid any confusion that the bystander effect is part of this study.

### **Audience role**

The role of an audience has been the focus of only a limited number of scientific examinations in relation to lethal violence. Decker (1995) and Luckenbill (1977) stressed the significance of third parties (i.e. witnesses, audience, peers) involved in such incidents, pointing out that homicide could be as much a situational or social process as a singular act of violence. In 1999, Polk added the term honor contest to the conversation, which he defined as a physical confrontation between two individuals that occurs in full view of an audience. Polk (1999) found that maintaining respect in front of an audience was a common thread in the male-to-male confrontations he analyzed. This was also the case in Elijah Anderson's (1999) research on the code of the street. In his exploration of the interactions of Philadelphia residents in low income, minority neighborhoods, Anderson (1999) depicted the notion of "black toughness." At its core, this notion meant that respect and a violent reputation were paramount to other characteristics of those living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. As such, violently responding to threats against an individual's respect and reputation in front of others (an audience) was described to be a normal and expected way of life in these areas. To respond in any other manner risked almost certain

damage to that person's reputation, opened that individual up to ridicule, and the probability of future victimization (Anderson, 1999).

Adding to the cultural aspects of violent behavior in front of (and for the approval of) those present as a matter of respect (Anderson, 1999; Polk, 1999), Grant and Diehl (2012) argued that crowd formation in cases of lethal violence was an indicator of that community's cultural dynamics. The cultural aspect of a crowd's acceptance of the normalcy of violent encounters has, in fact, been examined among minority communities (Anderson, 1999; Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006; Stewart & Simons, 2010). Because of these results, social scientists were able to begin laying the ground work for the notion that the presence of an audience's has an influence on the decision to violently act out (Anderson, 1999; Grant & Diehl, 2012; Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006; Stewart & Simons, 2010).

Beyond the cultural elements of an audience, Black's (1993) theory of the third party suggests that a third party witnessing violence will have a direct influence on the outcome of the conflict. In fact, he maintained that the importance of the third party in a violent confrontation could not be overstated, especially in instances of homicide (Black, 1993). Cooney (1994, 1998) and Phillips and Cooney (2005) expanded upon Black's (1993) theory in a series of publications focused on the social (as opposed to cultural) ties between the third parties and one or both of the combatants as well as the partisan structure of the third party (third party ties to the combatants) as a predictor of interference with or encouragement of the violence. Both of these aspects, interference or encouragement, were found to be predictive of the violent encounter. Their findings suggest that parceling out VPHs in the presence of third parties may add a new dimension to the role of an audience during lethal combat.

## **Audiences and victim precipitated homicide**

While each of the above studies focusing on audience roles form a basis for researching audience participation in homicide generally, the author is unaware of any such study exploring in depth the relationship between the presence of an audience and VPH. As a result of research performed by Muftić and Hunt (2013) using VPH to further the understanding of the victim offender overlap, the question was raised regarding which factors might influence a victim to precipitate his or her deadly end. One possible explanation was the presence of an audience witnessing hostilities between the victim and offender. Thus, this question was tested utilizing the same dataset as Muftić and Hunt's (2013) previous study. Further, whereas Wolfgang (1958, 1967) defined the concept of VPH, he left open the door for questions of why it occurs and what the motivation for the initial physically violent move might be. This current study posits that one of the reasons this occurs is that the presence of an audience at the scene of the initial incident can act as a catalyst.

Considering Baron's (1971) research demonstrating that an audience can promote violence, Polk's (1992, 1997, 1999) research indicating that honor contests are an almost mandatory call to violence, and Anderson's (1999) work establishing the connection between cultural aspects and violence as a form of respect, it stands to reason that the presence of an audience precipitates violence rather than mutes it (such as suggested in research on the bystander effect). When coupled with research on audiences, witnesses, and third parties in cases of violence, one of the next logical steps to understanding the causal influences on homicide is to determine the extent of the influence the presence of an audience has on VPH (Cooney, 1994, 1998; Decker, 1995; Luckenbill, 1977; Phillips & Cooney, 2005; Polk, 1997, 1999; Sacco & Kennedy, 2002; Wolfgang, 1967). Derived from the works of Baron (1971), Polk



(1992, 1997, 1999), and Anderson (1999), it is expected that the presence of an audience will provoke the initial action toward violence and will be more pronounced in homicides categorized as victim precipitated; whether it be out of a sense of anger arousal, a need to save face, or cultural reasons. Thus, the central research question underlying the current study is: “Are homicides that involve the presence of an audience at greater odds of being victim precipitated than homicides that do not involve the presence an audience?” Following the logic above, it is hypothesized that victim precipitated homicide events are at increased odds of happening when they involve the presence of an audience compared to homicides not categorized as victim precipitated.

### **Alcohol as a catalyst to homicide**

In his study of victims as actors, Felson (1997) wrote, “the greater the consumption of alcohol the higher the risk of victimization. Presumably, people who drink a lot are more likely to engage in behaviors that provoke others” (p. 213). This sentiment has also been echoed in other victim precipitated homicide research (Polk, 1999; Sobol, 1997; Wolfgang, 1958). Wolfgang (1958) found that alcohol was present in 69.3% of the homicides he classified as victim precipitated in his Philadelphia cohort study. Alcohol was also present in 89% of confrontational homicides resulting from honor contests (Polk, 1999).

Homicide in general, not just VPH, has also been linked to alcohol use. Pridemore and Eckhart (2008) showed that alcohol usage was connected to over 40% of the victims in their homicide study. Of those, 31% of the time, the homicide was classified as victim precipitated. In addition, Shepherd, Irish, Scully, and Leslie (1988) demonstrated a positive relationship between victim level of alcohol consumption and victim level of injury sustained in a violent assault.

Moreover, Adams et al. (2013) found that intoxication lowers a person's inhibitions. That being the case, their findings may be transferable to the study of victim precipitation. Consuming alcohol, then, may facilitate a victim initiating violence when that same individual might not have if he or she were not consuming alcohol – this could be especially true in the cases where an audience is present. Based on the previous research (Adams et al., 2013; Felson, 1997; Polk, 1999; Pridemore & Eckhart, 2008; Shepard et al., 1988), it is expected that the victims' consumption of alcohol raises the level of susceptibility to the presence of an audience, and therefore, moderates the relationship between the audience presence and VPH. Therefore, it is postulated that an interaction exists between the presence of an audience and the victim drinking when predicting VPHs.

To test these hypotheses, the current study will utilize a dataset that comes from the Dallas, Texas police department. It consists of all officially recorded adult homicides occurring from 1988 to 1997. The data source includes not only the basic information normally found in homicide datasets constructed from investigation case files (victim, offender, demographics, area, etc.), but also includes narratives along with information on the social setting in which the events occurred that allow for coding the explicit or implicit characteristic of whether or not an audience was present and whether alcohol use was readily apparent.

The study and testing of these two hypotheses offers criminologists, law enforcement, and authorities another dimension to consider when forming or advancing theories and policies regarding lethal violence. Understanding the influence the presence of an audience has on an individual to initiate a violent event brings with it a host of options to prevent this type of encounter. Not only does it strengthen what is already known about homicide and VPH, but it also adds another facet to how these incidents unfold.

In terms of theory, the audience presence may cause strain or a deficit of control upon an individual unduly coercing him or her to initiate violence. Moreover, the study of alcohol as a moderator brings forth another dimension to the study of lethal violence in that it may strengthen the influence that the audience has on a person. In addition to theory, policy makers and other officials are better informed from the results of a study of this nature. Policies reflecting the nature of lethal violence in places where an audience typically gathers might be beneficial in preventing the incident from ever occurring rather than responses to a past event.

To begin this examination, the following chapter focuses on the literature regarding audience involved violence. Next the literature pertaining to victim precipitation, including (1) victim precipitated crimes in general; and (2) VPHs is presented. Finally, the literature pertaining to third parties (the presence of an audience) is integrated into the concept of VPH. After the review of literature, a chapter explaining the methods used to test the proposed hypothesis will be offered and the results of these tests will be illustrated and explained in a subsequent chapter. A concluding chapter will discuss theoretical and policy implications, limitations, and potential directions for future research.

## **Chapter II: Review of Literature**

When seeking to understand the dynamics of violent encounters, it is common to look to the suspect and victim in-and-of themselves. There is, however, another factor to consider. The presence of an audience may be of equal importance when explaining violent interactions fully (Anderson, 1999; Athens, 2005; Baron, 1971; Cooney, 1998, Phillips & Cooney, 2005; Sacco & Kennedy, 2002; Polk, 1999). This is especially true when considering VPH because, in the right setting and under certain circumstances, the presence of an audience may be all that is needed to spur a person on to violence.

In order to begin the evaluation of whether the presence of an audience is predictive of VPH, a review of the literature is necessary. This begins with a consideration of scholarly works regarding an audience and violence. From there, a review of the literature concerning victim precipitated crime in general and in the area of homicide in particular is performed. Finally, the literature regarding an audience and VPHs are integrated in order to form the basis of this current study.

### **Audience and violence**

Whenever an audience is gathered in a specific location, the potential for disorder increases (LeBon, 1895; Vider, 2004). There is not one definitive cause explaining why this particular aspect of human behavior exists. What is strongly indicated in the literature, however, points to an aggregation of psychological, social, cultural-historical, and cognitive factors (Vider, 2004). Add to the mix a developing confrontation between two individuals and the possibility for violence can quickly turn to the probability of violence. This is especially true when alcohol and drug use are present (Russell & Arms, 1998; Vider, 2004). As stated at the outset of this study, there can be as many as three active entities in violent confrontations, the offenders, the

victims, and the audience members. In fact, studies have shown that, in the case of violent physical assaults, an audience is present as often as two-thirds of the time (Hart & Miethe, 2008). Thus, the influence of the presence of an audience is a key factor in understanding the entirety of violent confrontation and, more to the point of the current study, victim precipitated violence.

For centuries, humankind has used public violence as a way to remedy personal insults. As far back as the 1600s, British, French, Colonial American, and other “civilized gentlemen” have settled their differences with dueling pistols or foil and rapier in the presence of an audience. In this same manner, although not nearly as “civilized,” honor contests still exist and occur daily in disadvantaged urban areas across the United States (Bennett & Fraser, 2000; Polk, 1999). While there are no longer duels between aristocrats, there are still clear similarities between honor contests of the past and some of the violent confrontations happening in current times. Today, though, honor contests generally involve multiple combatants who settle their disputes in front of an audience in order to save face (Anderson, 1999; Polk, 1999). And, regardless of how the audience came to view the unfolding events, Polk (1999) stated that saving face is paramount when an audience is present.

In 1993, sociologist Donald Black examined the effect of audience presence on an individual in a variety of social settings to explain a multitude of behaviors. Though not specifically pointed toward homicide research, Black (1993) found that an audience can have an influence on the outcome of any conflict. Just over a decade later, Cooney (2004) extended Black’s theory of third party influence into the study of violent behavior including homicide. Cooney (2004) wrote that, in terms of violence, third parties “can act as warriors, peacemakers, or something in between” (p. 8). Essentially, he stated that an audience can bring about the

violence between two actors – even to the point of joining the fray – or abate the violence by means of intervention or any resolution in between lethal violence and complete abatement.

In extending Black's theory of third parties into the criminological arena, Cooney (2004) spent a considerable portion of time discussing the aspect of combatants maintaining honor in the presence of an audience. Honor, according to Cooney (2004), is to exhibit bravery in front of others in the form of physical, aggressive force in response to an insult. Moreover, failure to respond to a public slight will only bring ridicule and further insult to those who do not exact vengeance on their insulters (Cooney, 2004). What makes third parties so important to understanding violence is that, "honor makes people touchy. Honorable people are especially touchy in the presence of others" (Cooney, 2004, p. 111, 112). Thus, it could be assumed that even the slightest insult between two individuals has an increased probability of escalating into deadly combat when there is the presence of an audience. In this case, the audience is seen as promoting the violence simply by being present.

Inside the prison environment, word among inmates circulates about which prisoners are willing to fight in answer to insult or attack. Should a prisoner not be willing to respond with violence that prisoner's level of respect is diminished and will inevitably be subjugated (Cooney, 2004). Contrary to Shaw and McKay's (1942) social disorganization theory, Cooney (2004) posited that strong ties between the combatants and third party observers increased the need to maintain honor.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, this increases the probability of retributive violence. The crux of the argument being that the combatants would have more of a need to maintain honor among those closer to them than a neutral or passing bystander.

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<sup>3</sup> Black (1973) made reference to stable ties increasing violence originally. Cooney advanced that notion into criminological research.

Phillips and Cooney (2005), in fact, evaluated the extent to which prisoners respond with violence to an insult specifically to determine the influence of third party ties on violence. The authors theorized that partisaned third parties (those with ties to one of the combatants) increased the probability of escalating a conflict into violence, while settlement structured third parties (those with ties to both combatants) tended to diffuse a conflict. In one-on-one interviews with 100 inmates convicted for violent crimes, originating from a simple conflict, prisoners were asked to recount two incidents from their past. The first incident was the conflict that resulted in their incarceration for aggravated assault or homicide. The second incident also began with a conflict but did not result in violence. In both cases, the conflict must have originated from the interviewee first being insulted. Thus, the data compiled consisted of 200 matched cases. Because Phillips and Cooney's (2005) research examined the "victim" making the first insult in the presence of third parties (an audience), their results have important bearing on the current study.

In the final analysis, it was found that 154 of the 200 conflicts occurred in the presence of third parties. Third party action was then split into partisan, settlement, and neutral categories. Relational ties between combatants and audience members were defined as friendship, gang affiliation, family, common memberships, or a combination thereof (Phillips & Cooney, 2005). In over half of the cases, the third party (audience present) chose to remain neutral, while partisanship was observed in 33 % of the cases, and a diffusion or settlement effect was produced by the audience in only 15 % of the cases. Additionally, group ties (71%) and individual ties (51%) to the offended combatant were more predictive of partisanship escalating the violence than "cross-cutting" ties – meaning ties to both combatants which accounted for 39 % (Phillips & Cooney, 2005).

Their study did not specifically look to explain victim precipitation as being influenced by the presence of an audience or third party. Rather, it was the intervention, or lack of intervention by the third party that Phillips and Cooney (2005) evaluated. Although the action or inaction by the third party was the primary scope of their research (instead of its simple presence), Phillips and Cooney's (2005) study has immediate relevance to the current research. The fact that the audience chose not to intervene over 50 % of the time yet the victim still initiated the aggravated assault or homicide in front of a third party adds relevance to the current work's hypothesis that VPH is influenced by the fact that an audience is present. Additionally, it was observed that, in over 33 % of the cases, partisanship with one of the combatants was present indicating that, aside from the mere presence of an audience, the ties to the audience can escalate the violence without any other encouragement by the audience.

Anderson's "code of the street" concept is directly relevant to the present discussion of public violence<sup>4</sup> in urban areas. Elijah Anderson (1999) utilized his field work in inner-city Philadelphia to operationalize a specific set of rules tied to respect and reputation by which lower class, black urbanites live. It is contended that the street code is inextricably linked to public behavior, especially in those situations involving confrontation and disrespect (Anderson, 1999; Stewart & Simons, 2010). More specifically, threats to an individual's respect are necessarily dealt with by means of violence and displays of toughness. Those adhering to the code see violence as not only acceptable, but also expected and even go so far as to demand it in cases of status and reputational damage (Anderson, 1999, Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; Lee, 2011). The youth of lower class urban communities learn this early on in life. Brezina, Agnew, Cullen, & Wright (2004) applied the code of the street thesis to lower class, young, black males in the first

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<sup>4</sup> Public violence meaning violence that occurs in the full view and presence of an audience.



three waves of the National Youth Survey<sup>5</sup> and found that Anderson's assertions held true, in that disadvantaged young people engaged in more violence than non-disadvantaged youths. Thus, in disadvantaged urban areas, from its youngest members to its "street" veterans, all must be on guard to answer threats to their identity, reputation, respect, and personal protection (Stewart & Simons, 2010). As such, one key component of a violent interaction could be the presence of an audience made up of neighborhood peers who endorse violence as an appropriate response to outward acts of disrespect.

There exists an important overlap between scholarship on the code of the street and Polk's work related on honor contests, as the former theorizes the cultural background of urban violence and the latter speaks to the interactional foreground of individual confrontations. Polk (1999) systematically broke down the common characteristics of an honor contest as a means of articulating the common structures and processes associated with such an event. According to Polk (1999), an honor contest begins with the interaction of two males leading to some form of a provocative insult. As a result, the process involves one male extending a physical challenge that is accepted by the other. This quickly escalates into a fight which may result in the death of either or both of the combatants (Polk, 1999).<sup>6</sup>

Polk (1999) performed an evaluation and comparison of six research studies conducted by Silberman and Kennedy (1993), Lundsgaarde (1977), Wolfgang (1958), Stephenson (1995), Ruggiero (1980), and Polk (1994). This allowed Polk to speak to the common structure or setting of honor contests. The analysis revealed that the violent combatants are almost always young men from lower class backgrounds and the area in which these events happen are

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<sup>5</sup> In the final analysis N=752.

<sup>6</sup> For purposes of this current study, the male extending the challenge would likely be considered the victim of a VPH should the interaction turn deadly. If the initiator of the violence wins the altercation, the homicide is not considered victim-precipitated.

generally settings where these young males relax, consume alcohol, and audiences accustomed to violence gather. Polk (1999) also found that the violence in an honor contest almost always occurred by means of one individual's opening move (or precipitation), another individual's counter move, and the subsequent melding of these moves into mutual violence (Polk, 1999). Clearly, then, honor contests that unfold according to Polk's schematic provide fertile ground for the examination of victim precipitated violence in an environment where an audience is gathered.

It appears, moreover, that there is the possibility that the initial violent actions may partly be the result of a setting containing an audience (Lee, 2011; Polk, 1999). This possibility speaks directly to the main premise of this thesis. Polk (1999) states here that honor contest violence can erupt when an audience is present. That concept is taken one step further in the current study by postulating that victim precipitated violent homicide (not just violence initiated by either party) is especially prevalent when there is the presence of an audience.

While Polk (1999) acknowledged the presence of an audience in violent combat between two individuals, he did not specifically look to the influence of that entity for any causal relationship to the ensuing violence. However, nearly three decades earlier, Baron (1971) employed an experimental design on sixty male undergraduate students in order to understand the relationship between an audience, anger arousal, and aggressive behavior. This work adds an important insight into the potential impact that audience members have on emotionally charged events. During the experiment, he had participants observe other individuals' (confederates) attempts to resolve a complex problem. When the confederate made an error in an assigned problem's resolution, the test subjects would administer "shocks"<sup>7</sup> varying in number and length

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<sup>7</sup> The "shocks" were not real. The confederate acted out the part of being shocked.

of time to the confederate. Baron (1971) introduced the element of an audience by overlaying three audience scenarios onto the problem solving dynamic.

Acting as a control, the first setting involved the absence of an audience, with only the participant and confederate present. The next setting consisted of what was termed an “early audience” where, at the outset of the experiment, observers were present watching the participants. Last, Baron (1971) created a setting where, sometime after the experiment had begun, an audience formed within view of the participant to observe the experiment. He referred to this audience as a “late audience.” Baron (1971) specifically employed this method as a means to test if the participants varied the number and length of the shocks administered if an audience was gathered watching the participants.

During the experiment, Baron (1971) also coupled the scenarios involving no audience, an early audience, and a late audience with either no anger arousal from the confederate or high anger arousal from the confederate. Anger arousal was manipulated by having a confederate antagonize the participants to a certain, prearranged degree of anger. Aggression was measured by the duration of the individual shocks administered. Baron (1971) discovered that a high arousal state achieved prior to the arrival of a late audience consistently led to the initiation of violence.

Moreover, two important findings arose that are of particular interest to the current study. First, the presence of an audience appeared to be enough for the arousal to transform into violence, with the introduction of a late audience scenario serving to push participants into a higher level of hostility. This finding indicated it is possible that an audience may be a catalyst to the VPH victim initiating the violence in the first place. Second, specific to the late audience condition, Baron (1971) found that participants felt justified in administering longer shocks to

the confederates (perpetrators) when an audience was present. This justification may also be a factor in the VPH victim's willingness to initiate the violence – perhaps to save face or preserve honor.

But is the audience above suspicion or have audiences in these types of settings become accustomed to, and encouraging of, violence? Research shows that certain cultures recognize that crowds have become ambivalent to violence (Grant & Diehl, 2012; Lacks, Gordon, & McCue, 2005). In a study conducted over a two-year period in the late 1990s, Lacks, Gordon, and McCue (2005) placed observers at the scene of 32 homicides occurring in a Mid-Atlantic city noting the behavior of those gathered.<sup>8</sup> Their study was specifically interested in the factors influencing the size of a crowd as well as the factors influencing citizen's participation with law enforcement at the scene. In this descriptive analysis, they found that a carnival-like atmosphere did, in fact, exist around the scene of a homicide just as LeBon (1895) had described. Additionally, and of importance to this current study, in 10 out of 32 homicide scenes, individuals who were present were observed to be so unphased by the scene before them that they actually were casually socializing and consuming food during the incident (Lacks, Gordon, & McCue, 2005). This lends weight to the fact that an audience may, in fact, be so unfazed by lethal violence that they view it as a show to be encouraged and an event in which to participate.

Scholarly research, indeed, suggests that the crowd itself may have a social or psychological need to witness violent events, especially when they are particularly aggressive in nature (Grant & Diehl, 2012; Killian, 1972). For example, Grant and Diehl (2012) found that social and cultural aspects of crowd formation were underlying considerations in the formation of an audience in and around lethal violence scenes. Their findings indicated that a particular

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<sup>8</sup> Many more cases of homicide were observed but did not fall into the specific guidelines of the study and were, therefore, eliminated from the final analysis.

culture may have an actual social need to witness such deadly events. It stands to reason that it could also be the case that the victim actor enmeshed in this culture might feel a need to put on a show for the audience. If so, audience presence would certainly have an influence on victim precipitated homicidal incidents.

In sum, Polk (1999) theorized that this specific type of interaction can transform minor run-ins between two people into physical altercations ultimately ending in homicide. Similarly, previous research suggests that respect must be maintained in the presence of others, especially in close-knit urban communities (Anderson, 1999; Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006).

Compounding the aggressor's internal need to save face in the presence of an audience are the prompts that the crowd provides by way of taunts and jeers. The collective audience presents a multitude of reasons to continue the event into ever increasing violence. Each of these studies indicates, as Cooney (1998) hypothesized, that there is a dynamic between the audience and the combatants that can influence whether the violence escalates or de-escalates, but do not suggest whether victim precipitated violence is subject to that dynamic. The current study primarily proposes that the audience's presence alone is enough to provide the mechanism needed for the victim to precipitate the homicide.

### **Victim precipitation**

For some, it may seem odd to think of the victim of a violent crime as having initiated the action that brought about his or her own victimization. Yet research pertaining to victim precipitated violence indicates that victims frequently serve as the initial aggressors and those named as suspects or offenders are generally responding to the aggressive actions of their victims (Chen, 2009; Copes, Kerley, & Carroll, 2002; Curtis, 1974; Felson, 1997; Menard, 2000; Miethe, 1985; Wolfgang, 1967). From Wolfgang's (1958) seminal study up to the present, the idea of

victim precipitation has found support in social science research, yet more work is needed to fully appreciate the phenomenon. When Wolfgang (1958) first defined the concept of victim precipitation, he did so by considering who the first person was to initiate physical force and whether or not that person ultimately ended up becoming a homicide victim. But that definition offered little direction in which to code and operationalize victim precipitation for future analyses. As an example, the argument could be made that Amir (1967), a student of Wolfgang, mistook the concept – created by his own mentor - in his research on forcible rape and, inadvertently, added in the component of victim blaming to victim precipitation.<sup>9</sup>

To test this, Curtis (1974) performed a re-evaluation of Amir's (1967) victim precipitation study on forcible rape and examined other outcomes: homicide, aggravated assault, and robbery. Curtis (1974) dissected Amir's (1967) method and specifically found fault with his inclusion of such variables as whether or not the rape victim had a "bad" or "poor" reputation (i.e. promiscuous or having had sexual relations with the offender prior to the rape). Utilizing a sample of arrest reports of violent behaviors from 17 American cities, Curtis (1974) found a much lower number of victim precipitated rapes than Amir (1967) stating that, "if one interprets bad or poor reputation as associated with the likelihood of precipitation, then added support is given to Amir's position" (p. 601). She contended that removal of the victim's reputation from the precipitation formula yielded more accurate and reliable results.

While Curtis (1974) was critical of the methodology employed by Amir (1967), it is important to note that she was able to demonstrate victim precipitation in all of the violent assaults in her study (to include homicide).<sup>10</sup> Her results impacted victim precipitation research

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<sup>9</sup> Amir's study appeared so much to be a treatise in victim blaming, that it nearly halted research in victim precipitation.

<sup>10</sup> Since this was strictly a victim precipitation study, all of the cases in the sample were victim precipitated.

in two essential ways. First, examining the phenomenon with such a large, nationwide sample across multiple criminal behaviors brought about a clear distinction between victim precipitation and victim blaming. Second, Curtis (1974) re-opened the door that Amir (1967) had fundamentally shut for further, more detailed studies of victim precipitation, establishing it as a valid criminological framework and one that is entirely different from victim blaming.

Miethe (1985) further strengthened the definitional framework of victim precipitation by identifying two necessary conditions underlying the concept. Not only did the victim need to be the first to initiate the violence but also, the victim had to have acted in a manner which brought about the violence. In other words, the victim's initiation needed to be enough to actually evoke a violent and physical response from the offender. This current study combines Miethe's bifurcated framework with Wolfgang's original definition (in addition to Sobol's definition discussed later) as a guide to evaluating the coding for VPH for each of the cases contained within the dataset.

### **Victim precipitated homicide**

Wolfgang (1957) stated that VPH occurs when the victim's actions can be "characterized by his having been the first in the homicide drama to use physical force directed against his subsequent slayer" (p.2). Under this umbrella, Wolfgang's (1957, 1958) analysis of 588 cases of homicides occurring in Philadelphia over a five year period revealed that 26 % of killings were aptly described to be victim precipitated. Moreover, Wolfgang (1957, 1958) found that race, age, place and motive were not predictive of VPHs. He did, however, find that there were more male initiators in VPHs and that alcohol involvement was positively related to VPHs. Wolfgang (1967) was also able to demonstrate that in VPH cases, the victim, as opposed to the offender, was more likely to have a prior criminal record introducing the notion of the victim-

offender overlap. Although this research was pivotal in subsequent research regarding VPH, Wolfgang (1957, 1958, 1967) did not consider the impact that the presence of an audience might have had during the homicidal event or how victim alcohol use impacted VPH events. Nor has there been any criminological research since that time focused specifically on these issues. Thus, one of the purposes of the current study is to address this gap and expand the collective knowledge of VPH through a thorough analysis of audience presence.

Based on the concepts and findings of Wolfgang's (1957, 1958, 1967) Philadelphia study, Roberson (1976) drew upon official homicide data from San Francisco to largely replicate Wolfgang's efforts. Two decades later, most of his findings closely resembled those observed in the Philadelphia study. For example, most homicides were intraracial and committed by black males who knew each other (Roberson, 1976). There were also similar results concerning the victim-offender overlap. Of particular relevance to the current study, Roberson (1976) found that 36 % of the San Francisco homicides occurring from 1971 through 1973 were victim precipitated, lending weight to Wolfgang's observations.

Subsequent research by Sobol (1997) and Polk (1992, 1997, 1998) breathed further life into scholarly inquiries pertaining to VPH. Each dissected the role of the victim in VPHs by looking closer at the behaviors and characteristics of the victim and circumstances during the event. Both of the researchers' findings added to the foundation of VPH.

Sobol (1997) advanced the understanding of the role of the victim in VPHs by creating a continuum of victim involvement. Sobol's (1997) research used official homicide and criminal history data spanning a two-year period in the early 1990s provided by the Buffalo, New York Police Department. He then combined that information with data received on those same cases from the Erie County Medical Examiner's office which provided drug and alcohol information.



The final sample included 157 incidents of homicide where the involvement of the victim could be definitively identified. From the data, four victim behavior categories were created in order to accurately assess victim involvement; innocent non-participating, non-criminal facilitating, criminal facilitating and criminal participating.

The category of “innocent non-participating” included those persons who did not actively participate in the event other than having been a victim of circumstance. The “non-criminal facilitating” category included those victims who were not breaking the law at the time of the incident, but may have been acting in an unnecessarily risky or careless manner such as purposely associating with known violent or criminal offenders. The “criminal facilitating behavior” category captured victims who were killed as a result of direct involvement in criminal behavior such a burglary, larceny, drug dealing, or prostitution where the attack on the offender was more a result of their criminality. Sobol’s (1997) final victim category was labeled “criminal precipitating.” This is the category most associated with the previous tests of victim precipitation and indicates those victims who were first to resort to physical violence or those committing crimes against persons such as rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.<sup>11</sup>

The results of Sobol’s (1997) analysis indicated that the innocent non-participating victim category comprised 26.1 % of the total victims in the study, the noncriminal facilitating category 21.0 %, the criminal facilitating victim category had 31.8 %, and the criminal precipitating category consisting of the remaining 13.4 % of the victims in the study. While age was not a significant predictor of victim type, black males were over represented in the criminal facilitation and precipitation victimization categories while females were overwhelmingly present in the innocent non-participating category. Last, victim precipitation was most significant when the

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<sup>11</sup> Sobol’s third and fourth categories, criminal facilitating behavior and criminal precipitating, are used as methods of determining the cases in the current study as victim precipitated.

victim was involved in drug dealing, drug and alcohol consumption, and engagement in other excessive risk-taking activities away from home. Previous arrests for violence by the victim were also predictive of victimization. Specific to alcohol, Sobol, like others (Wolfgang, 1958; Polk, 1999), empirically linked victim precipitation to consumption adding weight to the postulation made in the current research. Based on these results, it could be argued that the victim's consumption of alcohol has a moderating effect between the presence of an audience and VPH.

The results of Sobol's (1997) study confirmed that the victim can be a significant factor in VPH. Moreover, his analysis also furthered the understanding of what victim behaviors and characteristics (drugs, alcohol, and criminality) were most predictive of VPH. At the time, this was a departure from the concept being summed up as "who started it" (Sobol, 1997, p. 372). Although Sobol's (1997) study was detailed and comprehensive, one factor about VPH that remained untested was, again, the presence of an audience during these events. Consequently, without factoring in the influence of the presence of an audience, an important aspect of the homicidal event might be overlooked and a full understanding of the VPH phenomenon is incomplete.

During this same time period, Polk (1997) noticed a pattern among general homicide research that "victims often contribute to (i.e. precipitate) their own deaths by playing an antagonistic role in the events preceding the fatal encounter" (p. 144). Thus, he performed a test of VPH using data from the Victoria, Australia coroner's office. One aspect that differentiated this research from previous VPH research was that the analysis combined qualitative and quantitative techniques. Utilizing a research model such as this, and adhering to Wolfgang's (1958) original definition of VPH, Polk (1997) was able to gain a more accurate understanding by evaluating the characteristics of the homicidal event and, more specifically, if there existed a

precipitatory victim. The coroner's data set consisted of 384 homicides taking place from 1985 to 1989 supplemented by a lengthy case history, the initial police report, the autopsy and toxicology report, the prosecutor's report, police narratives and, most advantageous, witness statements and defendant statements and interviews. This was more information than even Wolfgang had at his disposal, allowing Polk (1997) to precisely evaluate if a homicidal incident was victim precipitated.

Polk's (1997) findings advanced the study of VPH in three important ways. First, he found that nearly 50% of the homicide cases in the data set fell under the category of victim precipitated.<sup>12</sup> Thus, he was able to further substantiate victim precipitation as a valid and viable framework in which to study homicide. Second, Polk's data showed that the victim could precipitate the homicide under four scenarios: Sexual intimacy, male honor contests, concomitant criminality, and as a conflict resolution. Sexual intimacy referred to situations of intimate-partner violence. In cases where women killed their male partners, victim precipitation was nearly always the case but not the reverse. Male honor contests also figured prominently in VPHs as well. As stated earlier, honor contests were considered to be confrontations between two males in front of an audience in order to save face and right an offense. This was an expansion of Polk's (1992) initial report on confrontational homicide. Concomitant criminality, where the homicide occurred as a direct result of the actions contained within another crime, was found to be another scenario in which VPHs could occur. Due to the inherent risks involved, Polk (1997) surmised that if an individual died as a result of committing a crime, the homicide should be considered victim precipitated because the victim could have also chosen not to commit the crime based on the risk. The most prominent crimes resulting in VPHs were armed

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<sup>12</sup> This percentage was actually a finding from a report that Polk and Ranson (1992) performed for the Australian Criminology Research Council.

robberies and armed burglaries. Finally, Polk (1997) found that victim precipitation existed in some cases where homicide was chosen by two males as conflict resolution. These types of homicides were defined by Polk (1997) as means to resolving a “long-simmering dispute” (p. 159). The operative function of this type of VPH was that one or both of the parties (in particular the victim) saw lethal violence as the only means of resolving the dispute.

The third important contribution of Polk’s (1997) study was the finding that a lack of information regarding the determination of victim precipitation or non-victim precipitation can be detrimental to this type of theoretical research since most data sets are not rich in police narrative information and other such reports used in this particular examination. He further concluded that victim precipitation researchers must contend with measurement error issues when relying on investigative case files, as conflicting accounts of what really happened during a homicidal event commonly emerge from combatants, witnesses, and involved parties.

Polk’s (1997) emphasis on homicide events that manifest as male honor contests (which he would later follow up with a more complete evaluation two years later) is particularly relevant to the present study. He observed that this deadly type of contest often happened in full view of a social audience. This fact indicated that studying the presence of an audience in homicidal situations may further the shared understanding of how VPHs begin or, at least, proceed. This fact directly relates to the present exploration’s hypothesis predicting a positive correlation between the presence of an audience and VPH.

Following the trend of determining more precisely the role of the victim in VPH, Felson and Messner (1998) sought to understand the effect of sex in these types of killings. Noting that when women murder their husbands the event is more likely classified as victim precipitated than when husbands murder their wives, they proposed a method by which to extricate the

effects of the sex of the offender, the sex of the victim, and the intimate relationship that exists, or does not exist, in the study of VPH. In order to perform an analysis of this type, Felson and Messner (1998) operationalized the concept of victim precipitation in three separate ways. They first considered the killing as simply occurring in self-defense. They did this by considering only the motive or the circumstances (i.e. domestic quarrel) surrounding the event without regard for the victim's physical actions. They next expanded on that definition by adding into the event the victim's physical provocation that resulted in the offender's lethal response without consideration of self-defense, acknowledging that this particular way of determining victim precipitation was the most commonly utilized in the research to date (Felson & Messner, 1998). Finally, they employed a more inferential method for determining victim precipitation by factoring in the victim and offender's criminal history of violence. They theorized that if the victim (typically the male in an intimate partner VPH) had an official history of violence they may be more likely to attack first and, therefore, precipitate their own homicide. Likewise, if the offender had no official history of violence, then that offender was deemed likely to have reacted to the victim's attack and to have responded in self-defense rather than being the primary aggressor. Thus, if the victim possessed any previous arrests, the case was automatically coded as victim precipitated.

Felson and Messner (1998) used previously collected homicide data from 33 large urban counties across the United States (US).<sup>13</sup> The research team examined 2,058 cases and employed liner and logistic regressions to evaluate the gender effects of intimate partner VPH. Primarily, Felson and Messner (1998) found that indeed gender had a strong effect in cases of VPHs involving male and female intimate partners, with women being disproportionately identified as

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<sup>13</sup> See Dawson, J.M., & Boland, B. (1993). *Murder in large urban counties, 1988*. BJS Special Report, NCJ-140614, Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

the “offender” in these killings. Results of their examination also revealed patterns in cases of VPHs, demonstrating that males resort to more and greater violence than females and that the males who killed their intimate partners did, in fact, have a more pronounced criminal history of violence than the women (Felson & Messner, 1998). In this way, Felson and Messner (1998) advanced the study of VPH by disentangling the gender effect and demonstrating the statistical power of the intimate partner relationship. Coupling this finding with Polk’s (1997, 1999) studies of honor contests and VPH, it is expected that the results of this current work will also confirm that males are more likely to be the individual who initiated the violence in a victim precipitation homicide.

Concluding the scholarly research on VPH, Muftić and Hunt (2013) performed a study using victim precipitation as a framework to extend the knowledge of the victim-offender overlap. Hypothesizing that adult victim precipitation would be more present in homicide cases where the victim-offender overlap existed than in cases where the overlap did not exist, the authors employed a model utilized by Mustaine and Tewksbury (2000) and Broidy et al. (2006) where the actors in the incident were classified as either a victim (those without an official criminal history), offender (those without an official criminal history), or victim-offenders (those with an official criminal history). Utilizing a ten year homicide data set from Dallas, Texas spanning 1988 through 1997 (N=895), the authors performed a series of multinomial regressions in order to test their propositions. Muftić and Hunt’s (2013) analysis indicated that there was a greater degree of victim-offender overlap in VPH cases than in those cases designated as non-victim precipitated. This was found to be especially true regarding the criminal histories of the victim and the offender. Thus, they were able to fill a gap in the victim-offender overlap literature and extend the knowledge about victim precipitation.

## **Audience-involved victim precipitated homicide events**

Despite the numerous explorations of victim precipitation (Felson & Messner, 1998; Luckenbill, 1977; Muftić & Hunt, 2013; Polk, 1997; Roberson, 1976; Sobol, 1997; Wolfgang, 1958), there is at least one aspect of victim precipitated criminal behavior that has not been covered in the literature to date. To the author's knowledge, there has been no prior research which places center stage the association between the presence of an audience and VPH. Considering the fact that the existing homicide literature has looked into both the audience surrounding homicides and the fact that a significant portion of homicides are victim precipitated, but never together, an examination of the relationship between the presence of an audience and VPHs in the same study would fill a gap in the scholarly research related to homicide in general.

While Polk (1999) examined male honor contests in front of a social audience,<sup>14</sup> the focus of his research was on the interactions between the victim and offender. For Polk (1999), the audience was secondary and its presence was simply necessary in order for the event to be considered an honor contest. Similarly, Luckenbill (1977) broke down the situational characteristics of some types of homicides and was able to show that homicides are the result of several interactions between the victim and offender, further adding in the fact that the audience watching these events unfold should be considered a third actor in the homicidal event (Luckenbill, 1977). Even though he focused more on the step-by-step process of how a (sometimes victim precipitated) homicide can occur, Luckenbill (1977) placed the audience in the foreground of his analysis. Thus, Luckenbill's (1977) study beckons future researchers to further scrutinize the influence of an audience in a homicide as more than just a backdrop by

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<sup>14</sup> A social audience is a type of audience but is differentiated by the idea that a social audience is made up of people known the one or both of the combatants'.

noting that the literature at the time was devoid of research on how lethal events unfold. The investigation case file data used to perform this analysis spanned a ten-year period in the 1960s and 1970s in California. Luckenbill (1977) reconstructed homicide events by use of evidence gathered at the scene, the interviews of all of the witnesses (not just those which were used in court), the testimony in all phases of the court proceedings, the demeanor and physical characteristics of the victim and offender, venue characteristics, and the known sequence of events. The entirety of this chain of events was what he coined the “situated transaction” (Luckenbill, 1977, p. 177).<sup>15</sup> In addition, Luckenbill (1977) made a point of stating that the terms “victim” and “offender” were simply labels used to describe who ultimately died and who ultimately delivered the final deadly blow. By doing so, he was able to create a step by step model of how 94 homicides began and culminated, and thus objectively demonstrated the sequence of events.

Luckenbill (1977) found that homicidal events are generally comprised of six fundamental stages. Though many of these steps might mimic the concept of victim precipitation, Luckenbill (1977) was not specifically looking to define or refine the concept of victim precipitation. Rather, he was simply putting a chronological framework around the event. The first step in the event begins with the victim’s opening move which Luckenbill (1977) also considered to be an attempt to save face. Slightly over 40% of the incidents began with the “offender” interpreting the victim’s opening *physical* move as offensive, while in over 30% of the cases the offender interpreted the victim’s inaction as the opening move and the catalyst to the lethal transaction. In 25% of the cases, the unwitting victim made a nonverbal gesture, usually in the form of flirtation, which the offender simply labeled as the opening move. The

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<sup>15</sup> It is important to note here that Luckenbill was seeking to understand all homicides not just those specifically labeled victim precipitated.



second stage manifests itself when the offender interprets the victim's actions as offensive and worthy of redress (see also Miethe, 1985). Of particular importance, in over half the cases, the offender learned of the victim's opening move from the victim and/or the audience. Thus, if the audience had not been present, it might be that the event would never have occurred. This led to the third stage in which the victim and the offender are locked into a situation where they perceive that their respect and reputations are at risk if they do not respond. Luckenbill (1977) maintained that, at this point, the two parties (victim and offender) engage in a working agreement that violence is an appropriate means of restoring social order to the situation. It is at this stage where most victims die (Luckenbill, 1977). Luckenbill's (1977) fourth stage, therefore, is the decision-making stage for the victim. Either, walk away or escalate the confrontation. Stage five was deemed the commitment to battle stage where the victim commits to a physical resolution and is killed. Luckenbill's (1977) final stage deals directly with the actions of the offender and audience. Most often the offender left the scene although about one third of the time offender voluntarily remained at the scene. In the remaining cases the audience held the offender at the scene until law enforcement could arrive.

Luckenbill (1977) made the first attempt to understand the detailed and dynamic transaction that occurs between the victim, offender, and audience in a homicidal event.<sup>16</sup> Overall, Luckenbill (1977) observed that over 70 % of the homicides in his study occurred in venues where an audience was gathered and, at times, acted as a catalyst to the event by disseminating information about what the victim's opening move meant and suggest retaliatory pathways. While the current study looks not to the influence of the actions of the audience per se, Luckenbill's (1977) sequential model and the results therein give way to the idea that the

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<sup>16</sup> Though not at all an attempt to discover an overlap between the three entities.

simple presence of an audience could influence VPH. He also provided a warning for future researchers in that caution should be given to the fact the initial physical move may not be from the victim but from the offender responding to the non-verbal affront offered by the victim earlier. For that reason the current study includes cases where a clear determination can be made as to which combatant made the opening move in the transaction paying strict attention to any clues in the police narrative.

Similar to Luckenbill (1977), Polk (1999) also contributed to the study of homicidal events in places where people were gathered. In the early 1990s, he began to research in-depth the confrontational interactions between male victims and offenders in terms of maintaining their social status quo. He would eventually term these interactions as “honor contests.” In his first analysis of homicide data gathered in Australia, Polk, along with his colleague David Ranson (Polk & Ranson, 1992) supported much of what Luckenbill (1977) had put forth, with the added layer of examining the setting itself. Not unlike Luckenbill (1977), results of this report showed that homicide overwhelmingly involved male offenders and male victims. It also indicated that murder was not normally the intended outcome of the offender’s actions. Polk (1999), however, added that these fundamentally masculine confrontations more often than not involved working class individuals and occurred in front of male peers. The analysis of homicides resulting for honor contests showed that they were likely to occur in places that were “open” in character (leisure settings) and the probability of alcohol involvement was high. This is a significant finding to consider while engaging in this current study. Leisure settings and alcohol have the potential to act as interactive variables between the presence of an audience and VPH.

Overall, Polk’s (1992, 1997, 1999) research has particular relevance to this current study. While Polk’s (1992) original study focused on confrontational homicide, as opposed to VPH, it

did continue to add the dimension of the audience as a factor to be considered in lethal violence. That research study laid the foundation for Polk's (1997) later research focusing on actual victim precipitation and, later, the influence of a third actor he labeled a social audience (Polk, 1999). And, since the current study is primarily focused on the influence that the presence of an audience has on VPH, Polk's research and findings add to the current study's hypothesis that there should be a positive and significant correlation between the two.

Polk (1992, 1997, 1999) concluded that, generally speaking, the victim often plays a significant part in his or her own demise, yet it was crucial to look beyond the victim and offender's roles was essential to understanding the totality of the homicidal event. Decker (1996) also picked up on the importance of not discounting the presence of third parties in the lethal incident. In his analysis of St. Louis homicide data (N=792), Decker (1996) utilized what he called "event" variables to include the number of witnesses or, in effect, the presence of an audience. The study examined lethal violence over a five-year period from a standpoint relating to non-normative, deviant homicide; those homicides that fell outside of the typical incident such as a murder that occurs between two strangers having an expressive motive rather than instrumental.

Decker's (1996) study indeed revealed that a good number of homicides could be classified outside the normal expectations scholars had previously affirmed. He found that almost one third of the killings that occurred between intimates were the result of an instrumental motive rather than expressive. Almost 50 % of the homicides between strangers in this study were found to have an expressive motive rather than instrumental, with retaliation being one of the primary factors (Decker, 1996). It was also observed that "... when two or more witnesses were present, an unexpected combination of motive and victim-offender relationship was found

for both the acquaintance and stranger categories. In each case more expressive than instrumental motives were observed” (Decker, 1996, p. 437). In other words, when an audience was present, material gain did not matter, the violence was more expressive – such as anger, rage, and saving face. Again, the presence of an audience appeared to have an effect on the combatants at least in regard to a more expressive motive for the violence.

### **Alcohol as a moderator**

From the findings contained in many of the studies reviewed in this thesis, a common, underlying, theme also emerged. In evaluating the studies regarding audience presence, homicide, and victim precipitated homicide, the consumption of alcohol was demonstrated to have significant effects on the respective outcome variables. Most relevant to the research at hand, Wolfgang (1958), Polk (1999), and Muftić and Hunt (2013) found that alcohol consumption and VPH shared a positive, significant, and direct relationship. No research, however, has been conducted to test whether or not alcohol acts as a moderator between the presence of an audience and VPH. People under the influence of alcohol have been shown to be less inhibited and more courageous than when they are not drinking (Adams, Ataya, Attwood, & Munafo, 2013; Felson, 1997). This factor is indicative of the fact that individuals under the influence of alcohol might engage in activities that they might not ordinarily do so when they are not drinking. An example of this might be initiating violence that ultimately leads to their death – the same violence they would avoid if they were not drinking. The victim’s consumption of alcohol, therefore, could influence whether or not that person initiates violence (which ultimately ends in their homicide) or not. Hence, the current research tests the victim’s alcohol

consumption as both a direct predictor of victim precipitated homicide and as a moderator between the presence of an audience and VPH.<sup>17</sup>

Moderators are third variables in a statistical study that partition the independent variable into subgroups affecting the direction or strength of the relationship between the predictor and the outcome variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Polk (1999) inferred that alcohol usage is a specific characteristic of an honor contest in that the two combatants have easy access to alcohol as well as those watching the events unfold. That being the case, alcohol usage may confound the results of the primary analyses performed in this study and, as such, should be controlled for in the main hypothesis and then tested for a moderative influence - especially the victim's consumption. In 2001, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reported a link between alcohol use and homicide by the victim, the offender, or both.<sup>18</sup> In effect, the information provided in the BJS (2011) report represented a zero-order correlation between alcohol use and homicide without consideration of other influences. As such, there is the possibility that alcohol could have both a direct and moderating effect on homicides general. This study addresses that issue.

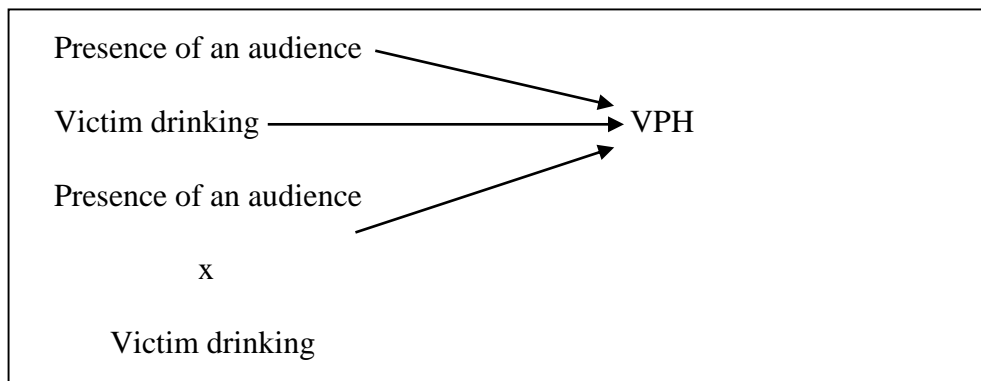
According to Baron and Kenny (1986), and as illustrated in Figure 1, if the causal relationship between the presence of an audience and VPH changes as a function of the victim's alcohol usage, then the victim's drinking would be considered to have a moderating effect.

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<sup>17</sup> Per the moderator techniques recommended by Baron & Kenny, 1986.

<sup>18</sup> The statistics presented, though, did not specify the presence of an audience nor did they speak to victim precipitation.

Figure 1. *Moderator model*



## Conclusion

In sum, research in the area of audience presence at homicide scenes combined with research regarding VPH may offer a way in which to increase the understanding of the factors involved in lethal violence. The current study seeks to expand that understanding based upon the works of Luckenbill (1977), Polk (1992, 1997, 1998), and Decker (1996) who began to incorporate the audience as a third actor in their analyses of homicide. Since Polk (1997) and Decker (1996) suggest that the audience should be considered a third actor in a homicide, the first step to furthering the understanding of the influence an audience has is to evaluate if the presence of that audience is predictive of a VPH occurring. The hypothesis made in this current exploration is that there is a positive and significant relationship between the victim's initial physical precipitation and the presence of an audience. Also, considering the previous research on the influence of alcohol on lethal outcomes, the victim's consumption of alcohol was tested for whether or not it moderated the relationship between the presence of an audience and VPH.

### **Chapter III: Methods**

As Sobol (1997) advocated, understanding “who started it” is a positive step toward increasing the collective knowledge of VPH, but researchers should go further to determine the possible causes of the victim’s precipitating actions. The chief research question guiding the current study, therefore, is: Are homicides that involve the presence of an audience more likely to be victim precipitated than homicides that do not involve the presence an audience? By providing insight into this question, the current gap in the literature of audience presence in VPH begins to be addressed.

It is further questioned in the current study whether the influence of the presence of an audience on VPH is moderated by the victim’s consumption of alcohol. In his research regarding honor contests, Polk (1999) stated that disentangling the effects of alcohol on violence was difficult, yet important to understanding the phenomenon. By testing this moderation hypothesis, some of the effects that victim drinking has on VPH as well as violence and violent victimization are extricated.

#### **Data**

The data used in this analysis was collected previously from the official homicide files of the Dallas, Texas police department (DPD) from 1988 through 1997. During that 10-year period, the DPD recorded a total of 3,085 homicide cases. This data was then collected from the officer’s initial report of the incident and made available to researchers from the University of North Texas and transferred into an SPSS dataset. The majority of the information was captured as numeric variables, although several variables were formatted as string variables to capture narrative information from the official reports. These researchers then entered, coded, or created

285 total data points from the information provided by the DPD. Researchers were not granted direct access to the actual incident reports from the field or resulting homicide investigation files.

The dataset contained information pertaining to the incident, the victim, the offender, the setting, and circumstances surrounding each homicide. Incident data included such information as the location in which the homicide took place, the time and day, cause of death, relationship between victim and offender, and the motive<sup>19</sup> behind the killing. Victim and offender data included the demographic variables of gender, race, and age as well as alcohol and drug use, their respective arrest histories, and probation or parole status. Individual variables of the setting and circumstances were also included in and of themselves. Additionally, an officer narrative describing the essence of what happened in each homicide is also contained in the dataset. This SPSS string variable captured verbatim the text that the officer entered into the record management system to summarize the homicide incident.

Research has indicated that the characteristics and circumstances of juvenile homicides are different from adult homicides (Meithe & Regoeczi, 2004). All cases in which either the victim or the offender was listed as a juvenile, therefore, were eliminated. Additionally, cases in which the victim or the offender was listed as below the age of 18 were also eliminated from the population. That process left a sample of 2,679 homicide cases. These remaining cases were then scrutinized for whether or not the victim precipitated the homicide and for the presence or absence of an audience.

## **Variables**

### **Dependent variable: Victim precipitated homicide**

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<sup>19</sup> Including concomitant criminal acts.



For a homicide to be considered victim precipitated it had to be clear from the information provided whether the victim caused the homicide with his or her initial actions. Because this variable was not directly contained in the original dataset, a dichotomous variable was created in order to code a homicide as victim precipitated (“1”) or non-victim precipitated (“0”). Wolfgang’s (1967) definition of a VPH served as the preliminary yard stick for determining this categorization. An incident was considered victim precipitated if it was clear from the information contained within the dataset that the victim initiated the physical action which led to his or her eventual death.

From that point, the definition Miethe (1985) provided supplemented this working definition. Miethe (1985) added that, besides the victim having to be the first to initiate the violence, the victim also needed to have done so in a manner that brought about the violence. Having this added dimension to the definition meant that both physical and verbal initiation could be included. So, not only could a shove be considered to have initiated the violence, but a verbal provocation also constitutes the initiation of the violence by the victim. Rounding out the working definition for the current study, Sobol’s (1997) concepts of criminal precipitating and criminal facilitating were included. Thus, concomitant criminality, such as drug dealing and prostitution, also were encompassed in the final definition of victim precipitation utilized in this research. Coding of victim precipitation was based heavily on what the responding officer’s narrative explicitly stated in addition to other variable information captured for that particular case (Muftić & Hunt, 2013).

The following example from a narrative in the data set is presented to demonstrate the coding of a VPH.

*Complainant (victim) was attempting to rob the subject using a toy gun. The suspect had a real gun, and killed the complainant (victim).*

In this example, the victim attempted to rob the suspect with a toy gun manufactured to look real. The suspect listed in the reported incident (the person being robbed) defended himself with an actual handgun and shot the victim (the initiator) dead. The victim's initial physical action of pointing a toy gun at and attempting to rob the suspect are why this case was considered victim precipitated. In short, this narrative suggested that the victim made an initial physical move that ultimately ended up in his death. In remaining true to the concepts of victim precipitation, blameworthiness was not a determining factor in the data coding process (Curtis, 1974; Miethe, 1985; Sobol, 1997). In the current example, it could be that what appears on the surface of this narrative is exactly what happened in that the victim was seeking to rob someone for drug money and might have "deserve what he got." It could also be the case, though, that the victim was seeking money in order to feed his family. In either case, the victim precipitated the homicide. Blame was not considered even though it is acknowledged that there may be an overlap between blame and victim precipitation. Simply stated, the determining factor of victim precipitation for this current study is whether or not the victim was the first to provoke the incident – regardless of blame.

In contrast, the following narrative provides an example of a non-VPH.

*The complainant (victim), a Texaco gas station clerk, let an ex-employee into the store to use the phone. Her accomplice then entered the store and robbed the complainant. He then shot the complainant multiple times. The incident was captured on video tape.*

This particular narrative describes clearly how the events unfolded. It is evident in this example that the complainant (victim) did nothing to provoke the violence and there was no hint

of initial physical violence or criminality by the victim. It can be construed that if the store clerk had made any actions forcing the robber to kill him, possibly precipitating the homicide, it would have been caught on video tape and, thusly, recorded in the narrative. In this case it is evident that the offenders initiated and carried out the entire incident.

While the preceding narratives were clear examples of VPHs, some narratives contained in the sample were not so easily determined as VPH or non-VPH. In such cases, other incident variables were taken into consideration as a whole in order to make the determination of whether or not the homicide was victim precipitated. Take, for example, the following narrative:

*Victim was sexually assaulted and then strangled to death. She was then shoved under the bed.*

The narrative in this particular case provides clues to what happened, but is not necessarily conclusive in terms of victim precipitation. At first read it appears that a woman was attacked by a stranger, killed, and then the body was hidden under her own bed to conceal the crime, the innocent victim of violence. More evidence was needed to make a determination of victim precipitation. The rest of the variables in the case (i.e. location, victim offender relationship, etc.) were then examined and demonstrated that the incident happened at the victim's residence as a result of a home invasion type of crime. The victim was asphyxiated with a rope in an attempt to restrain her and muffle any noise from her resistance. For these reasons, this case was coded as non-victim precipitated.

There were also some incidents in the sample where no determination could be made as in the following:

*Complainant (victim) was found dead of gunshot wound. No witnesses. No motive.*

The narrative here says nothing substantial about the homicide in general, let alone whether the victim initiated his death. Additionally, the victim had no prior criminal history and no other cases were related to this incident. None of the other variables in the sample offered any evidence of victim precipitation. Due to the lack of data for this incident, this case was eliminated from the current study.

As previously stated, the VPH variable was created and coded as dichotomous. If the case was clearly victim precipitated, it was coded as a “1.” If the case was clearly non-victim precipitated, it received a coded value of “0.” Since VPH and audience presence were coded simultaneously, the final sample size is reported at the end of the explanation of the coding process for audience presence.

## **Independent variables**

### **Audience presence**

The next step in this analysis was to determine if an audience was present in the homicides. In order to complete that process, it was important to define what exactly constituted an audience. Having a working definition allowed for a more precise determination of whether an audience was or was not present.

The defining aspect of an audience, for purposes of this study, consisted of persons present at the scene of the homicide other than the victim and offender. This definition may include, but was not limited to, persons listed as witnesses in the police narrative as well as bystanders. An audience could also include co-conspirators such as fellow gang members observing the violence. In addition, an audience is considered present if the incident took place in a leisure setting such as a bar, party, family gathering, or any of the leisure setting covered in

the previous chapter.<sup>20</sup> Drug or “dope” houses were also indicative of the presence of an audience since these types of residences are typically not left for one person to maintain. All of these factors, though, led to an indication of the presence of an audience but did not necessarily mandate that it be coded as such. The totality of the case was used in this determination. It should be noted here that, in this current study, as long as an audience was indicated by the data as being present during any point of the incident, the case was coded as having the presence of an audience.

The police narrative (formatted as a string variable in the SPSS file), as with the coding of VPH, was again the primary source of data relied upon to determine audience presence. In one instance, the narrative read:

*The complainant was shot and killed by a stray bullet fired by the suspect. The suspect had been kicked out of the bar for causing a disturbance. Suspect pulled out an AK assault rifle from the trunk of the car and started shooting.*

In a case such as this, the presence of an audience is evident. The fact that a stray bullet hit the victim (complainant) indicates that the victim was considered an onlooker, not one of the combatants so, logically, people other than the victim and suspect were present. The weapon, an AK-47, is an assault rifle capable of firing multiple bullets in rapid succession. Thus, it can be inferred that the suspect was shooting into a crowd (or audience) because not only was a victim killed by a stray bullet, but several shots were fired. The presence of an audience can be further supported by the fact that the narrative states the suspect had just been kicked out of a bar, the parking lot of which the incident happened, a place where people (an audience) often gather.

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<sup>20</sup> This is especially the case when coupled with such things as event location, time of night, day of the week, and social setting (see Polk, 1992, 1997, and 1999).

At times the narrative spoke for itself with respect to audience presence. However, other information was helpful in making the audience presence determination by examining the variable (*premise type*) listing the type of premises in which the homicide took place. In the example above, the officer listed the premise type as a BAR/CLUB/PARKING LOT. Again, this is a place where the public gathers and audiences typically form.

The day of the week and time of the incident were also considered in the overall determination of the existence of the presence of an audience. Again using the above case, the incident happened on a Friday. Weekend nights (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) and violent victimization have been found that share a positive correlation especially in studies evaluating lifestyle and routine activities theory (Chen, 2009; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Ezell & Tanner-Smith, 2009; Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garafalo, 1978). The determination of the presence of an audience in this case, therefore, was made through considerations of the narrative, venue, time and day of the week variables.

Below is a homicide case in which it was clear that no audience was present.

*Complainant (victim) was shot as she looked out the bedroom window after hearing gunshots earlier.*

Although the narrative strongly implies that there was no audience present, other variables in the data were evaluated. In this case, the DPD listed that the event occurred in a private residential area adding weight to the determination that no audience was present. Furthermore, the police indicated that this particular homicide was committed by a lone gunman.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The “multiple offenders” variable in the original dataset was coded as a “0” indicating that the offender acted alone.

Although the previous examples allowed for a firm determination of audience presence or not, some of the cases contained no evidence to allow for such a determination. Such was the determination in the following case:

*Complainant found dead in a vacant lot.*

None of the other data points captured in this case were of use in the audience presence determination. Without anything else to assist in the determination, the presence of an audience was unknown (nor could victim precipitation be deduced). There might have been an audience present, or there might not have but it could not be accurately concluded. Because of this lack of data, in this instance, it was decided to simply eliminate the case from the final analysis.

A separate variable was created and coded as either 0 (where there was no audience present), or 1 (where there was the presence of an audience). The final sample consisted of 473 cases to be used for this current study.<sup>22</sup>

To improve coding reliability, case coding (specifically for audience presence and victim precipitation) was also performed by two independent coders.<sup>23</sup> A random sampling of the population was provided to each of the independent coders to individually determine whether or not a case was victim precipitated and whether or not an audience was present during the homicide. Both raters were consistent in their coding (rater A matched the original coding with 88 % accuracy and rater B matched at 92 %) which was also consistent with the author's coding.

### **Victim drinking**

Alcohol consumption by the victim was a critical part of this study. Because the case may be that alcohol consumed by the victim caused the initial action(s) that resulted in his or her

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<sup>22</sup> This sample size of 473 reflects a paring down of 1121 cases that remained after the audience presence coding. When a listwise deletion was performed to remove the missingness in the variables, the final sample was 473. This is discussed in more detail later in Chapter III: Methods.

<sup>23</sup> This same technique, triangular coding, was specifically utilized and suggested by Meithe (1985).

death, and not audience presence, victim drinking was evaluated as a precipitator to the VPH on its own merits. As such, it was treated initially as an independent variable. The original dataset already had this variable contained within it and was a direct reflection of the DPD initial report of incident. The incident report, however, listed this information in the form of a question (“Was the victim drinking alcohol?”), with yes or no as possible responses. As a precursor to the current analysis, alcohol consumption by the victim was recoded dichotomously where usage was coded as “1” and non-usage was coded as “0.”

In order to make a proper assessment of the data contained within the current study, the analyses evaluated first the direct effect of alcohol on VPH and then, by means of creating a cross-product term multiplying the variables of the presence an audience by victim drinking, a moderating effect was also tested. If the effect of the cross-product term was shown to be a stronger predictor of VPH, a moderating effect could be said to exist.

### **Control variables**

#### **Age**

Age has been shown to be a predictor of homicide (BJS, 2011). Indeed, most incarcerated individuals in state prisons are between the ages of 18 and 24 (BJS, 2011; Miethe & Regoeczi; 2004). Consequently, age could confound or bias the results of this analysis. Age, therefore, was necessarily controlled for and held fixed. The age variable was the only variable in the current study not operationalized as dichotomous. Victim and offender ages were coded as continuous variables directly by the UNT coding team from the data supplied by the DPD. The ages ranged from ages 18 to 94. Because these variables were continuous, independent sample T-tests were performed for significance.



## **Sex**

The sex of both the victim and offender were included in the model for this study. A host of prior scientific research has established that, in America, homicide more often than not occurs between two males (BJS, 2011; Cooper & Smith, 2011; Fox & Zawitz, 2010; Pizarro, Zgoba, & Jennings, 2011; Wolfgang, 1958). The homicide actors' sex was important to this current study in two ways. If the analysis indicated that the same holds true for VPHs influenced by the presence of an audience, then the results of this current study contain that much more validity and generalizability. If, on the other hand, the analysis is contra-indicative of the current understanding of the sex of homicide victims and offenders, then a new dimension will be added to homicide research in that sex in the context of VPH should be disaggregated.

## **Victim race**

In addition to age and sex, the victims' race was also included in this study. The extant literature illustrates that the overwhelming majority of homicides in the US are Black on Black killings (Anderson, 1999; Bennett & Frasier, 2000; BJS, 2011; Griffiths & Tita, 2009; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004; Wolfgang, 1958). The race of the victim, therefore, was added into the model as a control to maintain the integrity of the validity and generalizability of the current study. Victim race was coded as five distinct dichotomous variables since five separate racial groups were represented in the sample. Race variables were dummied as Black (0=no/1=yes), White (0=no/1=yes), Hispanic (0=no/1=yes), Asian (0=no/1=yes), and Other (0=no/1=yes). Because Black individuals made up the majority of both the victim and suspect samples, this variable was used as the reference. By studying race as a predictor inside this current framework, significant results may contribute to the body of literature adding the dimension of race to the influence that the presence of an audience may have on VPH.

### **Victim criminal history**

The purpose for evaluating the victim's prior criminal history is to control for the fact that the victim might have a propensity toward violent criminal behavior. That propensity might act as the catalyst for initiating the violence and not the presence of an audience. Because the victim might be more likely to resort to violence as a normal course of conflict resolution (Anderson, 1999; Felson, 1978) this variable was held fixed in this current study. The victim's criminal history was coded as a dichotomous variable (0=no/1=yes) indicating whether or not the victim had a prior criminal history.

### **Incident variables**

The incident measures in this study contain the characteristics of the homicide event. Incident measures allow for a complete understanding of what happened with each particular homicide and its surroundings. Block and Block (1992) point out that not only is homicide research deficient if no incident measures are utilized, but proper preventative measures also cannot be fully achieved without a complete understanding of all of the factors that brought about the killing. Thus, conducting a study that evaluates the influence of the presence of an audience on a VPH inherently dictates the need to include incident measures, especially those relating to the audience.

### **Suspect drinking**

Because prior research has demonstrated that alcohol consumed by both the victim and the suspect is a common factor in homicide generally (BJS, 2011; Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004; Pridemore & Eckhardt, 2008), a suspect drinking variable was created as a control. This study focuses on factors that influence the victim in initiating the VPH. Thus, alcohol usage in general was divided out between the victim and offender/suspect to avoid confounding the results of the

hypotheses tested. Suspect drinking was coded as a dichotomous variable to indicate whether or not the suspect was consuming alcohol at the time of the incident (0=no/1=yes).

### **Weekend / Night time**

A dichotomous coding structure was also used to delineate whether or not the homicide occurred on the weekend (0=no/1=yes), or during the night time hours (0=no/1=yes). According to Polk (1999), leisure events occur on the weekends and in the evening hours. Since it is also commonly accepted that people gather in leisure settings, hence the name, it follows that on weekends during night time hours an audience would be more likely to gather.

Polk's (1999) findings are also consistent with the tenets of routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979). In later research, Felson (1997) stated that "An active night life has a causal effect on the opportunity to be involved (as a victim, offender, or witness) in nondomestic violence ... for males, night life is associated with witnessing violence as well as offending and victimization" (p. 217). Weekends and nights, therefore, are also controlled in this study's analyses.

A weekend was defined as being between the hours of 5 p.m. Friday evening and midnight Sunday night. Night time was considered to occur between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. and operationalized as such. Both variables were coded dichotomously by answering whether or not the incident took place on the weekends (0=no/1=yes) or at night time (0=no/1=yes).

### **Criminal Involvement**

The last of the incident-level control variables included in this study was a variable indicating whether the homicide was committed during the commission, or attempted commission of another crime (concomitant criminality). For instance, a person who robbed a

liquor store and killed the store clerk commits the crime of armed robbery, while concomitantly committing the crime of homicide. Concomitant criminality was incorporated into this current examination because crimes like robbery, dealing drugs, or engaging in prostitution fall within the definition of precipitation in the current study. This is consistent with Sobol's (1997) research on criminal facilitating behavior and criminal precipitating homicide. Concomitant crime was coded as dichotomously (no=0, yes=1).

### **Interaction variable**

To test the second hypothesis that the victim drinking alcohol would moderate the relationship between the presence of an audience and VPH, a cross product term was calculated (victim drinking\*audience). This variable was included in a second model (Model 2) which included the interaction variable controlling for the predictor and control variables. This model is compared side-by-side to the original model in Chapter IV: Results.

### **Analytic strategy**

The analysis in this current study proceeds as a three-step process. First, descriptive data was analyzed for frequencies, location and spread of their distribution. Bivariate techniques were then utilized as a second step in the analytic process. A contingency table (cross tabulation) was constructed to summarize the relationship between each predictor or control variable and both values of the outcome variable (VPH yes/no). Because the outcome variable was dichotomous, and therefore nonparametric, a Pearson's chi-square test of independence was employed within the cross tabulation. This test allows for the determination of a relationship, and the differences, between the variables and has the added advantage of being free of distributional assumptions (Weinberg & Abramowitz, 2008; Teasdale, 2012). The formula used for the chi-square test of independence was:  $\chi^2_{(Columns-1)(Rows-1)} = \sum [(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2 / E_{ij}]$ .

Two variables, the victim and suspect age were the only independent variables in the model that were interval or ratio variables. As such, independent samples t-tests were performed to evaluate their relationship with VPH and non-VPH homicides. In addition to reporting the mean and standard deviations of these variables, the t statistics, significance level, and degrees of freedom were listed and included at the bottom of Table 2 – the contingency table.

The third step in this analysis was to perform binary logistic regressions. This type of regression analysis was chosen because the outcome variable (VPH) was dichotomous (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). In addition to predicting the probability of VPH occurring due to the presence of an audience, regression analyses control for possible confounding variables in the model such as age, race, sex, criminal history, suspect alcohol use, and concomitant crime. The formula used in this study for the logistic regression analyses is as follows:  $\ln(p/1-p) = \alpha + \beta x$ .

Moreover, in contrast to ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, the requirements of logistic regression are better suited to this current research because they are more tolerant. Logistic regression does not assume that the dependent variable in the data is normally distributed, nor that homoscedasticity exists among the variables (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). In addition, a logistic regression computes the change in the odds ratio of the dependent variable, where an OLS regression computes the change in the dependent variable itself (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). Since this study is concerned with calculating the likelihood of a victim precipitating his or her own demise when there is an audience present, binary logistic regression odds ratios represent the most parsimonious and interpretable means to understanding that phenomenon.

There are, nevertheless, some restrictions when using logistic regression techniques. Significance estimation is an important consideration in logistic regression. While this method

does calculate a pseudo- $R^2$  and a chi-square value, it simply indicates that a relationship exists between the regressor and outcome variables. To overcome this issue, a Wald statistic was calculated as a measure of significance. Colinearity among the independent variables is also a concern. In order to diagnose multicollinearity, a variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated for each variable in the model.

## Chapter IV: Results

### Homicide data and missingness

It is not uncommon for homicide files and data to be incomplete or have missingness (Regoeczi & Riedel, 2003; Riedel & Regoeczi, 2004). This is particularly true concerning suspect data and the current study is no exception. Of the 1,121 cases contained in the complete victim and audience sample, missingness was observed in just over half the cases (648) and centered on suspect information, which left a sample size of 473 upon which to perform the analyses.<sup>24</sup> For example, one of the cases in the dataset involved a victim who was involved in an altercation in the parking lot of a night club. Although the victim's information was readily available for the police to obtain and the determination of VPH and audience presence was also able to be determined from the dataset, the suspect in the homicide fled the scene and consequently, the only information about the suspect was from what the witnesses provided to the DPD. While the data indicated that the suspect was an Hispanic male, information about that individual's criminal history, intoxication – either through alcohol or drugs – and age were not able to be recorded. Moreover, this missingness was not localized to one particular suspect variable. While this missingness was not readily classified as missing completely at random, missing at random, or not missing at random (Rubin, 1976), it did not appear to be ignorable. Thus, extensive efforts were made to account for the missing data in the following analyses.<sup>25</sup>

### Univariate results

The information contained in Table 1 describes the sample percentages of, and the number of cases for, each variable utilized in this analysis. This table was constructed in such a way as to present the reader with a comparison of the complete victim and audience sample to

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<sup>24</sup> No missing data was observed for any of the victim-related variables.

<sup>25</sup> Bivariate correlation matrices, mean substitution regressions, and variance inflation factors are appended.

the listwise deletion (analysis) sample. In a side-by-side analysis of the two samples, the majority of the variable percentages were similar but there were four variables where the differences were readily observable. In particular, the VPH variable, the victim criminal history variable, the suspect criminal history and the criminal involvement variable were appreciably different between the complete victim and audience (N=1,121) and analysis (N=473) sample datasets. These differences are discussed more closely below.

As illustrated in Table 1, the percentage of cases classified as VPH in the complete victim and audience sample (N=1121) was 33.1% (371) and 44.8% (212) in the listwise deletion sample. This difference is likely an artifact of the reduction of suspect information in the listwise deletion sample. Because there was more detailed information about the suspect in the listwise deletion sample, the accuracy of the VPH coding was likely increased and, thus, accounts for the percentage increase in the listwise deletion sample. In the complete victim and audience sample an audience was present 50.8% (569) of the time and in the listwise deletion sample an audience was present 54.3% (257) of the time. Male victims were represented in 82.3% (939) of the cases in the complete victim and audience sample and 81.4% (385) of the cases in the listwise deletion sample. In opposition, female victims were present in the complete victim and audience sample 17.7% (198) of the time and 18.6% (88) of the time in the listwise deletion sample. Additionally, Black victims were in the majority of the cases at 50.8% (569) of the complete victim and audience sample and 51.4% (243) of the listwise deletion sample, while 20.4% (229) of the victims were white in the complete victim and audience sample and made up 20.5% (97) of the listwise deletion sample. Hispanic victims represented 26.2% (294) of the victims in the complete victim and audience sample and 24.5% (116) of the listwise deletion sample and all other victims were counted in 2.6% (29) and 3.6% (17) of the cases in the



complete victim and audience sample and listwise deletion sample, respectively. The victim's age in the complete victim and audience sample was calculated at 33.25 years with a standard deviation of 14. Similarly, the mean age of the victim in the listwise deletion sample 32.3 years and had a standard deviation of 13.

The last three victim-specific variables were the victim drinking alcohol, the victim using drugs, and the victim's official criminal history. In the complete victim and audience sample, the victim consumed alcohol 37.8% (424) of the time and in the listwise deletion sample the victim consumed alcohol 38.7% (183) of the time. The victim used drugs in the complete victim and audience sample 23.0% (258) of the time and in the listwise deletion sample the victim used drugs, again, 23.0% (109) of the time. Finally, the victims in the complete victim and audience sample had official criminal histories in 21.8% (244) of the cases and in 33.4% (158) of the case in the listwise deletion sample, a marked increase. The explanation for this increase is again, in its simplest form, a matter of the missing suspect data. When the listwise deletion was performed, the number of cases where the victim had a criminal history (the numerator) was only reduced by 35% (86 cases), yet the denominator was reduced by 58% (648 cases).

Offender-specific characteristics were also similar in both the complete victim and audience sample and listwise deletion sample. Male suspects made up 90.8% (773) of the complete victim and audience sample and 89.6% (424) of the listwise deletion sample, while female suspects were represented in 9.2% (78) of the complete victim and audience sample cases and in 10.4% (49) of the listwise deletion sample cases. As with the victims, Black suspects were also the majority in both the complete victim and audience sample and the listwise deletion sample representing 57.8% (492) and 57.3% (271), respectively. In 18.1% (154) of the cases in the complete victim and audience sample, White suspects were listed and made up 18.6% (88) of

the listwise deletion sample cases. Hispanics represented 22.3% (190) of the suspects in the complete victim and audience sample and 22.0% (104) of the listwise deletion sample while the remaining 1.8% (15) of the complete victim and audience sample and 2.1% (10) of the listwise deletion sample consisted of races coded as Other. The mean age of the suspects was 30.0 years in the complete victim and audience sample with a standard deviation of 12.1 and has a mean of 28.8 years with a standard deviation of 11.1 in the listwise deletion sample.

The suspects were listed as having consumed alcohol in 22.1% (246) of the cases in the complete victim and audience sample and 24.9% (118) of the cases in the listwise deletion sample. The suspects were listed in 15.5% (173) of the cases in the complete victim and audience sample as having used drugs while 17.1% (81) of the suspects in the listwise deletion sample were listed as having used drugs.

Regarding the suspects' official criminal history, 19.6% (218) of the suspects in the complete victim and audience sample were listed as having a criminal history compared to 34.7% (164) of the suspects in the listwise deletion sample. As stated earlier, this was one of the four variables where a marked difference was observed between the complete victim and audience sample and the listwise deletion sample. The cause of this increase was likely due to, again, the missing data (1,121 cases in the complete victim and audience sample and 473 cases in the listwise deletion sample) for this variable. The deleted cases increased the number of cases where the suspect's criminal history was observed and, thus, increased the percentages arithmetically. A mean substitution treatment of this variable was performed on the complete victim and audience sample but did not yield any palpable explanation other than the one addressed above.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mean substitution was performed in a bivariate correlation as well as in a logistic regression for Models 1 and 2 and listed in the appendix of this study.

The last three variables in the model describe the incident characteristics. They are criminal involvement, weekend, and night time. In 78.1% (723) of the complete victim and audience sample cases there was criminal involvement and in 86.9% (411) of the cases in the listwise deletion sample. While this is a moderate increase in the percentage of case, numbers of cases in the complete victim and audience sample decreased in the listwise deletion sample from 21.9% (203) to 13.1% (62). Again, as in the suspects' criminal history variable, the most likely explanations for the differences is the change in the sample size and missing data for this variable.

Slightly less than half of the cases (47.5% (350)) occurred over the weekend in the complete victim and audience sample which was similar to the data in the listwise deletion sample (46.7% (221)) and slightly over half of the cases (52.5%(387)) occurred during the week in the complete victim and audience sample and listwise deletion sample (53.3% (252)). Lastly, the majority of the homicides in the complete victim and audience sample occurred at night (71.7% (703)) as well as in the listwise deletion sample (70.6% (344)) as compared to 28.3% (278) and 29.4% (139) of the cases on the complete victim and audience sample and listwise deletion sample, respectfully, which occurred during the day time hours.

### **Bivariate results**

To assess the associations between the outcome and other variables in the model, a contingency table (Table 2) was constructed.<sup>27</sup> Because the binary logistic regressions performed in Models 1 and 2 of Table 3 would be based on the listwise deletion sample<sup>28</sup> (N=473), Table 2 reflects that analysis sample size. In addition to indicating the percentages and

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<sup>27</sup> A correlation matrix was also calculated for additional analysis of correlations and is appended (See Appendix A).

<sup>28</sup> Binary logistic regressions performed using SPSS software calculate the results for cases with no missing data only.

numbers of cases contained within either VPH or non-VPH cases, a chi-square value was calculated along with significance level and degrees of freedom.

An initial scan of the table immediately indicates that the significant variables related to VPH or a non-VPH, with the exception of audience presence and criminal involvement, are overwhelmingly victim-related predictors. In relation to the first hypothesis, an audience presence shares a significant association<sup>29</sup> with VPHs ( $p < .000$  level,  $\chi^2=28.60$ ,  $df=1$ ). In the sample, when an audience was present, 56% (144) of the cases were VPH and 44% (113) of the cases were not VPHs. When an audience was not present, 69% (148) of the cases were not VPHs and 31% (68) were VPHs. This lent weight to the possibility that the first hypothesis might be supported.

The association between male victims and VPHs was also found to be significant at the  $p < .000$  level ( $\chi^2=21.34$ ,  $df=1$ ). When the victim was male, 50% (192) of the cases were VPHs and 50% (193) of the cases were not VPHs. When the victim was female, 77% (68) of the cases were not VPHs and 23% (20) of the cases were VPHs. This is consistent with previous research that males more often the victims not only in cases of VPH, but also homicides in general (BJS, 2011; Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004; Muftić & Hunt, 2013; Polk, 1997, 1999).

Table 2 reveals a significant association between certain victim races and VPH - when the victim was classified as Black ( $p < .000$ ,  $\chi^2=15.22$ ,  $df=1$ ), White ( $p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2=8.16$ ,  $df=1$ ), or Other ( $p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2=5.27$ ,  $df=1$ ). No significant association was observed with VPH when the victim was classified as Hispanic. When the victim was Black, 54% (130) of the cases were VPHs and 46% (113) of the cases were not VPHs. When the victim was White, 32% (31) of the cases were VPHs and 68% (66) of the cases were not VPHs. When the victim was classified as

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<sup>29</sup> Meaning they are not independent from each other.

Other, 18% (3) of the cases were VPHs and 82% (14) of the cases were not VPHs. Last, Hispanic victims were found to make up 41% (48) of the VPHs and 59% (68) of the non-VPHs but, again, the association was nonsignificant.<sup>30</sup>

The second hypothesis postulates that the victims' use of alcohol would moderate the influence of the presence of an audience on VPH. In Table 2, a significant association between VPH is observed with the victim consuming alcohol ( $p < .000$ ,  $\chi^2 = 26.23$ ,  $df = 1$ ). When a victim was drinking, 60% (109) of the cases were VPHs and 40% (74) of the cases were not VPHs. When the victim was not drinking, 64% (109) of the cases were not VPHs and 36% (103) were VPHs. Because these results are indicative of alcohol playing a significant part in the VPH event, this added some support to the postulation that alcohol moderates the relationship between the presence of an audience and VPH.

Similar results were found when the victim used drugs and the victims' criminal history. When the victim was involved with drugs, 68% (74) of the cases were VPHs and 32% (35) of the cases were not VPHs. When the victim was not using drugs, 62% (226) of the cases were not VPHs and 38% (138) were VPHs. All in all the association between the victim using drugs and VPH was significant at the  $p < .000$  level ( $\chi^2 = 30.48$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

Victims with an official criminal history shared the same level of association with the victim drinking and the victim using drugs ( $p < .000$ ,  $\chi^2 = 32.73$ ,  $df = 1$ ). When a victim possessed a criminal history, 64% (100) of the cases were VPHs and 36% (58) of the cases were not VPHs. When the victim did not possess a criminal history, 44% (203) of the cases were not VPH and 36% (112) were VPH.

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<sup>30</sup> Indicating that the being Hispanic and being involved in a VPH are independent of each other.

Regarding the suspect specific variables, the bivariate analysis indicates that no significant association exists in their relationship to VPH. When the suspect was male, 44% (188) of the cases were VPHs and 56% (236) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect was female, 49% (24) of the cases were VPHs and 51% (25) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect was Black, 44% (118) of the cases were VPHs and 56% (153) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect was White, 49% (43) of the cases were VPHs and 51% (45) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect was Hispanic, 44% (46) of the cases were VPHs and 56% (58) of the cases were not VPHs. And, finally, when the suspect was classified as Other, 50% (5) of the cases were VPHs and 50% (5) of the cases were not VPHs.

When the suspect was drinking alcohol, 45% (53) of the cases were VPHs and 55% (65) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect was not drinking alcohol, 45% (159) of the cases were VPHs and 55% (196) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect used drugs, 44% (36) of the cases were VPHs and 56% (45) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect did not use drugs, 45% (176) of the cases were VPHs and 55% (216) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect had a criminal history, 43% (70) of the cases were VPHs and 57% (94) of the cases were not VPHs. When the suspect did not have a criminal history, 46% (142) of the cases were VPHs and 54% (167) of the cases were not VPHs.

Criminal involvement was the final association with VPH that was significant in Table 2 ( $p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2 = 6.37$ ,  $df = 1$ ). When concomitant criminality was observed, 43% (175) of the cases were VPHs and 57% (236) of the cases were not VPHs. When no criminal involvement was observed in 60% (37) of the cases were VPHs and 40% (25) of the cases were not VPHs.

Nighttime and weekend hours were found not to share a significant association with VPH. When the homicide occurred on the weekend, 43% (94) of the cases were VPHs and 57%

(127) of the cases were not VPHs. When the homicide occurred during the week, 47% (118) of the cases were VPHs and 53% (134) of the cases were not VPHs. When the homicide occurred at nighttime, 44% (148) of the cases were VPHs and 56% (186) of the cases were not VPHs. When the homicide occurred during the day, 46% (64) of the cases were VPHs and 54% (75) of the cases were not VPHs.

The last part of Table 2 concerned the independent t-tests regarding the victim and suspect age. T-tests were performed because these variables were coded as continuous. The mean age for the victim was calculated at 30.12 (SD = 11.19) for the VPHs and 34.15 (SD = 14.03) for the non-VPHs. The relationship between the victim's age and VPH was significant at the  $p < .001$  level ( $t = 3.39$ ,  $df = 471$ ). The mean suspect age for this study was calculated at 29.69 (SD = 11.06) for the VPH incidents and to a .14 (SD = 11.02) for the non-VPHs; however, this relationship was not significant.

### **Multivariate results**

The final step in this study was to perform a binary logistic regression analysis to test the influence of the independent variables (the presence of an audience and the presence of an audience multiplied by victim drinking) on the outcome variable of VPH, while holding the remaining variables in the model constant. The results of this analysis are contained in Table 3.

To begin the evaluation of the regression analyses, diagnostics and model fit information were first assessed. Multicollinearity diagnostics were completed on each of the variables in the regression analyses. Tolerances and variance inflation factors (VIFs) were calculated (Appendix E). Weinberg and Abramowitz (2008) state that VIFs calculated to be below the value of ten indicate that colinearity is likely not a problem in the model. Although the full results are appended at the end of this study (see Appendix D), it is important to note that the VIFs ranged

from 1.032 (night) to 3.048 (victim Hispanic). Hence, it was concluded that multicollinearity would not confound the results contained within the regression analyses.

Regarding the regression model fit, Cox and Snell's pseudo- $R^2$  formula was utilized and the direct effects explained 25.5% of the variance in Model 1 (chi square =138.941, df=20,  $p<.000$ ). The Cox and Snell pseudo- $R^2$  was chosen because it represented a more conservative estimate of the explained variance in the model. While Nagelkerke's pseudo- $R^2$  suggested that 34.1% of the variance in VPH was explained by the independent variables, it was decided to utilize a more conservative value.

Regarding the first hypothesis, that the presence of an audience is a significant predictor of VPH, the regression analysis in Model 1 demonstrated support for this hypothesis.

Controlling for each of the other variables in the model, when an audience was present, the odds of a VPH occurring were 2.653 times the odds when an audience was not present ( $b=.976$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Thus, the presence of an audience can be seen to increase the odds of a VPH.

Variables that were significant in the bivariate analysis were also significant in the multivariate analysis. When the victim was drinking, the odds of a victim precipitated homicide occurring were multiplied by 1.812 ( $b=.594$ ,  $p <.05$ ) as opposed to when the victim was not drinking. When the victim was using drugs, the odds of a VPH occurring were 2.994 times the odds when the victim was not using drugs ( $b=1.097$ ,  $p<.01$ ) In line with Wolfgang (1958), Roberson, (1976), Sobol (1997), Felson and Messner (1998), and Polk (1999), being male was also found to be a significant predictor of VPH. Males in the model were at greater odds of becoming the victim in a VPH than females. The regression analysis indicated that males had 2.536 times the odds of females ( $b=.931$ ,  $p<.05$ ) Even outside the realm of VPHs, this finding is



also consistent with the results of homicide research in general (BJS, 2011; Meithe & Regoeczi, 2004; Pizarro, 2008; Pizarro, Zgoba, & Jennings, 2011; Pridemore, 2002; Smith & Zahn, 1999).

In terms of race, since Blacks made up the majority of the victims in the sample (50.8%), this category was used as the referent. The results of the analysis demonstrated that being White victims had .324 times the odds of being a VPH victim than Black ( $b=-1.127$ ,  $p<.05$ ), being Hispanic victims had .237 times the odds of being a VPH victim than Black ( $b=1.1441$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and those classified as being of Other races had .164 times the odds of being a VPH victim as opposed to being Black ( $b=-1.806$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In sum, black victims were significantly more at risk of VPH than any of the other racial groups included in the study.

The victims' age<sup>31</sup> and official criminal history were also significantly associated with VPH. The results showed a significant negative association with victim age and VPH, with the odds decreasing .973 times with every year increase of age ( $b=-.027$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This was consistent with previous homicide research (BJS, 2011; Polk, 1997; Wolfgang, 1958). Additionally, if a victim possessed a previous official criminal history, the odds of being the victim in a VPH were 1.701 times those of victims who did not possess a previous official criminal history ( $b=.531$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Similar to the victims' race, the majority of the suspects were Black (57.8%) and, as such, Black was used as the referent. The difference between the suspect and victim race results, however, was that only the suspect being White had any significance. In fact, White suspects had 2.273 times the odds of being involved in a VPH than Black suspects ( $b=.821$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The suspects' age was also found to be significantly associated with VPHs. Contrary to the victims'

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<sup>31</sup> Victim (and suspect) age were positively skewed. Natural log and square root transformations were performed and used in the regression. However, these transformations did little to bring the skew closer to a normal distribution. Thus, the original variable was used for the regression analysis.

age, the relationship was positive and indicated that with each yearly increase in age the odds that the suspect would be involved in a VPH were increased by 1.037 ( $b=.036$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This result is contrary to Wolfgang's (1957) findings. In his examination, he stated that "age [had] no apparent effect on VP homicide" (Wolfgang, 1957, p. 6). This result also differs from what was observed in the bivariate results of the current study. This difference may be due to the missingness in the suspect data (particularly age). Regardless of the reason, however, these differing findings may provide an avenue for future research to explore in more detail.

The final variable in Model 1 demonstrating a significant association with VPH was criminal involvement. The odds of a VPH occurring were decreased by .497 times when concomitant criminality was occurring as opposed to when no crime was taking place other than the homicide in question ( $b=-.699$ ,  $p<.05$ ) indicating that, on average, VPHs occur outside any other criminal activity.

The remainder of the variables contained in Model 1 were not significantly associated with VPH. The suspect drinking or using drugs had no effect on whether a homicide would be VPH or not. Male suspects did not share a significant association with VPH nor did the suspects' criminal history. Whether the suspect was Hispanic or classified as Other also did not share a significant relationship with VPHs. And, finally, the results showed that neither the day of the week nor the time of day had any significant relationship with a VPH.

The analysis of the second hypothesis is found in Model 2 of Table 3. The Cox and Snell pseudo- $R^2$  value indicated that 25.5% of the variance in VPH in Model 2 was explained by the independent variables contained therein. In addition, the Chi-square value was 139.082 with 21 degrees of freedom and a significance level of  $p=.000$ . Although the first hypothesis presented in this study was supported, the second hypothesis, that the influence the

presence of an audience on VPHs would be moderated by whether or not the victim had consumed alcohol, was not supported. The regression results demonstrated that there was no significant relationship between the interaction of the audience presence and the victim drinking with the occurrence of a VPH.

The key variable, audience presence, again, significantly and positively predicted a VPH ( $b=1.042$ ,  $p<.001$ ) such that, when an audience is present the odds of a VPH are 2.835 times the odds when an audience is not present. This was not the case for the victim consuming alcohol. In Model 2, the victim drinking was no longer a significant predictor of VPH. The reduction in significance of this variable may be due to part of its effect being captured by the cross-product. Further investigation would be necessary to determine more specifically the reason for the reduction.

In total, then, there is strong evidence to support the hypothesis that the presence of an audience is a significantly positive predictor of the occurrence of a VPH. The odds of a VPH happening are increased over two and a half times when an audience is present. Moreover, the victim's drinking alcohol does not appear to act as a moderator between audience presence and VPH.

## **Chapter V: Discussion and conclusions**

While studies in the area of victim precipitated homicide are limited, analyses linking the presence of an audience to the initiation of VPH are rare. The current study adds to the collective body of literature by asking two questions. First, are the odds of a VPH increased by the presence of an audience and, second, is that influence moderated by the victim drinking alcohol. From previous research, scholars have confirmed that victim precipitation is an important consideration in the study of homicide but little has occurred in the explanation of why the victim chose to engage in behavior that caused his or her death.

Based on the results of this study, one reason why the victim may precipitate his or her death may be the presence of an audience. The findings show that a homicide in the presence of an audience has more than two and a half times the odds of being victim precipitated compared to when an audience is not present. While it appears that drinking can sway the victim to engage in risky action(s) resulting in a VPH, this behavior is not as predictive as the presence of an audience in cases of VPH.

Both Anderson's (1999) research postulating the existence of a street code and Polk's (1999) work regarding honor contests seem to be affirmed by the results. Though neither of these scholars isolated VPHs in their examinations, when the results of the current study are combined with honor contest (Polk, 1999) and street code analyses (Anderson, 1999; Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006; Stewart & Simons, 2010), the supposition could be made that not only does the presence of an audience predict VPH, but may play a stronger role than expected in general homicide, violence, or whether or not a confrontation begins at all.

Moreover, when both factors are present (the presence of an audience and victim drinking) the likelihood of a VPH occurring became non-significant pointing to the possibility

that the audience or the suspect (or both) might become protective when the victim has been drinking and an audience is present. In other words, when there is an audience present and the victim has been drinking, the audience may intervene in order to stop the victim from initiating a violent interaction that might result in him or her becoming hurt or killed. Although more investigation is warranted, the argument could be made that an audience may protect those who have been drinking.

In the same light, the argument might also be made that the suspect in the confrontation decided not to respond to the precipitation because the victim had been drinking and/or the audience was present, watching, and judging. To respond under these conditions might lower the suspect's standing in the eyes of the audience or reputation. In either case, the data at hand does not allow for further investigation and these questions are beyond the scope of the current study.

This study also serves to add to the already existing literature demonstrating that at least 25% of the lethal events occur because of the initial physical actions of the victim (Felson & Messner, 1998; Muftić and Hunt, 2013; Polk, 1997; Roberson, 1976; Wolfgang, 1957, 1958, 1967). The results of this analysis show that the predictive influences of a VPH are victim-centric. The victim characteristics in this study had a greater predictive influence than the suspects or event aspects. Homicide prevention policies, however, may be overlooking this key component when addressing lethal violence. That being the case, the current study offers policy makers a deeper insight into homicidal incidents which may lead to better policies for the prevention of such behavior.

These findings also offer a variety of benefits to criminal justice practice, theory, and scholarship. In terms of criminal justice practice, the current study has the potential to guide law

enforcement preventative measures, tactics, and responses to homicide. A host of preventative measures could be constructed based on the audience presence factor. For example, police could partner with community leaders and business owners in order to educate them on the potential for lethal violence in settings where males gather and the presence of an audience is common.

These results could also guide criminological theories (especially those explaining violent crime) by building in the aspect victim precipitation and VPH. For instance, Tittle's (1995, 2004) control balance theory hypothesizes that a control deficit motivates an individual to act out defiantly in an effort to restore his or her sense of control back to a homeostatic condition. The presence of an audience could be seen by some individuals as a factor that creates the condition of a control deficit which demands a physical response in order to restore control back to balance. In other words, the presence of an audience might create a control imbalance that an individual responds to with the initiation of violence which ultimately results in a VPH, or a homicide in general. At the very least, the results of this study provide another direction in which scholarly research could examine homicide, VPH, and audience presence in general.

Scholarship particularly focused on the victim-offender overlap might also benefit from the results of the current study. The findings presented indicate that most of the significant predictors of VPH are victim-centric. This follows with what both Mustaine and Tewksbury (2000), Brady et al. (2006), and Muftić and Hunt (2013) put forth in that this study demonstrated that there are some victims who are more responsible for the violence they experience than others. In other words, there are "innocent" victims, victim-offender, and offenders. It has been shown that many of the victims in this study fall into the victim-offender category.

## **Limitations**

The primary limitation in the current study was having no access to the actual police reports relating to the homicides contained in the dataset.<sup>32</sup> Access to witness statements and other information normally contained in an official homicide file would have provided a more accurate number of homicides to be tested in the final analysis, both VPH and non-VPH. Though probably not detrimental, some individual cases may have been left out of the study that might otherwise have been included. While this factor might have affected the final results, it is suspected that the differences in the results would be minimal. The same is suspected to be true when considering the reduction in the sample size due to eliminating cases where a juvenile was either the victim or the offender. Although the sample means were not decidedly affected, the results should be interpreted with this in mind. In fact, both Curtis (1974) and Polk (1997) contended with the same issue but were still able to produce results that ultimately turned out to be viable. For the same reasons as listed above, this same limitation was also present in the coding of the audience presence variable. The lack of complete detail in the homicide files led to a lack of detail in the audience presence variable. Ergo, characteristics such as the size of the audience, the type of audience (i.e. strangers, acquaintances), and audience behavior were not able to be captured.

Missingness around the suspect data was also a limitation in this analysis. According to recent scholars (Regoeczi & Riedel, 2003; Riedel & Regoeczi, 2004), this is a common issue with homicide files and one that homicide researchers contend with regularly. Every effort was made to address the missing data where applicable. Although most of the percentages within the variables in the complete victim and audience sample did not change considerably when the

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<sup>32</sup> Unlike Wolfgang (1957) and Roberson (1976).

listwise deletion was performed, four variables were affected - VPH, victim criminal history, suspect criminal history, and criminal involvement (see Table 1 for full description). To that end, mean substitution techniques were employed on the complete victim and audience sample and both bivariate and logistic regressions were run on the data. These results, however, did not offer any better explanation of the missingness in this dataset.<sup>33</sup>

Because of the limited information concerning the specific audience characteristics within the dataset, this study was not able to explore different audience types, characteristics, and cultural aspects of those present during the homicide. For example, the social ties between the audience and the combatants were unable to be determined. It could be that certain social ties encourage violence (Akers et al., 1979; Anderson, 1999; Cooney, 2004) either through encourage, reward, or imitation. In addition, the relative cultural norms of the audience were unknown. Previous research has indicated that culture plays a strong role in the initiation and response to violence (Anderson, 1999; Martinez, 1996). Having this type of information would have bolstered the interpretation of the results found in the current study.

The next limitation is the absence of the victim's voice. Without a victim statement any police incident report is incomplete. This is particularly detrimental in cases of victim precipitated homicide. According to Polk (1997):

Estimates of the number of victim precipitated homicides are difficult to make, because doing so requires intimate knowledge of the interaction before the killing took place.

Since one party is dead, recreation of the incident must rely on personal accounts by the killer and by any witnesses who might be available. (p. 143)

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<sup>33</sup> Missingness in homicide data sets is, in fact, commonplace.



Polk (1997) continued by pointing out that the various actors involved in the incident (suspect, witnesses, business owners, passersby, and the police) all have different views of what happened. Each of these actors may have a stake in what was officially recorded in the police report over and above any media coverage resulting from the incident. This would be especially true in a suspect's claim of self-defense. In addition, both Polk (1997) and Meithe (1985) stressed that, even if all of the information by others was in the official police report, the incident is still likely to be based on the officer's perception of how the incident might have happened. This limitation is important to note, but accounting for it is problematic.

The last limitation is the fact that there was a level of subjectivity in the coding of whether a case involved a VPH or non-VPH. The possibility of coder bias in that determination is acknowledged. Every effort, however, was made to objectively evaluate each homicidal event on its own merits. Meithe (1985) dealt with a similar issue and employed a triangulation technique as a way to offset this bias and this same technique was employed in the current study. In order to increase coding reliability, two other colleagues, not involved in this study, coded a sampling of the data in its original form. The original coder combined with these two colleagues formed the triangle that allowed for inter-rater reliability. Each coding was consistent with each other and with the original coding by the author (88% and 92%). Though this limitation is still recognized, coder bias at least was minimized.

### **Future research**

The findings in the current study offer some implications for future research. First, Dallas, TX, is a unique geographic city in a country with several large urban areas. The descriptive statistics found in Table 1 show that, aside from Blacks, Hispanics make up the majority of the cases in the dataset. Other major cities throughout the US do not have the Latin influence that

Dallas, TX had. Martinez (1996, 2013) points out that Latin violent crime is fundamentally different from other ethnicities in that the underlying drivers are different. Anderson (1999) also argues this same point for the Black culture. Culture encompasses all of the actors in the homicides represented in this study. Culture varies across the audience. Culture varies across the victims. Culture varies across the offenders. And, as stated previously, culture varies across cities. Replicating the study presented here, therefore, with homicide data from other urban areas representing different cultures would offer better insight to the results of this study. In this way, questions of reliability might also be resolved.

Another area to explore would be the incorporation of criminological theory into this study. While there is not one theory that accounts for the effects of the presence of bystanders on VPH, or even homicide, it is suggested that an integrated theoretical approach would have value. As previously mentioned, this type of analysis may be included in other areas of research such as integrating Tittle's (1995) control balance theory into the decision to initiate a VPH.

Finally, the possibility of graduations of victim precipitation might exist. For instance, how large an audience is necessary to influence the victim to engage in the initial actions? Perhaps there is an association between the type of audience and the victim's initial move. Anderson (1999) and Cooney (2004) suggested that known peers in the audience serve as a stronger call to retributive violence. This same axiom may be true for victims of VPH. Knowing who was in the audience, the audience's relationship to the victim, and how many peers were in the audience would serve to further the understanding of the influence of the presence of an audience on VPH.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the primary hypothesis presented in this study was supported by the analyses conducted. It was found that the presence of an audience was a strong predictor of VPH. To that

end, the current study adds not only to the literature concerning VPH, but also brings a unique dimension to studies focused on situational foreground factors (see Katz, 1988), such as the presence of an audience, that result in violence.

Although the second hypothesis was not supported, the analyses conducted in this research did point out two noteworthy findings. First, the victim's consumption of alcohol can lead to a VPH, though not as significantly as the presence of an audience. Second, when the victim is drinking in the presence of an audience, that audience, the suspect, or both, might assume some type of protective role before the violence becomes deadly. Why this occurs is a matter for future research.

One thing is certain. Previous research has shown that one of the possible outcomes of victim precipitated violence is the victim's death. Considering this research, one of the predictors of a victim precipitating his or her own death is the presence of an audience. Hence, research in this area is important to the prevention of such lethal incidents and there is no shortage of possibilities for researchers to address in the future.

## Tables

Table 1: Univariate side-by-side comparisons

Table 1		Full Sample N=1121	Listwise deletion sample N = 473
VPH	Yes	33.1%(371)	44.8% (212)
	No	66.9%(750)	55.2% (261)
Audience Present	Yes	50.8%(569)	54.3% (257)
	No	49.2%(552)	45.7% (216)
Victim SEx	Male	82.3%(923)	81.4% (385)
	Female	17.7%(198)	18.6% (88)
Victim Race	Black	50.8%(569)	51.4% (243)
	White	20.4%(229)	20.5% (97)
	Hispanic	26.2%(294)	24.5% (116)
	Other	2.6%(29)	3.6% (17)
Victim Age	mean (SD)	33.3(14.0)	32.3 (13.0)
Victim Drinking	Yes	37.8%(424)	38.7% (183)
	No	62.2%(697)	61.3% (290)
Victim Drugs	Yes	23.0%(258)	23.0% (109)
	No	77.0%(863)	77.0% (364)
Victim Crim. Hist.	Yes	21.8%(244)	33.4% (158)
	No	78.2%(877)	66.6% (315)
Suspect Sex	Male	90.8%(773)	89.6% (424)
	Female	9.2%(78)	10.4% (49)
Suspect Race	Black	57.8(492)	57.3% (271)
	White	18.1%(154)	18.6% (88)
	Hispanic	22.3%(190)	22.0% (104)
	Other	1.8%(15)	2.1% (10)
Suspect Age	mean (SD)	30.0(12.1)	28.8 (11.1)
Suspect Drinking	Yes	22.1%(246)	24.9% (118)
	No	77.9%(867)	75.1% (355)
Suspect Drugs	Yes	15.5%(173)	17.1% (81)
	No	84.5%(940)	82.9% (392)
Suspect Crim. Hist.	Yes	19.6%(218)	34.7% (164)
	No	80.4%(896)	65.3% (309)
Criminal Involvement	Yes	78.1%(723)	86.9%(411)
	No	21.9%(203)	13.1 (62)
Weekend	Yes	47.5%(350)	46.7% (221)
	No	52.5%(387)	53.3% (252)
Night-time	Yes	71.7%(703)	70.6% (334)
	No	28.3%(278)	29.4% (139)

Table 2: Contingency table

Table 2	Cross Tabulations			N = 473
		VPH Yes	VPH No	
Audience Present	Yes	56%(144)	44%(113)	$x^2 = 28.60^{***}$
	No	31%(68)	69%(148)	df=1
Victim Male	Yes	50%(192)	50%(193)	$x^2 = 21.34^{***}$
	No	23%(20)	77%(68)	df=1
Victim Black	Yes	54%(130)	46%(113)	$x^2 = 15.22^{***}$
	No	36%(82)	64%(148)	df=1
Victim White	Yes	32%(31)	68%(66)	$x^2 = 8.16^{**}$
	No	48%(181)	52%(195)	df=1
Victim Hispanic	Yes	41%(48)	59%(68)	$x^2 = .74$
	No	46%(164)	54%(193)	df=1
Victim Other	Yes	18%(3)	82%(14)	$x^2 = 5.27^*$
	No	46%(209)	54%(247)	df=1
Victim Drinking	Yes	60%(109)	40%(74)	$x^2 = 26.23^{***}$
	No	36%(103)	64%(187)	df=1
Victim Drugs	Yes	68%(74)	32%(35)	$x^2 = 30.48^{***}$
	No	38%(138)	62%(226)	df=1
Victim Crim. Hist.	Yes	64%(100)	36%(58)	$x^2 = 32.73^{***}$
	No	36%(112)	44%(203)	df=1
Suspect Male	Yes	44%(188)	56%(236)	$x^2 = .38$
	No	49%(24)	51%(25)	df=1
Suspect Black	Yes	44%(118)	56%(153)	$x^2 = .419$
	No	47%(94)	53%(108)	df=1
Suspect White	Yes	49%(43)	51%(45)	$x^2 = .72$
	No	44%(169)	56%(216)	df=1
Suspect Hispanic	Yes	44%(46)	56%(58)	$x^2 = .02$
	No	45%(166)	55%(203)	df=1
Suspect Other	Yes	50%(5)	50%(5)	$x^2 = .11$
	No	46%(207)	54%(256)	df=1
Suspect Drinking	Yes	45%(53)	55%(65)	$x^2 = .001$
	No	45%(159)	55%(196)	df=1
Suspect Drugs	Yes	44%(36)	56%(45)	$x^2 = .01$
	No	45%(176)	55%(216)	df=1
Suspect Crim. Hist.	Yes	43%(70)	57%(94)	$x^2 = .46$
	No	46%(142)	54%(167)	df=1
Criminal Involvement	Yes	43%(175)	57%(236)	$x^2 = 6.37^*$
	No	60%(37)	40%(25)	df=1
Weekend	Yes	43%(94)	57%(127)	$x^2 = .88$
	No	47%(118)	53%(134)	df=1
Night-time	Yes	44%(148)	56%(186)	$x^2 = .12$
	No	46%(64)	54%(75)	df=1
T-Tests				
Victim Age		Mean x = 30.12 (11.19)	Mean x = 34.15 (14.03)	t = 3.39** df=471
Suspect Age		Mean x = 29.69 (11.06)	Mean x = 28.14 (11.02)	t = -1.519 df=471

Table 3: Binary logistic regressions - Models 1 and 2.

Table 3: Binary Logistic Regressions		N=473		
	Model 1 - Main Effect		Model 2 - Interaction Effect	
	b (SE)	Odds Ratio	b (SE)	Odds Ratio
Audience Present	.976(.241)	2.653***	1.042(.299)	2.835***
Victim Drinking	.594(.253)	1.812*	.704(.385)	2.021
Victim Drugs	1.097(.322)	2.994**	1.083(.323)	2.954**
Victim Male	.931(.316)	2.536*	.934(.316)	2.546**
Victim White	-1.127(.384)	.324*	-1.143(.386)	.319*
Victim Hispanic	-1.441(.466)	.237*	-1.430(.467)	.239*
Victim Other	-1.806(.857)	.164*	-1.812(.857)	.163*
Victim Age	-.027(.010)	.973*	-.027(.010)	.974**
Victim Criminal History	.531(.245)	1.701*	.537(.245)	1.711*
Suspect Drinking	-.027(.303)	0.973	-.039(.304)	.962
Suspect Drugs	-.529(.364)	0.589	-.526(.364)	.591
Suspect Male	-.158(.362)	0.854	-.163(.362)	.850
Suspect White	.821(.393)	2.273*	.833(.395)	2.301*
Suspect Hispanic	.837(.465)	2.31	.840(.466)	2.316
Suspect Other	1.672(.920)	5.324	1.674(.925)	5.335
Suspect Age	.036(.012)	1.037*	.036(.012)	1.037*
Suspect Criminal History	-.014(.240)	0.986	000(.243)	1.000
Criminal Involvement	-.699(.332)	.497*	-.704(.333)	.495*
Night time	.062(.238)	1.064	.064(.238)	1.066
Weekend	-.132(.222)	0.877	-.130(.222)	.878
Audience * Victim drinking	--	--	-.178(.473)	.837
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001	$\chi^2=138.941$ df=20 p=.000		$\chi^2=139.082$ df=21 p=.000	
	Cox & Snell pseudo-R <sup>2</sup> = .255		Cox & Snell pseudo-R <sup>2</sup> = .255	

## Appendices

Variable Key for Appended Tables:

VPH:	Victim precipitated homicide
AUD:	Audience present
V_Blkc:	Black victim
V_Whc:	White victim
V_Hspc:	Hispanic victim
V_Othc:	Other race victim
V_Malec:	Male victim
V_Agesc:	Victim's age
Night:	Homicide occurred at night
Wkend:	Homicide occurred over the weekend
V_Drkc:	Victim drinking
V_Drugc:	Victim involved with drugs
CrmInv:	Criminal involvement
S_CH:	Suspect criminal history
S_Blkc:	Black suspect
S_Whc:	White suspect
S_Hspc:	Hispanic suspect
S_Othc:	Other race suspect
S_Malec:	Male suspect
S_Agesc:	Suspect's age
S_Drkc:	Suspect drinking
S_Drugc:	Suspect involved with drugs

Appendix A: Correlation matrix N=473

		Correlation Matrix for analysis sample N=473																						
		VPH	AUD	V_Blkc	V_Whc	V_Hspc	V_Othc	V_Malec	V_Agesc	Night	Wkend	V_Drkc	V_Drugc	V_CH	CrmInv	S_CH	S_Blkc	S_Whc	S_Hspc	S_Othc	S_Malec	S_Agesc	S_Drkc	S_Drugc
VPH	Pearson's r	1	.246**	.179**	-.131**	-.039	-.106	.212**	-.154**	-.016	-.043	.235**	.254**	.263**	-.116	-.031	-.030	.039	-.006	.015	-.028	.070	.001	-.003
AUD	Pearson's r		1	-.051	-.155**	.256**	-.119**	.151**	-.253**	-.023	.033	.179**	.078	.046	-.079	-.028	-.096	-.129**	.241**	-.013	.134**	-.190**	-.048	.011
V_Blkc	Pearson's r			1	-.522**	-.586**	-.198**	-.019	-.097	-.043	-.030	-.070	.171**	.223**	.011	.087	.639**	-.263**	-.495**	-.063	-.164**	-.043	-.123**	.049
V_Whc	Pearson's r				1	-.290**	-.098	-.107	.250**	.017	-.035	-.070	-.042	-.049	-.020	.004	-.260**	.538**	-.181**	-.038	.070	.095	-.015	.019
V_Hspc	Pearson's r					1	-.110	.134**	-.125**	.033	.077	.183**	-.125**	-.164**	-.012	-.095	-.501**	-.172**	.777**	-.050	.097	-.046	.171**	-.050
V_Othc	Pearson's r						1	-.024	.009	.000	-.021	-.083	-.079	-.113	.041	-.021	.006	-.063	-.075	.366**	.066	.016	-.033	-.058
V_Malec	Pearson's r							1	-.079	.002	-.021	.157**	.094**	.177**	.007	-.097	-.039	.005	.057	-.043	-.002	-.074	-.038	.015
V_Agesc	Pearson's r								1	.049	-.035	-.056	-.051	-.069	-.068	.029	-.038	.205**	-.132**	-.042	-.051	.348**	.058	.072
Night	Pearson's r									1	.065	-.040	-.022	-.055	-.086	-.076	-.013	-.014	.040	-.034	-.006	.015	-.036	-.039
Wkend	Pearson's r										1	.109	-.080	-.088	-.038	-.014	-.014	-.067	.086	-.020	.012	-.062	.008	-.032
V_Drkc	Pearson's r											1	.287**	.091**	-.142**	.051	-.122**	-.001	.176**	-.087	-.058	.050	.314**	.088
V_Drugc	Pearson's r												1	.304**	-.055	.044	.117	-.004	-.133**	-.011	-.028	-.120**	.091	.364**
V_CH	Pearson's r													1	-.057	-.017	.068	.053	-.116	-.042	-.083	.041	-.015	.023
CrmInv	Pearson's r														1	-.033	.083	-.072	-.051	.057	-.070	.004	-.051	-.023
S_CH	Pearson's r															1	.144**	-.074	-.076	-.076	.029	-.054	.206**	.176**
S_Blkc	Pearson's r																1	-.554**	-.615**	-.170**	-.083	-.175**	-.125**	.063
S_Whc	Pearson's r																	1	-.254**	-.070	-.051	.305**	-.025	-.001
S_Hspc	Pearson's r																		1	-.078	.130**	-.082	.178**	-.065
S_Othc	Pearson's r																			1	.050	.014	-.017	-.028
S_Malec	Pearson's r																				1	-.032	-.045	-.011
S_Agesc	Pearson's r																					1	-.010	-.096
S_Drkc	Pearson's r																						1	.451**
S_Drugc	Pearson's r																							1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

# Appendix B: Correlation matrix N=1121

		CorrelationMatrix for the Full Sample N=1121																						
		VPH	AUD	V_BlK	W_WhT	W_Hs p	V_Oth	V_Male	V_Age	Nght	Wkend	V_Drk	V_Drug	V_CH	Crmlnv	S_CH	S_BlK	S_WhT	S_Hsp	S_Oth	S_Male	S_Age	S_Drk	S_Drug
VPH	Pearson's r	1	.241**	.181**	-.131**	-.062**	-.067**	.172**	-.147**	-.002	-.067	.159**	.250**	.208**	-.009	.059	.041	-.002	-.054	.022	-.083	.080	.069	.047
	N	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	981	737	1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
AUD	Pearson's r		1	-.021	-.191**	-.214**	-.042	.218**	-.221**	-.036	.079	.146**	.068	.087**	-.046	.006	-.040	-.160**	.209**	-.043	.119**	-.173**	-.008	-.014
	N		1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	981	737	1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
V_BlK	Pearson's r			1	-.514**	-.605**	-.165**	.012	-.072**	.001	-.052	-.056	.182**	.174**	-.009	.070	.684**	-.329**	-.485**	-.069**	-.163**	-.057	-.050	.066
	N			1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	981	737	1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
V_WhT	Pearson's r				1	-.302**	-.083**	-.171**	.263**	-.004	-.074	-.085**	-.067	-.074	.024	-.027	-.313**	.579**	-.150**	-.047	.072	.108**	.007	.027
	N				1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	981	737	1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
V_Hsp	Pearson's r					1	-.097**	.143**	-.157**	.002	.125**	.166**	-.119**	-.103**	-.014	-.051	-.500**	-.145**	.731**	-.013	.103**	-.047	.062	-.080**
	N					1121	1121	1121	1121	981	737	1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
V_Oth	Pearson's r						1	.002	-.005	.003	-.016	-.069**	-.076**	-.072**	.002	-.010	-.002	-.055	-.067	.382**	.051	.029	-.033	-.055
	N						1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
V_Male	Pearson's r							1	-.151**	.028	-.010	.130**	.042	.148**	.062	-.050	.026	-.105**	.075	-.026	-.010	-.097**	-.088**	-.048
	N							1121	1121	981	737	1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
V_Age	Pearson's r								1	.026	-.049	-.091**	-.100**	-.079**	.020	-.019	-.061	.213**	-.119**	-.018	-.056	.348**	.024	.044
	N								1121	981	737	1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
Nght	Pearson's r									1	.057	-.041	.012	-.036	-.041	-.063	-.003	.006	.009	-.032	.006	.039	-.027	-.011
	N									981	672	981	981	981	815	974	747	747	747	747	747	711	974	974
Wkend	Pearson's r										1	.140**	-.073	-.086	-.067	.003	-.040	-.078	.119**	-.020	.012	-.067	.012	-.015
	N										737	737	737	737	647	730	587	587	587	587	587	558	729	729
V_Drk	Pearson's r											1	.334**	.057	-.171**	.027	-.102**	-.004	.147**	-.070	-.065	.049	.300**	.147**
	N											1121	1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
V_Drug	Pearson's r												1	.235**	-.027	.017	.110**	.002	-.121**	-.033	-.023	-.079**	.128**	.340**
	N												1121	1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
V_CH	Pearson's r													1	.054	.146**	.058	.007	-.065	-.035	-.073**	.002	-.012	.051
	N													1121	926	1114	851	851	851	851	851	809	1113	1113
Crmlnv	Pearson's r														1	.040	.063	-.034	-.061	.053	-.026	-.066	-.194**	-.065
	N														926	920	768	768	768	768	768	733	919	919
S_CH	Pearson's r															1	.115**	-.074**	-.049	-.058	.028	-.073**	.201**	.163**
	N															1114	848	848	848	848	848	809	1113	1113
S_BlK	Pearson's r																1	-.550**	-.628**	-.157**	-.106**	-.191**	-.092**	.079
	N																851	851	851	851	851	809	847	847
S_WhT	Pearson's r																	1	-.252**	-.063	-.009	.299**	.003	.022
	N																	851	851	851	851	809	847	847
S_Hsp	Pearson's r																		1	-.072**	.121**	-.066	.115**	-.100**
	N																		851	851	851	809	847	847
S_Oth	Pearson's r																			1	.043	.042	-.026	-.045
	N																			851	851	809	847	847
S_Male	Pearson's r																				1	-.043	-.025	.016
	N																				851	809	847	847
S_Age	Pearson's r																					1	.010	-.107**
	N																					809	808	808
S_Drk	Pearson's r																						1	.524**
	N																						1113	1113
S_Drug	Pearson's r																							1
	N																							1121

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
 \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



Appendix C: Correlation matrix with mean substitution for complete victim and audience sample N=1,121

		Correlations with mean substitution N=1121																						
		VPH	AUD	V_BlK	W_WhT	W_Hsp	V_Oth	V_Male	V_Age	Nght	Wkend	V_Drk	V_Drug	V_CH	Crmlnv	S_CH	S_BlK	S_WhT	S_Hsp	S_Oth	S_Male	S_Age	S_Drk	S_Drug
VPH	Pearson's r	1	.241**	.181**	-.131**	-.062*	-.067*	.172**	-.147**	.159**	.250**	.208**	-.002	-.056	-.008	.058	.037	-.002	-.048	.020	-.075*	.071*	.068*	.047
AUD	Pearson's r		1	-.021	-.191**	.214**	-.042	.218**	-.221**	.146**	.068*	.087**	-.034	.064*	-.041	.006	-.035	-.139**	.182**	-.038	.104**	-.147**	-.008	-.014
V_BlK	Pearson's r			1	-.514**	-.605**	-.165**	.012	-.072*	-.056	.182**	.174**	.001	-.042	-.008	.070*	.595**	-.287**	-.422**	-.060*	-.142**	-.048	-.050	.066*
V_wWhT	Pearson's r				1	-.302**	-.083**	-.171**	.263**	-.085**	-.067*	-.074*	-.004	-.058	.022	-.027	-.274**	.508**	-.131**	-.041	.064*	.092**	.007	.027
V_Hsp	Pearson's r					1	-.097**	.143**	-.157**	.166**	-.119**	-.103**	.002	.106**	-.012	-.051	-.425**	-.123**	.620**	-.011	.088**	-.038	.062*	-.080**
V_Oth	Pearson's r						1	.002	-.005	-.069**	-.076**	-.072*	.003	-.014	.002	-.010	-.002	-.047	-.057	.325**	.043	.024	-.033	-.055
V_Male	Pearson's r							1	-.151**	.130**	.042	.148**	.026	-.008	.058	-.050	.023	-.094**	.067*	-.023	-.009	-.086**	-.087**	-.048
V_Age	Pearson's r								1	-.091**	-.100**	-.079**	.024	-.038	.018	-.019	-.052	.182**	-.102**	-.016	-.047	.289**	.024	.043
V_Drnk	Pearson's r									1	.334**	.057	-.039	.113**	-.156**	.027	-.089**	-.004	.128**	-.061*	-.057	.042	.299**	.146**
V_Drug	Pearson's r										1	.235**	.011	-.058	-.025	-.017	.097**	.002	-.107**	-.029	-.020	-.068*	.127**	.338**
V_CH	Pearson's r											1	-.034	-.078**	.051	.146**	.053	.006	-.059*	-.032	-.067*	.002	-.012	.051
Nght	Pearson's r												1	.045	-.035	-.060*	-.002	.005	.007	-.029	.005	.032	-.025	-.010
Wkend	Pearson's r													1	-.046	.003	-.030	-.056	.092**	-.014	.009	-.045	.008	-.012
Crmlnv	Pearson's r														1	.037	.055	-.031	-.052	.048	-.023	-.060*	-.183**	-.061*
S_CH	Pearson's r															1	.110**	-.071*	-.047	-.056	.027	-.070*	.201**	.163**
S_BlK	Pearson's r																1	-.550**	-.628**	-.157**	-.106**	-.186**	-.088**	.076*
S_WhT	Pearson's r																	1	-.252**	-.063*	-.009	.294**	.003	.022
S_Hsp	Pearson's r																		1	-.072*	.121**	-.064*	.109**	-.096**
S_Oth	Pearson's r																			1	.043	.042	-.025	-.044
S_Male	Pearson's r																				1	-.043	-.023	.015
S_Age	Pearson's r																					1	.009	-.102**
S_Drnk	Pearson's r																						1	.524**
S_Drug	Pearson's r																							1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix D: Binary logistic regressions with mean substitution N=1,121

Binary Logistic Regressions with Mean Substitution		N=1121		
	Model 1: Main Effect		Model 2: Interactive Effects	
	b(SE)	Odds Ratio	b(SE)	Odds Ratio
Audience Present	1.105(.158)	3.020***	.920(.198)	2.509***
Victim Drinking	0.196(.168)	1.217	-.101(.258)	.904
Victim Drugs	.957(.190)	2.605***	1.002(.193)	2.723***
Victim Male	.880(.232)	2.410***	.873(.232)	2.394***
Victim White	-.759(.248)	.468**	-.750(.249)	.473**
Victim Hispanic	-.856(.231)	.425***	-.890(.234)	.411***
Victim Other	-1.592(.644)	.204*	-1.556(.642)	.211
Victim Age	-.026(.007)	.975***	-.026(.007)	.974***
Victim Criminal History	.456(.173)	1.578**	.454(.173)	1.575*
Suspect Drinking	.480(.218)	1.615*	.486(.219)	1.626
Suspect Drugs	-.361(.251)	.697	-.358(.252)	.699
Suspect Male	-.688(.278)	.502	-.677(.278)	.508
Suspect White	.466(.282)	1.593	.464(.283)	1.591
Suspect Hispanic	.134(.274)	1.143	.146(.276)	1.157
Suspect Other	1.610(.690)	5.005*	1.607(.687)	4.986
Suspect Age	.036(.008)	1.037***	.036(.008)	1.036***
Suspect Criminal History	.342(.189)	1.408	.319(.190)	1.376
Criminal Involvement	.063(.196)	1.065	.066(.197)	1.068
Night time	.055(.171)	1.056	.050(.171)	1.052
Weekend	-.278(.180)	.757	-.278(.181)	.757
Audience * Victim drinking	---	---	.473(.309)	1.605
	$\chi^2=252.121$ ***	df=20	$\chi^2=254.478$ ***	df=21
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001	Cox & Snell pseudo-R2=	0.201	Cox & Snell pseudo-R2=	0.203

Appendix E: Tolerances and variance inflation factors N=473

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	.227	.135		1.674	.095		
	AUD	.189	.045	.190	4.216	.000	.816	1.226
	V_Wht	-.197	.066	-.160	-2.985	.003	.573	1.746
	V_Hsp	-.261	.082	-.226	-3.184	.002	.328	3.048
	V_Oth	-.261	.121	-.098	-2.158	.031	.803	1.245
	V_Male	.179	.055	.140	3.237	.001	.883	1.133
	V_Age	-.004	.002	-.115	-2.490	.013	.774	1.293
	Night	.008	.045	.008	.188	.851	.969	1.032
	Wkend	-.029	.041	-.029	-.709	.478	.954	1.049
	V_Drink	.119	.049	.116	2.412	.016	.708	1.413
	V_Drug	.191	.059	.162	3.265	.001	.668	1.496
	V_CH	.110	.048	.105	2.319	.021	.807	1.239
	Crmlnv	-.110	.062	-.074	-1.770	.077	.934	1.071
	S_VH	-.004	.045	-.004	-.091	.928	.900	1.111
	S_Wht	.136	.068	.106	1.983	.048	.574	1.741
	S_Hsp	.141	.083	.118	1.707	.089	.346	2.890
	S_Oth	.245	.154	.071	1.594	.112	.835	1.197
	S_Male	-.024	.069	-.014	-.342	.733	.918	1.089
	S_Age	.006	.002	.140	2.978	.003	.746	1.340
	S_Drink	-.004	.058	-.003	-.069	.945	.644	1.552
	S_Drug	-.082	.067	-.062	-1.227	.221	.643	1.554

a. Dependent Variable: VPH

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## Vita

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