

**Provocation and the Point of No Return:
An Analysis of Victim-Precipitated Homicide**

By

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DEDICATION

To all my family, friends, and colleagues;
I would not be where I am today without you.

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I would like to extend a special thank you to:

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ABSTRACT

Victim-precipitation theory is based on the notion that a victim may contribute to his or her own victimization. This research replicates Marvin Wolfgang's famous Philadelphia study on victim-precipitated homicides. Additionally, the present analysis includes variables not originally tested by Wolfgang in hopes of adding to the victimization literature. Using data from 194 homicides that occurred in Youngstown, Ohio between the years 1977-2008, information was gathered from police files to discover what demographic and situational factors increase the likelihood of a victim-precipitated homicide. Data retrieved from the Youngstown Police Department revealed that 18 percent (n=35) of homicides were victim-precipitated. Differences in the frequency of victim-precipitated homicides, as opposed to non victim-precipitated homicides are analyzed with respect to age, race, gender, victim-offender relationship, level of provocation, homicide circumstance, previous arrest record, the presence of alcohol or drugs, location, and weapon used. Utilizing binary logistic regression, three variables were statistically significant in predicting the likelihood of victim-precipitated homicide: prior criminal record of the victim, the victim-offender relationship, and the gender of the offender. Demographics of the victim, alcohol and drug consumption by the victim, homicide location, and weapon used were not significant predictors of victim-precipitated homicides. In the future, a more robust and demographically diverse sample of victim-precipitated homicides would be optimal in order to obtain a more accurate depiction of the factors which affect the likelihood of victim-precipitated homicides.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Homicide is considered to be the most depraved of all crimes. Homicide refers to “all cases in which human beings, by their own acts, omissions, or procurement, kill other human beings” (Reid, 2007, p. 166). In 1980, homicides within the United States claimed the lives of 23,970 citizens (BJS, 2010). As of 1980, homicide was the eleventh leading cause of death and ranked as the fourth leading cause of premature mortality in the United States, particularly among young, African American males, for whom homicide was the leading cause of death (Rosenberg & Mercy, 1986).

Populations with the greatest risk of homicide victimization are males, minorities, and the young. According to Rosenberg and Mercy (1986), in 1980, 75.6 percent of homicide victims were male, 56.6 percent were between the ages of 15 and 34, and 44.2 percent were African Americans or members of other minority groups (p. 389). In 1980, the average American had a 1 out of 153 chance of becoming a homicide victim; however, probabilities varied greatly between genders and races. For a white American woman, the probability of being a homicide victim was 1 out of 450; for a black male it was 1 in 28 (DOJ, 1981). More specifically, for a young, African American male between the ages of 20-24 who die, the probability that he died as a result of homicide is greater than 1 in 3; a rate five to ten times higher than young white men (Rosenberg & Mercy, 1986).

Homicide varies, not only demographically, but also geographically. A Center for Disease Control 1983 report, *Surveillance of Homicide*, indicates an uneven geographical distribution among homicides in the United States. The highest homicide rates are found in southern states, urban cities, and particularly for young, black males, the highest rates occur in large, north-central cities (CDC, 1983). For many years, homicide was viewed primarily as a concern only for the criminal justice system. However in recent years, homicide has become a growing public health concern considering it is the fourth leading cause of premature death (CDC, 1983). The next section will discuss the various types of homicide and its influence within a criminal justice context.

Types of Homicide

The criminal justice system has long distinguished between the varying degrees of homicide. In the United States there is first to fourth degree murder, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, excusable, and justifiable homicide (Wolfgang, 1958). Victim-precipitation parallels the legal standard of provocation often used in criminal proceedings; in both aspects, the killing must occur immediately following the provocation. However, this study focuses on the theoretical principles rather than the legal aspects of homicide. Specifically, this research distinguishes between two types of homicide: victim-precipitated and non victim-precipitated. Victim precipitated homicide is defined as when “the victim is a direct, positive participator in the crime” while a non victim precipitated homicide would be when the victim is not the precipitator; in other words, not the first to instigate the violent interplay (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 252).

The genesis for the present study of homicides is rooted in the theory of victim-precipitation. This theory, simply stated is based on the concept that the victim may in varying degrees, contribute to his or her own victimization (von Hentig, 1948; Wolfgang, 1958; Schafer, 1968).

Trends in Homicide

In 1980, the United States experienced an unprecedented number of homicides. The rate of homicides increased from 6.2 in 1967 to 10.2 in 1980 (BJS, 2010, p. 8). However, little research has been done on how many of those homicides were victim-precipitated. It would seem, however, that due to the growing popularity of Wolfgang's Philadelphia study and the staggering homicide rates in the United States, researchers would begin to discern the prevalence of victim-precipitated homicide in other cities. For example, Voss and Hepburn's (1968) Chicago study found that 38 percent of the homicides were victim-precipitated. Similarly, Roberson (1976) and Mulvihill (1969) found that 22 percent and 36 percent respectively, of the homicides in their samples were victim-precipitated.

The Present Study

For a relatively small city, Youngstown, Ohio struggles with a fairly high homicide rate. This was especially so in the 1990s. Youngstown reached its peak in 1995 when the homicide rate reached 72 per 100,000, giving Youngstown the title "Murdertown, U.S.A." In that year, only St. Louis, Missouri; Camden, New Jersey; and Gary, Indiana ranked higher than Youngstown for the city with the highest homicide rate. Today, Youngstown has a considerably lower rate of homicide, however high levels of

murder continue to plague the city. This research seeks to determine how many homicides in Youngstown can be classified as victim-precipitated, and more precisely, seeks to discover the specific factors that influence the likelihood of there being a victim-precipitated homicide, as opposed to non victim-precipitated homicide. Given the similarities between Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Illinois, and Youngstown, Ohio with regard to high urbanization, low income neighborhoods, and demographic makeup, it is expected that a fair proportion of Youngstown homicides would be victim-precipitated.

This study extends Wolfgang's Philadelphia research of victim-precipitated homicide. While the present research replicates Wolfgang's efforts to examine factors that influence homicide, this study will also look at levels of provocation, something Wolfgang did not take into consideration. Levels of provocation were first introduced by Benjamin Mendelsohn, who as a criminal lawyer noticed that in most cases the victim and offender had known each other in some capacity and often times the victim had been a participator in their own victimization. Mendelsohn (1956) developed a victim-responsibility typology to assign a degree of accountability to the victim. Mendelsohn's victim-responsibility typology will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

By including variables not initially tested by Wolfgang, this research will expand the theory of victim-precipitation and homicide. In addition, it will also contribute to the understanding of provocation within the criminal justice system. By including the level of provocation, it will give a better understanding of the judicial decision-making process. According to Horoszowki (1975), provocation is the most common mitigating circumstance in homicide trials. Other studies have concluded that provocation on behalf

of the victim will significantly influence the final disposition of a case and whether or not the case would even have been prosecuted in the first place (Williams, 1976; Denno & Cramer, 1976). This research seeks to determine what role, if any, provocation has in criminal homicides. Only then can there be a better understanding of the role of the actors who partake in such a lethal event.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Trends in Homicide

There are many demographic trends in homicide. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2010) reports various patterns in homicide based on data from the years 1976 – 2005: (1) Blacks are disproportionally represented as both homicide victims and offenders; the victimization rates for Blacks were six times higher and offending rates were seven times higher than those for Whites; (2) Males represent 77 percent of homicide victims and nearly 90 percent of offenders; victimization rates for males were three times higher and offending rates were eight times higher than the rates for females; and (3) roughly one-third of murder victims and approximately half the offenders are under the age of 25 (p. 11). In regards to the racial boundaries of homicide, a majority of murders are intra-racial; 86 percent of White victims were killed by Whites and 94 percent of Black victims were killed by Blacks (p. 68). Furthermore, stranger homicides are more likely to cross racial lines than those that involve friends or acquaintances (BJS, 2010, p. 64). In regards to the victim-offender relationship, females are considerably more likely than male murder victims to be killed by someone they know, especially by an intimate rather than a mere acquaintance (BJS, 2010, p. 83). There is also a regional distinction regarding homicide. While in recent years, all areas of the United States have experienced a decline in homicide rates, the southern regions of the United States have not been so fortunate (BJS, 2010, p. 144).

Demographic Characteristics and Homicide

Much of the homicide literature has concentrated on the influence of demographic factors. As indicated above, risk of involvement in homicide is not evenly distributed throughout the United States. African Americans currently make up approximately 13 percent of the population, however, they account for roughly one-half of all homicide offenders and victims (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1995; Bureau of the Census, 1995). Consistent with the majority of studies on race and homicide, Voss and Hepburn (1968) revealed that incidents of criminal homicide were more common among nonwhites than whites. “78 percent of the victims and 79 percent of the offenders were nonwhite” (p. 501). The rate of homicide victimization and offending for nonwhites is nearly ten times that of whites (p. 502).

Voss and Hepburn (1968) also report that the involvement of males in criminal homicide is especially significant. Males comprised 73.6 percent and 83.1 percent of victims and offenders, respectively (p. 501). When race and gender were considered simultaneously, a disproportionate number of nonwhite males were the victims and offenders in these cases. Nonwhite males were victims in 56.6 percent of the cases and offenders in 63.8 percent of the cases (p. 501). When both race and sex were accounted for, nonwhite males had the highest rate of homicide victimization and offending, 46.1 and 55, respectively (p. 501).

With respect to age, Voss and Hepburn (1968) found that the young are particularly overrepresented in criminal homicide, with a specific concentration of victims found in the 25 to 29 year age group (p. 502). Fifty-two percent of white and

44.5 percent of nonwhite offenders were between 15 and 29 years of age (p. 502). When age, race, and gender were accounted for, 30 of the 39 male victims under the age of 20 were nonwhite, indicating the frequent involvement of young, Black males in criminal homicide. Furthermore, Voss and Hepburn discussed the similarity in the ages of offenders and victims; approximately one-half of the victims were killed by an offender in the same or adjacent age group (p. 502).

In a similar study, Block (1976) collected demographic information regarding victims and offenders in criminal homicides located in Chicago from 1965-1973. Block reported that of the 6,075 cases of criminal homicide, the majority of victims and offenders were Black. Over the course of the nine-year study, the percentage of Black victims ranged from 70 to 74 percent; likewise, the percentage of Black offenders varied from 77 percent to 83 percent (p. 497). Consistent with Voss and Hepburn (1968), Block discovered that males are primarily the offenders and victims of criminal homicide; particularly, Black males. In regards to race and age, the highest concentration of Black male victims and offenders were found within the 15-24 year age group. Block reported that Black males, aged 15-24, accounted for the greatest increase in both victims (25.1 percent) and offenders (35.6 percent) over the nine-year period (p. 504).

Many studies have indicated that most violent crime is intra-racial (Boland, 1976; O'Brien, 1987; Garfinkel, 1949; Zahn & Sagi, 1987). Homicide is no exception. In an early study of homicide victimization, Garfinkel (1949) discovered that homicides are generally intra-racial occurrences. Data were collected from the death certificates and Superior Court records of ten counties in North Carolina: Alamance, Caswell, Chatham, Durham, Granville, Guilford, Orange, Person, Rockingham, and Wake. Three large cities

are located within these counties, Raleigh, Durham, and Greensboro. Garfinkel (1949) studied 673 instances of homicides, involving 821 offenders over an eleven year period, January 1, 1930 – December 31, 1940. Ninety percent of the 821 homicide cases were intra-racial (Garfinkel, 1949, p. 370). Many other studies have arrived at this same conclusion (Bensig & Schroeder, 1960; Pokorny, 1965; Swigert & Farrell, 1976; Block, 1975). Block (1985) went one step further and distinguished between assault homicides and robbery homicides. Data were collected from Chicago police records from 1965 to 1981 which included 12,872 homicides. Results show that in the vast majority of assault homicides, the victim and offender shared the same race/ethnicity; however, robbery homicides were comparatively inter-racial.

Macro-level Influences on Homicide

While there is a strong association between demographic characteristics and homicide victimization and offending, many studies have demonstrated that macro-level variables such as, education, poverty level, and income are also important factors in predicting homicides. In Block's (1975) study of homicides in Chicago, the influence of economic depression on the homicide rate was evident. The study reported that two percent of the neighborhoods in Chicago accounted for 22 percent of the homicides over a nine-year period (p. 510). These neighborhoods were the most economically depressed areas of the city which included a housing project and two Section 8 neighborhoods. Block (1975) proposed that these areas are predominately occupied by young Blacks who, because of economic deprivation, may resort to violent acts for economic gain. Dobrin, Lee, and Price (2005) conducted a study which drew upon the differences of neighborhood structure between homicide victims and non-victims. Demographic

characteristics were collected from a sample of homicide victims which included name, address, date of birth, age, race, and gender. Conversely, a sample of non-homicide victims were selected from Motor Vehicle Administration records and the same data was collected as those for homicide victims. Information regarding the high school dropout rate, unemployment rate, percentage of female-headed households, level of poverty, and median household income were collected from Census data. Results indicated that significant differences existed between homicide victims and non-homicide victims in regards to these macro-level measurements. Furthermore, when demographic variables were included in the analysis, age, race, gender, and previous arrest were strongly associated with the likelihood of victimization (Dobrin et al., 2005). When all other variables were controlled for, Blacks had 2.7 times the probability of becoming a homicide victim compared to Whites, and males were 2.1 times more likely to be victimized than females (Dobrin et al., 2005, p.142). This study demonstrated that while macro-level variables are significantly associated with homicide victimization, individual level variables such as race and gender are consistently strong predictors of homicide victimization as well.

Studies have also found that homicide rates vary depending upon region. Many of these studies report a high level of fatal violence in southern states (Shannon, 1954; Lottier, 1938; Brearly, 1932). Gastil (1971) attempted to address this concern by exploring the southern culture's affect on homicide rates. When Gastil was conducting his study, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Alabama were the seven states with the highest homicide rates. Gastil employed a measure of "Southernness" to determine the effect that Southern culture had on homicide

rates. To accomplish this, Gastil constructed an “Index of Southernness”; a numerical value between 5-30 was applied to each state depending upon the presence of a southern culture. Those states that embodied the most pure Southern culture were given a 30, while states with the lowest influence of southern culture received a 5. The data uncovered the influence of southern culture on homicide rates. The amount of “Southernness” in the culture of the state accounts for the variation in homicide rates, more so than income, education, percent urban, or age. Gastil (1971) suggests this is due in part to the persistence of Southern cultural beliefs and traditions about violence and the use of violence that developed before the Civil War and continues within present generations.

Alcohol and Homicide

According to the United States Public Health Service, homicide is recognized as a major cause of premature mortality in the United States (Goodman, Mercy, Loya, Rosenberg, Smith, Allen, Vargas, & Kolts; 1986). In order to identify the risk factors related to homicide victimization, public health officials have called for a better understanding of alcohol in homicide situations (p. 144). Many studies have discussed the physiological effects of alcohol which include an increase in risk-taking behaviors, provocation, release of inhibitory control, and expression of aggressive or violent behavior (Bennett, Buss, & Carpenter; 1969; Katkin, Hayes, Teger, & Pruitt, 1970; p. 144).

Goodman et al. (1986) addressed the relationship between alcohol use and homicide victimization by utilizing data from the Los Angeles City Police Department and the Los Angeles Medical Examiner’s Office. The sample included 4,950 victims of criminal

homicide from 1970-1979. Results indicated that 46 percent of the sample had detectable levels of alcohol, 30 percent of those victims had blood alcohol content consistent with the legal level of intoxication in most states (p. 145). Alcohol was found most commonly in victims who were young, male and Latino and least common among Whites. In regards to situational characteristics, alcohol was detected in 67.9 percent of victims that were engaged in a physical altercation before the homicide, 55 percent of victims involved in verbal arguments, and 48.3 percent of victims in gang-related homicides (p. 146). These findings suggest that the presence of alcohol in victims, who were engaged in a conflict prior to the homicide, is compatible with the notion that alcohol promotes aggressive behavior and violent interplay (p. 148).

A subsequent study by Gantner and Taylor (1992), investigated threats of physical harm on the aggressive behavior of intoxicated and non-intoxicated participants (p. 29). The sample included forty male undergraduates over the age of 18 from Kent State University. The researchers utilized a reaction time task in which subjects were to administer shocks upon an increasing provocative opponent. The results indicated that under conditions of low provocation (low levels of shock), the intoxicated subjects were more aggressive (administered higher shock levels) upon their opponents than the non-intoxicated subjects. Findings suggested that alcohol consumption may increase aggressive behavior even when the potential for physical harm is minimal.

Victim-Offender Relationship and Homicide

Studies conducted on the relationship between victim and offender have yielded consistent results (Voss & Hepburn; 1968; Block, 1975; Allen, 1980, Brearly; 1976). In

a majority of homicide incidents the victim and offender know one another in some capacity (friend, intimate, acquaintance, family member). Curtis (1974) dissected the victim-offender relationship into four categories: family, primary relationships (intimates or friends), non-primary relationships (acquaintances or neighbors), and strangers. In a study of seventeen American cities, a high percentage of victims (45.4 percent) were found to have a “non-primary” relationship with the offender, 24.7 percent were classified as family relationships, and 15.6 percent were stranger relationships (pp. 50-51).

Zahn and Sagi (1987) also distinguished between four victim-offender relationship types: (1) homicide within the family, (2) homicide among friends and acquaintances, (3) stranger-felony homicide, and (4) stranger non-felony homicide (pp. 379-380). Data was gathered from a nation-wide study of nine American cities: Philadelphia, Newark, Chicago, St. Louis, Memphis, Dallas, Oakland, San Jose, and another anonymous city. The police and medical examiner departments for each of the nine cities were asked to provide records for all homicide cases that occurred in 1978. A total of 1,373 homicide cases were utilized for analysis. Of the four types, the data indicate that acquaintance homicide was the most prevalent relationship (54 percent) followed by family homicide (18 percent), stranger felony homicide (16 percent), and lastly, stranger non-felony homicide (12 percent) (p. 393). Findings regarding the four typologies demonstrated the following: (1) Black males had the highest rate of involvement as both victims and offenders in acquaintance homicides, (2) family homicide had a higher proportion of female offenders than the other relationship types, (3) in stranger felony homicides, most were interracial involving a Black or Hispanic

male as the offender and an older White male as the victim, and (4) a majority of the non-stranger felony victims and offenders were males of similar ages (pp. 395-396).

Early victimologists studied the victim-offender relationship to gain a better understanding of the circumstances that consummate a criminal act. This relationship led to a transformation in the ideology of the victim and their role within a criminal event.

Theoretical Framework

In recent years, the field of victimology has gained an exceptional amount of attention. However, in the early years of criminological research, only a select few had focused upon the victim and the dynamic of the victim-offender relationship. Early scholarly work in victimology concentrated on the development of victim typologies (Doerner & Lab, 2008). McKinney (1950) described a typology as “an effort to categorize observations into logical groupings to reach a better understanding of our social world” (as cited in Doerner & Lab, 2008, p. 4). A pioneer of victimology, Hans von Hentig, developed a research focus on the criminal-victim dyad. His purpose was to discover what makes a victim, a victim. Von Hentig (1948) claimed that the victim often contributed to his or her own victimization. While von Hentig recognized that some victims had an active role in the criminal act, he also believed that most victim contributions were a result of physical or psychological characteristics or social positions beyond the victim’s control. As a result, von Hentig developed a victim typology in which victims were classified into thirteen different categories depending upon their susceptibility for victimization. The thirteen categories include: (1) the young, (2) the female, (3) the old, (4) the mentally defective and deranged, (5) immigrants, (6)

minorities, (7) dull normals or the simple-minded, (8) the depressed, (9) the acquisitive or the greedy, (10) the wanton, (11) the lonesome and the heartbroken, (12) the tormentor, and (13) the blocked, exempted, or fighting (von Hentig, 1948, pp. 404-438). Von Hentig is not suggesting that the victim is always the principal cause of the criminal act, but that due to these physical, psychological, and social conditions, victims are unable to avoid or defend themselves against their offenders.

Another victimologist, Benjamin Mendelsohn, often referred to as the “father of victimology”, was similarly intrigued by the victim-offender dynamic. As an attorney, Mendelsohn noticed that in many criminal cases, there was a strong interpersonal relationship between the victim and offender (Doerner & Lab, 2008). Thus, Mendelsohn (1956) developed a six-step classification system which categorized victims based on legal standards of culpability. The six typologies are: (1) completely innocent victim - no provocation, (2) victims with minor guilt - placed themselves in a risky situation, (3) victim as guilty as offender (voluntary victim - suicide, vice, and victimless crimes), (4) victim more guilty than offender - provocation by the victim, (5) most guilty victim - those who started as the offender and ended as the victim, and (6) imaginary victim - pretend to have been victimized (as cited in Doerner & Lab, 2008, p. 6). Mendelsohn’s work thus expanded the concept of victim-precipitation to include degrees of provocation asserted by the victim during the criminal event.

Stephen Schafer further explored the victim’s role in his or her victimization in his work, *The Victim and His Criminal* (1968). Schafer explored the victim-offender relationship in regards to the victim’s “functional responsibility” in the criminal act. Similar to Mendelsohn (1956), Schafer constructed a victim typology based solely upon

the victim's degree of culpability in the criminal act. These seven categories consisted of: (1) unrelated victims – no victim responsibility, (2) provocative victims – victim shares responsibility, (3) precipitative victims – some degree of responsibility, (4) biologically weak – no victim responsibility, (5) socially weak – no victim responsibility, (6) self-victimizing – total victim responsibility, and (7) political victims – no victim responsibility (Schafer, 1968).

Research on Victim-Precipitation Theory in Criminal Justice

Many studies have emerged to test victim-precipitated theory as it relates to violent crime. Menachem Amir (1971) conducted the most controversial empirical research regarding the crime of rape. Amir (1971) applied the notion of victim-precipitation in the cases of forcible rape. Information was gathered from police records on rape incidents that occurred in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from 1958 – 1960. Amir (1971) described victim-precipitated rape as:

...those rape situations in which the victim actually, or so it was deemed, agreed to sexual relations but retracted before the actual act or did not react strongly enough when the suggestion was made by the offender. The term applies also to cases in risky situations marred with sexuality, especially when she uses what could be interpreted as indecency in language and gestures, or constitutes what could be taken as an invitation to sexual relations (p. 266).

By utilizing this definition of victim-precipitated rape, Amir concluded that 19 percent of all forcible rapes were victim-precipitated.

Amir (1971) also found other factors, such as alcohol, contributed to victim precipitation. Alcohol consumption, especially by the victim, was a major precipitating factor leading to victimization. If both parties were drinking, the risk of sexual victimization increased. Amir (1971) proceeded to include seductive actions by the

victim as possible precipitating factors for forcible rape. For example, promiscuous clothing, risqué language, a bad reputation, and being in the wrong place at the wrong time, was considered to be sufficient provocation for a rape scenario (Amir, 1971). In a rather bold statement, Amir (1971) suggested that some victims may have an unconscious need to be sexually controlled through rape.

Consequently, Amir's study came under harsh criticism. Weis and Borges (1973, 1976) condemned the methodological techniques and ill-conceived theoretical notions of Amir's forcible rape study. These authors were particularly troubled by the suggestion that women psychologically prompt or desire rape as a means of rebelling against accepted standards of behavior and that men were just reacting to these cues. Not only was this suggestion objectionable, it was also not supported by research. Amir offered no justification for why female behavior develops from psychological factors while male actions originate from social cues.

To challenge Amir's findings, Curtis (1974) conducted a study using a more concise definition of victim-precipitated rape. Believing that Amir (1971) employed an ambiguous definition, Curtis defined victim precipitated rape as, "an episode ending in forced intercourse in which a female first agreed to sexual relations, or clearly invited them verbally or through gestures, but then retracted before the act" (p.600). Curtis's definition was also used by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence in a 1967 study, which determined that only four percent of forcible rapes were victim-precipitated, when the definition is limited to an initial agreement to engage in sex but then retracted by the victim.

Curtis (1974) also examined the frequency of victim-precipitated events in other violent crimes such as, robbery and aggravated assault. A victim-precipitated robbery occurred when, “the victim clearly had not acted with reasonable self-protective behavior in handling money, jewelry, or other valuables” (Curtis, 1974, p. 602). In armed robbery cases, 11 percent of the cleared and five percent of the uncleared cases were found to be victim precipitated, while in unarmed robbery cases, six percent of the cleared and ten percent of the uncleared were classified as victim-precipitated (Curtis, 1974, p. 602). In the study, an aggravated assault was deemed victim-precipitated when, “the victim was the first to use either physical force or insinuating language and gestures against the subsequent attacker” (Curtis, 1974, p. 598). Results indicate that 14 percent of cleared and 21 percent of uncleared aggravated assaults were believed to be precipitated (Curtis, 1974, p. 598). Curtis’ work greatly contributed to the literature on victim-precipitated crimes showing that while victim-precipitation was common in aggravated assaults, it was less frequent in robberies, and least frequent and relevant in rape scenarios.

Many studies have determined that most violent crimes (excluding armed robbery) are victim-precipitated events committed within interpersonal relationships (Curtis, 1974; Voss & Hepburn, 1968; Mulvihill, Tumin, & Curtis; 1969). While these studies focused on relationships, few addressed the potential role that victim-precipitation played in incidents of intimate partner violence. Muftic, Bouffard, & Bouffard (2007) sought to test the utility of victim precipitation in explaining differences between male and female violence within intimate relationships. Data was gathered from a community corrections agency in North Dakota. Demographic information of male and female arrestees and incident characteristics were drawn from police reports located in the

agency's official files. A total of 203 cases involving 123 male and 80 female arrestees were utilized. This study suggested that women arrested for intimate partner abuse were more likely responding to an act of victim precipitation by their counterpart. When prior history of intimate violence was considered, males were significantly more likely to have committed an act of violence against an intimate than females. Thus, when females were arrested for intimate partner violence, they were reacting to a prior history of abuse by their male partners (p. 336). In general, there are apparent gender differences regarding measures of prior violence, suggesting that males are commonly more aggressive than females and therefore may be more likely to precipitate their own victimization.

Marvin Wolfgang's Victim-Precipitated Homicide Study

With respect to victim- precipitated homicides, the first comprehensive study was conducted by Marvin Wolfgang. Wolfgang focused not upon all homicides but only those of a criminal nature. For Wolfgang, criminal homicides are defined as, "all slayings not recognized as justifiable, accidental or excusable by the police and the coroner's inquest, and that normally make or would make a suspect subject to arrest and prosecution" (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 16). Wolfgang sought to discover the patterns that exist in criminal homicide. To investigate such patterns, he conducted a case study of criminal homicides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from 1948 – 1952. His study consisted of 588 cases of criminal homicide, including 621 offenders. Some of the factors that Wolfgang included were: where and when most criminal homicides occur, most common weapon(s) used, and the relationship between the victim and offender. He recognized that in each homicide there are at least two actors – the victim and the offender – and it is important to know what the differences and similarities are between them.

While past literature discovered the existence of victim culpability in the criminal act, Wolfgang was the first to empirically test the concept of victim precipitation, as well as, the first to apply the concept of victim-precipitation to a specific crime, homicide. In the Philadelphia study, Wolfgang discovered that out of the 588 criminal homicides, 150 (26 percent) had been victim-precipitated. A homicide was considered to be victim-precipitated if “the victim is a direct, positive participator in the crime”, identified by the following criteria: (1) the first to use physical force, (2) the first to show or use a weapon, and (3) the first to commence the interplay of resort to physical violence (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 252). The findings by Wolfgang regarding victim-precipitated (VP) cases and non victim-precipitated cases (non-VP), sets the stage for the present analysis.

First, Wolfgang considered demographic variation in VP and non-VP cases. With respect to race, he discovered that nearly 80 percent of VP cases involved “Negros” compared to 70 percent of non-VP cases. Wolfgang attributes the race and VP homicide association to the aggressiveness of “Negroes” compared to Whites. Wolfgang argued that because of “Negroes” high rates of homicide and assault, they are more inclined to commit criminally aggressive acts, indicating that they would have a significant association with VP homicide cases. Further indicating the significance of race in homicides, intra-racial homicides were predominate in both VP and non-VP cases; however, interracial slayings were more frequent in VP homicides, 8 percent, than non-VP homicides, 4 percent (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 258).

When gender was considered, males comprised 94 percent of VP homicide victims compared to 70 percent of non-VP homicide victims. Wolfgang hypothesized that because females are known to be less criminally aggressive than males, females

would be less likely to precipitate their own victimization, in other words, less likely to provoke the offender. The study also revealed that females were twice as likely to be offenders in VP homicides (29 percent compared to 14 percent in non-VP cases). In addition, 88 of all criminal homicides involved a male victim and a female offender. Of those 88 cases, 43 were VP homicides. This underscores Wolfgang's hypothesis regarding gender and victim-precipitation; females were considerably more likely to be offenders in VP homicides. Overall, 29 percent (43) of the 150 VP homicides were instances where a female had executed a male (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 260).

One demographic characteristic in the Wolfgang research, which demonstrated no significant association, was age. The age of both victims and offenders in both VP and non-VP homicides was similar. The average age of VP victims was 33.3 years and non-VP victims were 31.2 years of age (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 255).

Wolfgang's (1958) study also considered situational characteristics of VP and non-VP homicides. Wolfgang examined the method used to cause the death of the victim in VP and non-VP homicides. The data showed that homicides by stabbing were the most frequent method of inflicting death in VP homicides, 54 percent compared to only 34 percent of non-VP homicides. The location and motive for VP and non-VP homicides were also examined. No significant differences were found in regards to the place and motive of VP or non-VP homicides (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 258). Another situational characteristic analyzed was the presence of alcohol in the homicide situation; whether in the victim, offender or both. Wolfgang hypothesized that because alcohol has the ability to lower inhibitions, one or both parties of a VP homicide will be intoxicated. Support was found for this hypothesis; alcohol was present in one or both parties in 74 percent of

VP homicides compared to 60 percent in non-VP homicides (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 261). Further, the data indicated that an association existed between VP homicide and the presence of alcohol in the victim (no association was found between the alcohol consumption of the offender and VP homicide). The victim had consumed alcohol prior to their death in 69 percent of VP homicides and only in 47 percent of non-VP homicides. Wolfgang (1958) asserts that these numbers may not indicate a causal relationship but they do indicate a decreased ability to defend against an attack or to control impulses (p. 261).

Wolfgang's study yielded interesting results regarding the victim-offender relationship. Close friends, relatives, and acquaintances were the predominate relationships between victim and offender in both VP and non-VP homicides. When combined they constituted 69 percent of VP homicides and 65 percent of non-VP homicides. For domestic homicides involving husbands and wives, the results showed of the VP homicides, 28 victims were husbands while only five were wives. When examining non-VP homicides, a significant difference was demonstrated where only 19 victims were husbands and 48 were wives. This evidence tends to reaffirm Wolfgang's proposal that husbands more often than wives, were precipitators of their homicide.

The victims past involvement with the criminal justice system was also taken into account, specifically focusing on the previous arrest record of victims. Wolfgang (1958) suggested that because the victim was the first to initiate the aggressive interplay, he has probably previously engaged in similar but less severe assaults. Thus, in VP homicides, the victim (precipitator) is more likely than the offender to have a previous arrest record. Results indicated that overall 62 percent of victims and 54 percent of offenders had a

previous arrest record. Specifically, a higher proportion of VP victims (37 percent) than of non-VP victims (21 percent) had a record of assault (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 262).

Wolfgang's work makes it clear that there are differences between VP and non-VP homicide cases. The results revealed that VP homicides have higher proportions of the following characteristics: (1) "Negro" victims, (2) "Negro" offenders, (3) male victims, (4) female offenders, (5) stabbings, (6) mate slayings with husbands primarily being the victim, (7) substance abuse involvement, (8) victims with a previous arrest record, some of which indicate the presence of an assault (Wolfgang, 1958, pp. 264-265). Also, the data exposed similar characteristics shared by both victims and offenders, and in the words of Marvin Wolfgang, "in some cases two potential offenders come together in a homicide situation and it is probably only chance which results in one becoming a victim and the other an offender" (Wolfgang, 1958, p. 265).

Based on prior literature that examined both demographic and situational variables and their influence on homicide, the following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

H₁: Females, as opposed to males, are more likely to be the offenders in victim-precipitated homicides.

H₂: Victim-precipitated homicides are more likely to result from a domestic incident rather than non victim-precipitated homicides.

H₃: Contact weapons, such as knives or blunt objects, will be used most often in victim-precipitated killings as opposed to non victim-precipitated killings.

H₄: Substance use will be found more often in victim-precipitated homicides than non victim-precipitated homicides.

H₅: When the victim has a prior criminal record it is more likely to be a victim-precipitated homicide than non victim-precipitated homicide.

H₆: Both younger victims and younger offenders will be seen more often in victim-precipitated homicides than non victim-precipitated homicides.

H₇: Victim-precipitated homicides are more likely to be intra-racial than interracial, when compared to non victim-precipitated homicides.

H₈: A lower degree of provocation by the victim will be the offender is a male, as opposed to a female.

H₉: A higher degree of provocation by the victim will be found in cases where the victim-offender relationship is stranger.

H₁₀: A higher degree of provocation by the victim will be found when substance use is present in the victim.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Hypotheses

Wolfgang's study of victim-precipitated homicide was conducted over 50 years ago. In the present study, the work of Wolfgang and victim-precipitated homicide was re-visited to see what, if any, differences exist between victim-precipitated homicides and non victim-precipitated homicides regarding race, gender and age, as well as, level of provocation initiated by the victim, homicide location, previous criminal record of the victim, substance use, weapon used, and victim-offender relationship. The overall hypothesis is that there would be demographic and situational differences between victim-precipitated and non victim-precipitated homicides. Much of the hypotheses in this analysis retest those asserted by Wolfgang, however other propositions were added to provide some further contribution to the existing literature on homicides and victimization. Following Wolfgang (1958), this study suggested that:

H₁: Females, as opposed to males, will be the primary offenders in victim-precipitated homicides.

H₂: Victim-precipitated homicides are more likely to result from a domestic incident rather than non victim-precipitated homicides.

H₃: Contact weapons, such as knives or blunt objects, will be used most often in victim-precipitated killings as opposed to non victim-precipitated killings.

H₄: Substance use by the victim will be found more often in victim-precipitated homicides than non victim-precipitated homicides.

H₅: When the victim has a prior criminal record it is more likely to be a victim-precipitated killing than a non victim-precipitated killing.

Contrary to Wolfgang, it was expected that age would also be a contributing factor to the likelihood of victim-precipitated homicides. Wolfgang (1958) found no significant association between the age of either the victim or offender in regards to victim-precipitated and non victim-precipitated homicides. However, other studies have found that youthfulness is a significant factor (Mulvihill, et. al, 1969; Zimring, 1979). Block (1975) discovered that members of the 15-24 age group accounted for a 25.1 percent increase of victims and a 35.6 percent increase of offenders in criminal homicides over a nine-year period (p. 504). Block's findings were further illustrated by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2010), which reported that 33 percent of murder victims and slightly over 50 percent of offenders were under the age of 25 (p. 11). Therefore, this study proposes that:

H₆: Both younger victims and younger offenders will be seen more often in victim-precipitated homicides than non victim-precipitated homicides.

The racial relationship between victim and offender was also examined. The literature concerning interracial and intra-racial violent crimes has been inconsistent (Messner & South, 1992; Wolfgang, 1958; Garfinkel, 1949). Wolfgang found that while an overwhelming majority of criminal homicides were intra-racial, victim-precipitated homicides were slightly more likely than non victim-precipitated homicides to be interracial (p. 258). It is hypothesized here, based on the work of Garfinkel (1949), that because the victim and offender are exposed to similar environments and lifestyles, most homicides will likely be intra-racial. Therefore, unlike Wolfgang, this research purposes that:

H₇: Victim-precipitated homicides are more likely to be intra-racial than interracial, when compared to non victim-precipitated homicides.

Unique to this study, varying levels of provocation on behalf of the victim were considered across demographic and situational variables. According to multiple studies, males are believed to be more criminally aggressive than females (Wolfgang, 1958; von Hentig, 1948; Sobol, 1997; Muftic, et al. 2007). Therefore, this study asserts that:

H₈: A lower degree of provocation by the victim will be present when the offender is male, as opposed to female.

With respect to the victim-offender relationship, most violent crimes are committed by people the victim knows (Wolfgang, 1958; Hewitt, 1988; Curtis, 1974). Specifically, victim-precipitated homicides are more likely to occur between close friends and family members (Voss & Hepburn, 1968; Wolfgang, 1958; Block, 1975). Sobol (1997) sought to address the association between the victim-offender relationship and the level of involvement by the victim in the homicide. The victim-offender relationship was dissected into two categories: primary, which included family members, spouses, and boyfriends/girlfriends and non-primary, which consisted of all other relationships including strangers, acquaintances, friends, and unknowns (p. 365). Four typologies were applied to the level of involvement by the victim: innocent (no participation); noncriminal facilitating (carelessness, negligence, risk-taking behaviors); criminal facilitating (involved in some criminal activity or act); and criminal precipitating (first to initiate physical violence) (p.373). Results indicated that 46.2 percent of homicides that occurred within a primary relationship, the victim was classified as an “innocent” or “non-participating” member compared to homicides that occurred in non-primary

relationships, where 41.2 percent of victims were classified as “criminal facilitating” (p.366). Thus, this study hypothesizes that:

H₉: A higher degree of provocation by the victim will be found in cases where the victim-offender relationship is stranger.

Due to the large proportion of homicides that involve alcohol (Goodman, et al., 1986; Voss & Hepburn, 1968; Block, 1975), the role of alcohol in victim-precipitated homicides was addressed. With regards to homicide victimization, it has been well documented that alcohol increases the likelihood of risk-taking and provocative behavior, which can lead to violent interactions including homicide (Goodman, et al., 1986; Katkin, et al., 1970; Bennet, et al., 1969). Further, alcohol affects the central nervous system allowing for decreased inhibitions and increased aggressiveness, which can set the scene for a victim-precipitated situation (Katkin, et al., 1970). Based upon the conclusions of prior literature regarding alcohol and homicide, this research asserts that:

H₁₀: A higher degree of provocation by the victim will be found when the substance use is present in the victim.

Data Collection

A longitudinal study was conducted for criminal homicides that occurred in Youngstown, Ohio from 1977-2008, the only years available for this research. Information was gathered from 210 closed homicide files. Sixteen cases were excluded due to missing information regarding the victim-offender relationship and ambiguity concerning whether or not the homicide was victim-precipitated. The final sample was composed of 194 closed homicides, consisting of 194 victims and 210 offenders.

Demographic data on each victim and offender in criminal homicide cases were collected, which included information on: age, gender, race, and the prior criminal record of the victim. Additionally, situational data of the homicide event were also gathered, these included: location of the homicide, weapon used to inflict death, substance use by the victim, the victim-offender relationship, and the circumstance surrounding the homicide. Three sources were employed to gather the demographic and situational data. First, the majority of demographic and situational data were obtained from closed homicide files of the Youngstown Police Department. Second, the Mahoning County Integrated Justice System – Public Access Page, *Courtview*, was used to acquire the criminal history data of the victim, and lastly, the Mahoning County Coroner’s Office Inquest reports were used to determine the cause of death (i.e. “hemorrhage due to gunshot wound”) and the presence of alcohol or drugs in the victim close to the time of the homicide.

In order to classify a homicide as victim-precipitated or non victim-precipitated, the primary sources of data used were the closed homicide files, as well as summary sheets. Homicide files are considered to be open or closed dependent upon whether or not the murder has been cleared. Clearances result from two scenarios: arrest or “exceptional means”, the former occurs once the primary suspect has been arrested, regardless of judicial disposition; the latter is defined as instances in which the police could not make an arrest due to the death of the suspect (i.e. murder/suicide situations) (Wellford & Cronin, 2000). The closed homicide files contained witness and informant “tips”, officer statements; supplementary reports; follow-up detective investigations; police narratives; place of occurrence; relationship between the victim and offender;

evidence found at the scene; method used to inflict death; and demographic information of both the victim and offender. From this data, a homicide was classified as either victim-precipitated or non victim-precipitated. When a homicide was classified as victim-precipitated, the level of provocation was also recorded. Following previous literature (Sobol, 1997; Hannon, 2004; Wolfgang, 1958; Mendelsohn, 1956), three levels of provocation were assigned. The lowest level included those where the victim verbally threatened the subsequent offender. The second level of provocation included situations in which the victim was the first to physically attack the offender. The final and highest level of provocation was assigned when the victim was the first to show and/or use a weapon. In addition to the closed homicide files, summary sheets were examined. Summary sheets contain descriptive information on the victim and offender, such as age, race and gender, the location and time of the homicide, an explanation of the victim-offender relationship, and the weapon used to inflict death. This provided the researcher with a tool in which to check for consistency between information found within the homicide file and information recorded by police on the summary sheet. When working with police files, some discretion and judgment was inevitable, however, no level of provocation, determination of victim-precipitation, or victim-offender relationship was assigned if the information within the file was incomplete or conflicting. In those situations, it was recorded as “unknown” and excluded from analysis (Sobol, 1997; Hannon, 2004; Wolfgang, 1958; Mendelsohn, 1956).

Analytic Strategy

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via Microsoft Excel and SPSS Version 15.0. Descriptive statistics were utilized to profile, summarize,

and determine the frequency of victim-precipitated homicide considering all demographic and situational characteristics. Crosstabulations and chi-squares will be used for comparative purposes. A correlation matrix was employed to determine the degree of relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable. Due to the sample size of this study, only those variables deemed statistically significant were included in the logistic regression. One variable was excluded from the logistic regression due to its tautological nature, level of provocation. Rather, the level of provocation variable was illustrated by its frequency among victim-precipitated homicides across all demographic and situational factors.

The Regression Model

Logistic regression, with an alpha of .10, was used to ascertain which demographic and situational characteristics of a homicide event would make a victim-precipitated homicide more likely to occur than a non victim-precipitated homicide. By utilizing logistic regression, the association between a respective independent variable and its effect on the dependent variable can be determined while controlling for all other variables.

Dependent Variable

In the present study, the dichotomous dependent variable was whether or not a homicide was victim-precipitated or non victim-precipitated. Due to the overwhelming majority of non victim-precipitated homicides, the dependent variable was not normally distributed requiring the use of logistic regression.

Independent Variables

Twelve variables were measured in this study: victim age, victim gender, victim race, prior criminal record of the victim, offender age, offender gender, offender race, homicide location, weapon used, substance use, victim-offender relationship, and homicide circumstance. Victim and offender age was recorded as both a raw number and as a dichotomous measure. To make age dichotomous, the ranges employed were “25 and under” and “26 and over.” These ranges were determined based upon the study conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2010), which considered young as under the age of 25. Gender was a dichotomous variable indicating a male or female victim or offender. Following Voss and Hepburn (1986), a dichotomy of white or nonwhite was employed to avoid the exclusion of any race. For the purposes of this study, nonwhite included African Americans, Hispanics, and those of Middle-Eastern descent, although a vast majority of the nonwhite group consisted of African American victims and offenders (nearly 95 percent and 97 percent, respectively). The prior criminal record of the victim was also dichotomous, signifying a yes or no. Wolfgang (1958) utilized previous arrest records to indicate the presence of a prior criminal record of both the victim and offender. However, this study used Mahoning County Integrated Justice System – Public Access Page, *Courtview*, to determine whether or not the victim had previously been convicted of a crime. In order to satisfy the measure, the conviction had to have been of a criminal nature, felony or misdemeanor. Further, the offender’s prior criminal record was not collected because this study is primarily concerned with the victim and their role in the homicide event. Following Wolfgang (1958) and Voss and Hepburn (1968), the location of the homicide was collapsed into a dichotomous variable (home or not home). While

Wolfgang distinguished between various types of weapons: gun, knife, beating, etc; the present study uses a dichotomous variable to measure contact weapons (knife, hands, and blunt objects) or noncontact weapons (firearms, fire, acid, and starvation) (Roberts, 2007). Substance use was categorized by using the Mahoning County Coroner's Inquest reports to determine the presence of alcohol or drugs in the victim. If the report indicated the existence of any substances in the victim's system, the case was recorded as "substance use close to the time of the homicide" (Sobol, 1997, p. 364). To avoid ambiguous definitions, only two categories were utilized to define the victim-offender relationship: stranger and non-stranger (Sobol, 1997). Similar to Sobol (1997), a victim-offender relationship was considered to be stranger when there was no prior contact or knowledge of one another before the incident. A non-stranger relationship existed when the victim and offender had prior contact or knowledge of one another. The circumstance or motive for the homicide was split into six categories: robbery or burglary (attempted or completed), domestic, drug-related, gang-related, fight/argument/retaliation, and other (drive-bys, ransom, unknown). If a homicide was motivated by a robbery or burglary of a person or home for money or other material items (not including drugs), it was considered a robbery/burglary circumstance (Curtis, 1974; Voss & Hepburn, 1968). A homicide was categorized as "domestic" if the killing was committed by any family or household member, including "spouses, former spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, person who are presently residing together as if a family or who have resided together in the past as if a family, and persons who have a child in common, regardless of whether they have resided together at any time" (Websdale, 1999, p. 2). Due to the potential overlap of drug-related and gang-related homicides, a clear distinction has been

made in the present study. If the motivation for the homicide involved drugs, in any capacity (drug debt, disputes over drugs, conflict over drug territory), it was categorized as “drug-related” (Ezell & Tanner-Smith, 2009). The motive for a homicide was labeled “fight/argument/retaliation” when there was evidence of mutual combat, arguing, or a killing as punishment for a previous conflict (Block, 1975; Luckenbill, 1977). A category of “other” was applied to homicides that did not satisfy the criteria for the previously discussed motives; these included drive-by shootings (which were not discernible between gang-related or retaliation), concomitant homicides (i.e. arson and murder; rape and murder), and ransom.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Findings

This research focused on the demographic and situational characteristics of homicide, particularly, victim-precipitated homicide. Specifically, this project sought to determine factors that influence the likelihood of victim-precipitated homicides. Several of the hypotheses presented in this study ($H_1 - H_7$) were created for the purpose of retesting Wolfgang's conclusions regarding victim-precipitated homicides (See Appendix A). It was anticipated that five of these hypotheses ($H_1 - H_5$) would yield results similar to those found in Wolfgang's Philadelphia study; however, two hypotheses (H_6 and H_7) were expected to produce findings which would not support Wolfgang's original conclusions concerning age, race and victim-precipitation. In addition to retesting Wolfgang, this study presented three additional hypotheses that focused on the amount of provocation by the victim during the homicide. Thus, hypotheses 8, 9, and 10 were developed with the notion that varying levels of provocation exist within victim-precipitated homicide, and that these levels are influenced by certain demographic and situational characteristics.

To test the proposed hypotheses, various statistical analyses were conducted in this study, which included frequencies, crosstabs, chi-squares, correlations, and a binary logistic regression. Using SPSS Version 15.0, a total of 194 homicides were examined, composed of 194 victims and 210 offenders. The analysis begins with a description of non victim-precipitated homicides followed by a detailed discussion of victim-

precipitated homicides. Frequencies and crosstabs are utilized to profile and summarize the data.

Descriptive Data of Non Victim-Precipitated Homicides

A total of 159 non victim-precipitated (non-VP) homicides were analyzed. With respect to homicide victims and offenders, there was an over-representation of Nonwhite males. Nonwhites consisted of 79.2 percent (n = 126) of victims and 88.7 percent (n = 141) of offenders in non-VP homicide. With regard to gender, males comprised of 83.0 percent (n = 132) of the victims and 92.5 percent (n = 147) of the offenders in non-VP homicide. These numbers are not surprising considering the demographic makeup of Youngstown, Ohio. By examining the age of both the victim and offender in non-VP cases, one sees a notable difference. In regards to the age of the victim, a majority were found in the “26 and over” age group, while the bulk of homicide offenders were found in the “25 and under” age group. More specifically, examining the frequency distribution regarding the age of the offender shows a high concentration between the ages of 18 – 22. These five years accounted for 40 percent of the total homicide offenders in both age groups. Demographic features of the victim and offender are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics: Victim Population in Non-VP Homicides

Demographics		# of Victims	Percent
<u>Race</u>	Nonwhite	126	79.2
	White	33	20.8
<u>Gender</u>	Male	132	83.0
	Female	27	17.0
<u>Age</u>	25 and Under	65	40.9
	26 and Over	94	59.1

N = 159

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics: Offender Population in Non-VP Homicides

Demographics		# of Offenders	Percent
<u>Race</u>	Nonwhite	141	88.7
	White	18	11.3
<u>Gender</u>	Male	147	92.5
	Female	12	7.5
<u>Age</u>	25 and Under	97	61.0
	26 and Over	62	39.0

N = 159

In addition to demographic factors, situational characteristics of non victim-precipitated homicides were analyzed. Non – contact weapons, primarily firearms, were predominate in non victim-precipitated homicides, 88.7 percent (n = 141). Other non-

contact weapons such as acid, fire, and starvation, only accounted for 4 percent (n = 6) of the total non-contact weapons used in non-VP homicides. In a slight majority of non-VP cases, 58.5 percent, alcohol and/or drugs were present in the victim close to the time of the incident. Also in regards to the victim, a small minority of non- VP cases showed the existence of a prior criminal record, 17 percent (n = 27). The location of the homicide revealed, 66 percent of non-VP cases occurred outside of the victims' home. When the victim-offender relationship was considered, an overwhelming majority, 72.3 percent, were non-stranger relations. This supports the plethora of literature on victimization showing homicides are committed by people known to the victim. Situational factors are summarized in Table 3.

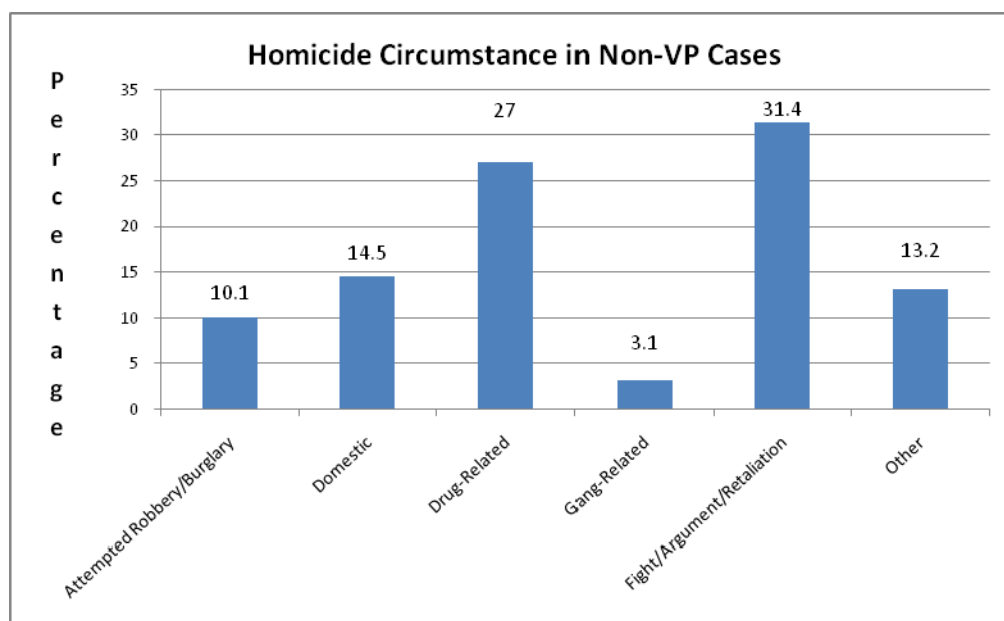
Table 3
Situational Factors of Non-VP Homicides

Factors	# of Cases	Percent
<u>Weapon Used</u> Non-Contact	141	88.7
	18	11.3
<u>Alcohol/Drugs in Victim</u> Yes	93	58.5
	66	41.5
<u>Prior Criminal Record of Victim</u> Yes	27	17.0
	132	83.0
<u>Homicide Location</u> Home	54	34.0
	105	66.0
<u>Victim-Offender Relationship</u> Non-Stranger	115	72.3
	44	27.7

N = 159

The final situational factor discussed was the motivation or circumstance of the homicide. Non victim-precipitated homicides were classified into five categories: attempted robbery/burglary, domestic, drug-related, gang-related, fight/argument/retaliation, and other. “Other” included drive-by shootings that were not considered as gang-related or retaliatory, ransom, and sexually motivated homicides. Homicide circumstances and respective totals are illustrated in Chart 1.

Chart 1



The most common circumstances surrounding non-VP homicide stemmed from a fight, argument, or retaliation, 31.4 percent, followed by drug-related circumstances, 27 percent, with the lowest being gang-related, at 3.1%. The low occurrence of gang activity may come from the strict definitions separating gang-related and drug-related homicides. Due to the overlap of drug activity and gang activity, if drugs were in any way involved,

the circumstance was categorized as a drug-related incident as opposed to gang-related; this may explain the low amount of gang-related homicides.

Summary of Non Victim-Precipitated Homicides

In general, non- VP homicide victims and offenders are likely to be African-American males. Regarding age, non-VP offenders are likely to be 25 years of age or younger, whereas victims are frequently found in the 26 and older age group. The data reveals that very few victims of non-VP homicides had a prior criminal record. However, a majority of victims did consume alcohol or drugs close to the time of the incident. When the victim and offender were either acquaintances or had known one another this was vastly over representative of non-VP homicide, 72.3 percent. Finally, over half (58.4 percent) of the circumstances surrounding the homicide were initiated by fight/argument/retaliation and resulted from a conflict involving drugs. In the next section, the results concerning victim-precipitated homicides will be discussed.

Descriptive Data of Victim-Precipitated Homicide

In the present study, victim-precipitated (VP) homicides accounted for 35 (18 percent) of the total homicides (n =194) in Youngstown, Ohio from 1977-2008. Since victim-precipitation is the focal point of this research, a detailed discussion is given on the demographic and situational variables related to VP homicide.

Similar to non victim-precipitated homicides, nonwhite males were overrepresented as homicide victims and offenders in the VP homicide sample. Both nonwhites and males consisted of 88.5 percent (n =31) of victims in the VP sample. Nonwhites account for 91.4 percent (n = 32) and males comprise 82.9 percent (n = 29) of

the offender VP population. The “25 and under” age group accounted for 50 percent (n = 17) of VP victims. What is interesting to note is the even split in the age group of victims in VP homicides. Similarly, offenders aged “25 and under” comprised 57.1 percent (n = 20) of the VP offender population. Once again, looking at the frequency distribution the concentration of victim-precipitated offenders lies between the ages of 18-22. These five years accounted for 50% (n = 17) of the total VP offender populations. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate these demographic findings.

Table 4
Demographic Characteristics of Victims in VP Homicide

Demographics		# of Victims	Percent
<u>Race</u>	Nonwhite	31	88.5
	White	4	11.5
<u>Gender</u>	Male	31	88.5
	Female	4	11.5
<u>Age</u>	25 and Under	17	50.0
	26 and Over	17	50.0

N = 35

Table 5
Demographic Characteristics of Offenders in VP Homicide

Demographics		# of Victims	Percent
<u>Race</u>	Nonwhite	32	91.4
	White	3	8.6
<u>Gender</u>	Male	29	82.9
	Female	6	17.1
<u>Age</u>	25 and Under	20	57.1
	26 and Over	15	42.9

N = 35

When it comes to situational factors both VP and non-VP homicides were nearly indistinguishable. A somewhat higher percentage of VP cases than non-VP cases reported a presence of alcohol or drugs in the victim's system close to the time of incident, 71.4 percent (n = 25) and 58.5 percent, respectively. With respect to the weapon used to inflict death, 97.1 percent (n = 34) of VP killings were committed with a non-contact weapon, compared to 88.7 percent in non-VP cases. More specifically, in the 34 non-contact weapon homicides, a firearm was the weapon of death. One notable distinction between non-VP and VP cases was with regard to whether or not the victim has a prior criminal record; the former indicates a small percentage, 17 percent while the latter reports a large proportion of victims with a prior criminal record, 42.8 percent (n = 15). Similar to non-VP homicides, VP homicides were predominately committed away from the victim's home, 66 percent compared to 68.6 percent, respectively. With regard to victim-offender relationship, a noticeable difference exists between non-VP and VP

homicides. A significantly higher percentage of non-stranger relationships were found in VP homicides, 91.4 percent (n = 32), compared to 72.3 percent in non-VP homicides.

The frequencies of these factors are shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Situational Factors in VP Homicides

Factors	# of Cases	Percent
<u>Alcohol/Drugs in Victim</u> Yes	25	71.4
	10	28.6
<u>Weapon Used</u> Non-Contact	34	97.1
	1	2.9
<u>Prior Criminal Record of Victim</u> Yes	15	42.8
	20	57.2
<u>Homicide Location</u> Home	24	31.4
	11	68.6
<u>Victim-Offender Relationship</u> Non-Stranger	32	91.4
	3	8.6

N = 35

With respect to the circumstances surrounding the homicide event, there are two situations which appear to influence a VP homicide: a fight, argument, retaliation or domestic situation. Just as in non-VP homicides, the most frequent situations which lead to a VP homicide were “fight/argument/retaliation”, 40 percent (n = 14) and “domestic” representing 25.7 percent (n = 9) of the VP sample. The frequency distribution regarding the situation surrounding VP homicides are illustrated below in Table 7.

Table 7
Circumstance in VP Homicide Cases

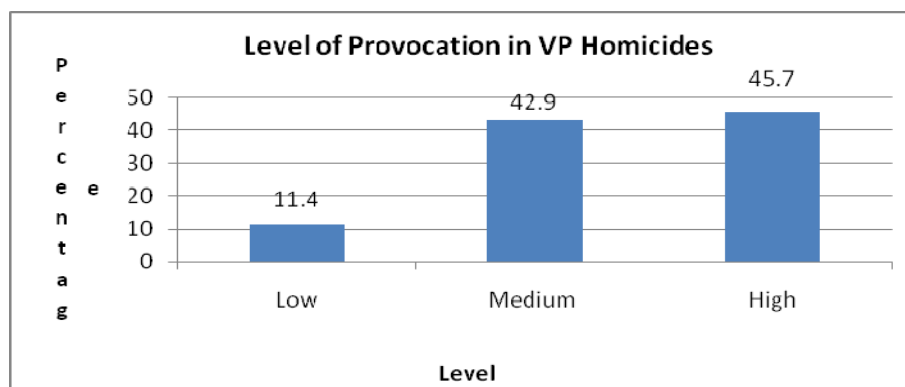
Circumstance	# of Cases	Percent
Attempted Robbery/Burglary	3	8.5
Domestic	9	25.7
Drug-Related	7	20.0
Gang-Related	2	5.7
Fight/Argument/Retaliation	14	40.0
Other	0	0.0

N = 35

Levels of Provocation in Victim-Precipitated Homicide

Levels of provocation by the victim were assigned in all 35 cases of VP homicide. Three levels were used: low-verbal threat, medium-physical assault, and high-show/use weapon. Medium and high levels of provocation by the victim were the most frequent, 42.9 percent (n = 15) and 45.7 percent (n = 16), respectively. The results are illustrated in chart 2.

Chart 2



Medium and high levels of provocation by the victim were found to exist at similar rates; however, low levels of provocation demonstrate a significantly lower rate of occurrence, 11.4 percent (n = 4).

An examination of the research hypotheses for this study follows using both descriptive statistics as well as binary logistic regression. Due to the limitations placed on certain variables, crosstabulations with chi-squares are utilized for comparative purposes.

Hypotheses

In this section, each independent hypothesis will be addressed, followed by a binary logistic regression to analyze the significant variables simultaneously, thus determining their affect upon victim-precipitated homicide.

H₁: Females, as opposed to males, are more likely to be the offenders in victim-precipitated homicides.

The data provided did not support this hypothesis. As discussed in the descriptive summary, females were the offenders in 17.1 percent of the VP cases compared to males who comprised 82.9 percent of the VP sample.

H₂: Victim-precipitated homicides, as opposed to non victim-precipitated homicides, are more likely to result from a domestic incident.

The findings indicate support for the hypothesis ($\chi^2 = .10$) indicating that homicides resulting from a domestic incident occur at a somewhat higher frequency in VP homicides compared to non-VP homicides; 25.7 percent and 14.5 percent,

respectively. However, as noted previously, the most frequent circumstance of both non-VP and VP homicides is “fight/argument/retaliation”.

H₃: Contact weapons will be used most often in victim-precipitated homicides rather than non-victim precipitated homicides.

The results show that VP homicides were overwhelming instigated by non-contact weapons; 97.1 percent of VP homicides occurred with a firearm as opposed to 2.9 percent with a knife.

H₄: Substance use by the victim will be found more often in victim-precipitated homicide than in non victim-precipitated homicide.

The data did not support this hypothesis, while substance use by the victim was slightly more prevalent in VP cases, 71.4 percent, compared to non-VP cases, 58.5 percent, a significant proportion of this relationship was due to chance, $\chi^2 = .156$.

H₅: When the victim has a prior criminal record it is more likely to be a victim-precipitated homicide than a non victim-precipitated homicide.

Strong support, $\chi^2 = .001$, was found for this hypothesis. As indicated in the descriptive statistics, victims of VP homicide had a prior criminal record in 42.8 percent of the cases compared to 17 percent of non-VP cases.

H₆: Both younger victims and offenders will be seen more often in victim-precipitated homicide than non victim-precipitated homicide.

To test such a hypothesis, a mean of the age of the victim and offender was calculated for both non-VP cases and VP cases. The results are indicated below in Table 8.

Table 8
Mean Age of Victim and Offender in Non-VP and VP Homicides

Type of Homicide	Victim Age	Offender Age
Non-VP	32.18	26.89
VP	30.66	28.14

The data show partial support for the proposed hypothesis. While younger offenders are found in non-VP homicides (26.89 years), younger victims are found in VP homicides (30.66 years).

H₇: Victim precipitated homicides are more likely to be intra-racial than interracial, when compared to non-victim precipitated homicides.

A crosstabulation, with an $x^2 = .522$, of victim race, offender race, and victim-precipitated homicide was conducted to determine support for the present hypothesis. The findings report that 14.3 percent (n = 23) of non-VP homicides were interracial compared to 14 percent (n = 5) of VP homicides; indicating virtually no difference with regard to race and homicide type.

H₈: A low degree of provocation by the victim will be present in victim-precipitated homicides when the offender is male as opposed to female.

A crosstabulation, with an $x^2 = .658$, was conducted to determine support for this hypothesis. Low levels of provocation were found in 11.4 percent (n = 4) of the 35 cases. The four cases of low provocation consisted of three male offenders and one female offender.

Gender Distribution of Level of Provocation in VP Homicides

Level of Provocation	Female Offender	Male Offender
Low	16.7%	10.3%
High	83.3%	89.7%

N = 35

The results indicate that no significant gender difference exists regarding the level of provocation by the victim necessary to invoke a deadly response by the offender.

H₉: In victim-precipitated homicides, a higher degree of provocation by the victim will be present in cases where the victim-offender relationship is stranger.

A crosstabulation between level of provocation and victim-offender relationship was calculated to seek support for the proposed hypothesis.

Relationship Distribution of Levels of Provocation among VP Homicides

Level of Provocation	Stranger Relationship	Non-Stranger Relationship
Low	0.0%	12.5%
High	100.0%	87.5%

N = 35

The findings show that for a victim-precipitated homicide to occur between strangers a high level of provocation is nearly certain to have lead to the event. However, the p-value revealed that the relationship between level of provocation and whether or not the victim and offender knew one another was not significance, $x^2 = .515$.

H₁₀: A higher degree of provocation by the victim will be found in victim-precipitated homicides where substance use is present in the victim.

This hypothesis is tested by looking at the descriptive statistics regarding levels of provocation and the presence or absence of alcohol or drugs.

Absence or Presence of Alcohol/Drugs in the Victim and Level of Provocation

Level of Provocation	Absence of Alcohol/Drugs	Presence of Alcohol/Drugs
Low	20.0%	8.0%
High	80.0%	92.0%

N = 35

As the data illustrates, there is no significance ($\chi^2 = .313$) regarding the level of provocation by the victim in relation to the presence of alcohol or drugs consumed close to the time of the incident.

Binary Logistic Regression

A binary logistic regression was utilized to determine the effect of the independent variables upon the dependent variable. This research sought to discover what demographic and situational factors influence the likelihood of victim-precipitated homicide while controlling for potential outside influences. Due to the dichotomous nature and uneven distribution of the dependent variable, a binary logistic regression was selected as the method of analysis.

Due to the sample size of this study (194 cases), only nine of the twelve variables were invited into the regression model for analysis. To determine which of the twelve would be selected, a correlation was conducted between all variables to discern the strength of each independent variable with the dependent variable. Two out of the twelve

variables were statistically significant: prior criminal record of the victim, at the .10 level, and the victim-offender relationship, at the .05 level. The two weakest associations, “weapon used to inflict death” (-.109) and “homicide location” (-.021) were eliminated from the model as well as, homicide circumstance (not a dichotomous variable) and level of provocation due to potential circular reasoning. The results of the binary logistic regression are illustrated below.

Table 9
Main Effects: Binary Logistic Regression

Dependent Variable: Whether or not a homicide is VP or Non-VP

Variables	Odds Ratio	Sig.
Control Variables		
Victim Race	1.616	.204
Victim Gender	.659	.417
Victim Age	.484	.487
Offender Race	.225	.636
Offender Gender	3.138	.076*
Offender Age	.179	.672
Independent Variables		
Victim Prior Criminal Record	11.323	.001**
Presence of Alcohol or Drugs	2.015	.156
Victim-Offender Relationship	5.701	.017**

Notes: Sig. = level of significance

* $p < .10$ level

** $p < .05$ level

The results indicate three variables that are statistically significant. The two independent variables, “victim prior criminal record” and “victim-offender relationship” were the most significant followed by “offender gender.” Surprisingly, only one demographic factor seemed to matter with respect to whether or not a homicide was VP or non-VP,

gender of the offender. With respect to the independent variables, two of them were telling. When the victim had a prior criminal record it was extremely likely that the homicide would have been victim-precipitated. Additionally, if the victim and offender were non-strangers it was also more likely to be a victim-precipitated homicide as opposed to a non victim-precipitated homicide.

In general, the model predicts that when a victim has a prior criminal record, the victim-offender relationship is non-stranger, and the offender is male, it is more likely that a victim-precipitated homicide than a non victim-precipitated homicide will occur, while controlling for all other variables.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Discussion

Victim-precipitated homicide was consistently studied throughout the late 1950s and into the early 1970s (Wolfgang, 1958; Voss & Hepburn, 1968; Block, 1975). However, little research has been conducted on the topic since then. This study sought to revive the literature on victim-precipitated homicide by determining its prevalence within a mid-size city in Northeastern Ohio. Ten hypotheses were analyzed regarding demographic and situational factors of non-VP and VP homicide, providing mixed results.

Summary of the Major Findings

This research employed a sample of 194 homicide cases that occurred in Youngstown, Ohio from 1977-2008. An overwhelming majority (82 percent, $n = 159$) of homicides were found to be non victim-precipitated; therefore, only 18 percent ($n = 35$) were victim-precipitated.

One of the most significant findings of this study was the prevalence of VP homicides in which the victim had a prior criminal record. The present study proposed that when the victim has a prior criminal record it was more likely to be victim-precipitated homicide than non victim-precipitated homicide; the data indicated support for this hypothesis. Victims with prior criminal records were overwhelmingly involved in victim-precipitated homicides compared to non victim-precipitated homicides. Furthermore, the “victim prior criminal record” variable was the strongest predictor of whether or not a homicide would be victim-precipitated.

Other significant findings were found in this study. For example, results show that victim-precipitated homicides, as opposed to non victim-precipitated homicides, tend to have younger victims; however, offenders in VP homicide are older than those of non-VP homicides, indicating partial support for H₆ which states that both younger victims and younger offenders will be seen more often in victim-precipitated homicides compared to non victim-precipitated homicides. With respect to the circumstances surrounding the homicide event, this study suggested that a domestic incident was likely to be the circumstance surrounding a majority of VP cases; however, both VP and non-VP cases indicated the most common situation leading up to a homicide was a fight, argument, or retaliation, followed by a domestic incident. Nevertheless, domestic incidents were somewhat more prevalent in VP cases than non-VP cases, indicating support for the H₂ which suggested that VP homicides were more likely to result from domestic incidents when compared to non-VP homicides.

Surprisingly, three of the conclusions in Wolfgang's Philadelphia study garnered no support in the present study. It was expected that females, as opposed to males, would be the majority of offenders in VP homicide; however, the results indicated that males were the perpetrators of VP homicide in nearly all cases. Additionally, contact weapons (i.e. knives) were projected to be the primary weapon used in VP homicides; once again, this hypothesis was not supported by the data. A non-contact weapon (i.e. firearm) was used in all but one of the VP homicides. This can be explained by the growth in the availability of guns within the United States. Overall, firearms were the weapon used in over 90 percent of homicides in Youngstown, Ohio. It was anticipated that, contrary to the conclusions of Wolfgang, VP homicides when compared to non-VP homicides, were

more likely to be intra-racial than interracial. The data indicated no support for this hypothesis; the frequency of interracial homicides was nearly identical in both non-VP and VP cases. Finally, there was no support found for the relationship between substance use and VP homicides. While substance use by the victim was slightly more common among victims of VP homicide than non-VP homicide, it was not a significant relationship. This is surprising considering the effects of alcohol, which can promote aggressive and provocative behavior and lower inhibitory controls (Katkin, et al., 1970).

With respect to the level of provocation by the victim, this study hypothesized that due to their aggressive nature, males, as opposed to females, would react to lower levels of provocation in VP cases. However, the data did not show support for this hypothesis. No gender difference existed between male and female offenders regarding the level of provocation needed to instigate a VP homicide. Due to the physiological effects of alcohol, this study proposed that higher levels of provocation would be present in VP homicides when substance use was present in the victim. The results were somewhat unexpected; it appears as though substance use by the victim is customary in both VP and non-VP homicide. When level of provocation by the victim and the victim-offender relationship was examined, the finding revealed no support for the hypothesis. This study proposed that a higher degree of provocation by the victim is present in VP homicides when the victim-offender had no prior relationship. The findings show that while a high level of provocation by the victim is nearly certain in stranger homicides, it is also quite common within non-stranger relationships.

While the data only shows strong support for one hypothesis, this research still offers insightful and valuable information concerning the similarities and differences in VP and non-VP homicides. Such contributions shall now be explored.

Contribution

Initially, the popularity of Wolfgang's study generated a plethora of research that tested victim-precipitation theory. However, Miethe (1985) noted that surprisingly, there was a sharp decline in the research on victim-precipitation in the early to mid 1980s. This sudden descent is surprising considering the influential role victim provocation plays within our legal system. According to Miethe (1985), the notion of victim contribution is still a major form of mitigation in disposition and legal processes. Williams (1976) concluded that victim-precipitation is a major predictor of the disposition of actual court cases. Also, provocation by the victim significantly influences jurors' attributions of responsibility for the criminal event (Scroggs, 1975). Due to the primarily punitive mindset of the public, often times plea-bargaining is misunderstood. It is often viewed as "getting away with murder" rather than a necessary and fair practice of the criminal justice system. Hopefully, by increasing the understanding of victim-precipitation and its mitigating effect on the legal processing of homicide offenders, this study may increase public confidence in the criminal justice system.

In addition to assisting with public confidence in the criminal justice system, this research expands upon the work of Wolfgang by including variables not initially tested in his original study. While Wolfgang did not find age of the victim or offender to be influential in his study, this research provided insight into the increasing problem of the

youthful victim population within VP homicide. Additionally, Wolfgang concluded that females were the primary offenders of VP homicide; this study found contrary results. Males were the offenders in over 90 percent of VP homicides. One important note regarding female offenders in VP homicide is that five out of the six (83.3 percent) were reacting to abuse from their spouse, mate, or common law husband. This distinguishing feature concerning female offenders may help explain why women receive less punitive sanctions for the killing of their counterparts than males (Baumer, Messner, and Felson, 2000).

Rather than relying on descriptive results alone, this study offers inferential statistics in order to determine the influential power of respective independent variables upon the dependent variable. Furthermore, by utilizing binary logistic regression, the present study was able to ascertain which demographic and situational variables could predict the likelihood of victim-precipitated homicide.

Expanding upon Mendelsohn's (1956) victim classification system, this study introduced varying levels of provocation found in VP homicide scenarios. By assigning a level of provocation, this research was able to provide further explanation of demographic and situational variations in VP homicides.

Limitations to the Study

There are several limitations to the present study. First, when working with police files there are some unavoidable methodological problems. One problem encountered by the researcher was the incompleteness of police files (Sobol, 1997; Wolfgang, 1958). As other studies have highlighted, police files can be fraught with

problems. There was some inconsistency from file to file and varying styles of reporting by law enforcement, as well as missing data (Sobol, 1997). For example, in some instances, conflicting testimonies were given by eye witnesses; this required the researcher to accept the details of the eye witness account that coincided with the final police report.

Discretion is inevitable when examining police files. However, to address this concern of research bias, abridgement files (summary sheets) were utilized to check for consistency between what was recorded by the researcher and what was previously recorded by law enforcement. In the present analysis, neither a classification of victim-precipitation nor level of provocation was assigned unless the information was complete and consistent (i.e. eye witness testimony). The files that consisted of conflicting or incomplete information were eliminated from the study.

Another limitation to the present study was the exclusion of socioeconomic factors from the sample. Many studies have indicated that poverty is a significant factor in homicide (Wilson, 1987; Hannon, 2005; Pridemore, 2011). It has been suggested that by reducing the concentration of poverty the homicide rate will inevitably decrease (Wilson, 1987; Hannon, 2005). While this research would have welcomed a measure of socioeconomic status, it is important to note that nearly all of Youngstown, Ohio exists within a perpetual state of economic deprivation. The median household income for Youngstown, Ohio in 2009 was \$25,175.00, compared to the state median, \$45,395.00 (<http://www.city-data.com/city/Youngstown-Ohio.html>, 2009). Furthermore, 35.7 percent of Youngstown residents are living in poverty; 25.4 percent for white residents and 45.8 percent for African American residents (

data.com/city/Youngstown-Ohio.html, 2009). Due to the uniformity of low income throughout Youngstown, Ohio, a measure of socioeconomic status was excluded.

One significant limitation to the present study is the rather low sample of victim-precipitated homicides. With only a limited amount of VP cases ($n = 35$), it is difficult to offer any definitive conclusions regarding the factors that influence the occurrence of victim-precipitated homicides as opposed to non victim-precipitated homicide.

Finally, the findings of this study may not be generalized with regard to all homicides across the United States, as the data is limited to a mid-size city. Yet, the results presented here showcase, if only modestly, the discriminate factors separating one homicide from another.

Recommendations for Future Research

The first recommendation for future research is for the researcher to obtain a more robust sample of victim-precipitated homicides. This would allow for more conclusive results concerning the factors that influence victim-precipitated homicide. Because of the uniform economic status of Youngstown, Ohio, a measure of socioeconomic status was excluded. Thus, it is suggested that future researchers obtain a sample from a more diversified population in order to include a measure of varying socioeconomic status.

The present research introduced a variable not initially tested by Wolfgang: level of provocation by the victim. This study attempted to demonstrate a significant relationship between the level of provocation and various measures of demographic and situational variables; however, only one of the three proposed hypotheses was supported. In order to determine if other variables not originally proposed in this study would affect

the level of provocation, a chi-square test was utilized. The results indicated that with regard to level of provocation by the victim, the homicide circumstance, such as gang-related, drug-related, attempted robbery/burglary, domestic, and fight/argument/retaliation and whether or not the victim had a prior criminal record were statistically significant. Due to these findings, it is proposed that further research be conducted utilizing the level of provocation as a dependent variable to determine its explanatory power across various demographic and situational characteristics.

Future research could also build upon these findings by exploring further the concept of provocation and its influence on the results of legal proceedings. The definition of provocation, utilized in this study, was restricted to the criteria established by Wolfgang. However, other academics and criminal justice practitioners, in future research may broaden the definition of provocation to include retaliatory acts committed after a reasonable “cooling off” period.

Final Thoughts

While victim-precipitated homicide was less prevalent than expected, research in this area should persevere. By continuing to research victim-precipitated homicide, law enforcement, victimologists and criminal justice practitioners can continue to enhance the understanding of factors which lead to homicide.

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APPENDIX A

Hypothesis 1: Both younger victims and younger offenders will be seen more often in victim-precipitated homicides than non victim-precipitated homicides.

Hypothesis 2: Females, as opposed to males, are more likely to be the offenders in victim-precipitated homicides compared to non victim-precipitated homicides.

Hypothesis 3: Victim-precipitated homicides are more likely to be intra-racial than interracial, when compared to non victim-precipitated homicides.

Hypothesis 4: Victim-precipitated homicides are more likely to result from a domestic incident rather than non-VP homicides.

Hypothesis 5: A lower degree of provocation by the victim will be present in victim-precipitated homicides as opposed to non victim-precipitated homicides when the offender is a young male.

Hypothesis 6: A higher degree of provocation by the victim will be found in cases where the victim-offender relationship is stranger and the homicide is one of victim-precipitation.

Hypothesis 7: Guns will be the weapon used most often in non victim-precipitated killings than victim-precipitated killings.

Hypothesis 8: Substance use will be found more often in victim-precipitated homicides than non-victim precipitated homicides.

Hypothesis 9: When the victim has a prior criminal record it is more likely to be a victim-precipitated homicide than non victim-precipitated homicide.

Hypothesis 10: A higher degree of provocation by the victim will be found in victim-precipitated homicides when substance abuse is present in the victim.

APPENDIX B*Binary Logistic Regression Model***Dependent Variable:**

(1) Victim Precipitated? Yes/No

Independent Variables:

(1) Victim Age

(2) Victim Gender

(3) Victim Race

(4) Victim Prior Criminal Record

(5) Location

(6) Weapon

(7) Alcohol / Drugs

(8) Offender Age

(9) Offender Race

(10) Offender Gender

(11) Victim/Offender Relationship

(12) Homicide Circumstance (Gang-related, Domestic, Drug-related, Fight/Argument, Other)

Regression Model

$$VP = VAge + VGen + VRace + PriCR + OAge + OGen + ORace + VO + AD$$

APPENDIX C

Youngstown
STATE UNIVERSITY

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June 26, 2011

Dr. Christopher Bellas, Principal Investigator
Ms. Racheal Pesta, Co-investigator
Department of Criminal Justice
UNIVERSITY

RE: IRB Protocol Number: 174-2011
Title: Factors that Influence Homicide Clearance

Dear Dr. Bellas and Ms. Pesta:

The Institutional Review Board of Youngstown State University has reviewed the aforementioned Protocol via expedited review, and it has been fully approved with the condition that the Investigator provide the Committee with a letter of support from the facility where the research will take place before she begins data collection.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB. Best wishes in the conduct of your study.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Kasvinsky
Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Research
Research Compliance Officer

c: Atty. Patricia Wagner, Chair
Department of Criminal Justice

www.yosu.edu 

APPENDIX D



JIMMY F. HUGHES
CHIEF OF POLICE



JAY WILLIAMS
MAYOR

YOUNGSTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT

116 WEST BOARDMAN STREET
YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO 44503
(330) 742-8921

To: YSU Human Subject Protection Institutional Review Board
From: Captain Rod Foley
Date: July 6, 2011

Institutional Review Board Members,

I have been informed of the student research project to be conducted by Racheal Pesta at the Youngstown Police Department. I understand the methodology procedures and agree that the project can be implemented at our facility. Please contact me [redacted] if I need to be reached for further questions.

Sincerely,

[redacted signature area]

Rod Foley
Captain

[redacted signature area]