

**An Eye for an Eye: Examining Public Support for Vigilante Behaviour**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the relationship between actor ethnicity and public support for vigilante behaviour. The study considered how actor ethnicity could influence participants' empathy for and blame towards a vigilante's victim, as well as the outrage towards and desire to punish a vigilante.

The predominate theory guiding the project was Haas' (2010) situational hypothesis, in addition to concepts such as in-group favouritism, stereotypes, sympathy perspective, and racial threat theory. This project considered whether such theories – which have been used to explain perceptions of crime – were applicable to the distinctive situation of vigilantism.

To examine this topic, two vignettes were constructed – one describing a precipitating crime and one outlining the vigilante response. Excluding the manipulation of vigilante and victim ethnicity, the content of these vignettes remained identical. To gauge participants' response, a questionnaire was developed to measure: support for vigilantism in general, responses to the precipitating crime and vigilante response, right-wing authoritarianism, and participant demographics. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling via university lectures and tutorials, as well as social media accounts. The anonymous, online survey was completed by a total of 126 participants. Various quantitative techniques were used to analyse the data collected; including, Pearson's correlation, independent samples t-test, one way ANOVA, two way ANOVA.

The results indicated moderate support for vigilantism as a general concept. In terms of the specific vignettes, it was found that the victim and offender of the precipitating crime were perceived differently to those within the vigilante scenario. In particular, participants prescribed less empathy and more blame towards the vigilante's victim than they did the precipitating victim. Furthermore, in comparison to the precipitating offender, respondents exhibited less outrage towards the vigilante and a lesser desire to punish them. With regards to actor ethnicity, the study found that the ethnicity of the vigilante's victim did not influence participant responses, nor did it significantly interact with vigilante ethnicity. The research identified one statistically significant finding related to the vigilante's ethnicity – participants expressed a significantly greater desire to punish the vigilante when they were portrayed as being 'light skinned' as opposed to 'dark skinned'.

This thesis focused on a topic that had not been considered by prior research and consequently began the process of addressing a gap present within the literature. The findings seem to suggest that the current theories surrounding ethnicity and perceptions of crime may not be applicable to the unique circumstances of vigilantism. Further research is required before a well-supported conclusion can be reached.

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### **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date:

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### **Ethics Approval**

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.0 Overview**

If one were to conduct an analysis of mass media content over the past twenty years, they would identify an increase in media representations of vigilante activity (Kort-Butler, 2012; Phillips & Strobl, 2006). Examples of this can be seen in the re-emerging popularity of graphic novel-related material – including live-action and animated movies, video games, television programmes, and the ‘re-booting’ of older comic-book characters and universes. The revenue and audience numbers achieved by this content is indicative of its success, popularity and positive reception (Phillips & Strobl, 2006; Weinman, 2016; Yueh, 2014). Given that members of the public use the media to inform their criminal justice knowledge, these representations may have far-reaching consequences (Gregoriou, 2012). Of particular important is its relevance for both attitudes and behaviours towards this phenomenon. For instance, if people perceive vigilantism as being acceptable, they may be less likely to report such behaviour, co-operate with police investigations, find vigilantes guilty, and administer punishments (Gregoriou, 2012; Phillips & Strobl, 2006). Based upon these concerns, it is important to examine public perceptions towards vigilantism and the factors that influence these perceptions. The thesis the follows focuses on one specific variable which could affect such attitudes – the ethnicities of the actors involved within vigilante scenarios (both the victim and offender).

### **1.1 Ethnicity & Vigilantism**

As the fourth chapter will demonstrate, the concepts of vigilantism and ethnicity are linked both historically and presently (Jacobs, Carmichael, & Kent, 2005). Vigilantism has been employed by both individuals and groups to perpetuate social inequalities, however, it is rarely recognised as being discriminatory. In fact, several vigilantes have been positively received by the public. For example, when Bernard Geotze shot four unarmed African American gentlemen, some individuals praised his actions and positively received his vigilante behaviour (Carlson, 2016).

While previous research has examined perceptions of crime and the influence of actor ethnicity, there are reasons to believe that these findings may not applicable to the situation of vigilantism. Specifically, the motives associated with vigilantism are often presented as being noble or honourable (Haas, 2010). Vigilantes are typically presumed to

be acting in response to situations in which offenders have ‘escaped the justice system’ (Dumsday, 2009; Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). This stands in contrast to ‘typical’ offenders who are viewed as engaging in criminal activity for personal gain or simply to enact aggressive impulses (Haegerich, Salerno, & Bottoms, 2012; Smalarz, Madon, Yang, Guyll, & Buck, 2016; Welch, 2007). This key difference in motivations could potentially interact with the influence of actor ethnicity in the scenario of vigilantism.

## **1.2 Topic and Purpose of the Research**

The current study represents the first known attempt to examine the relationship between actor ethnicity and public support for vigilante behaviour. The purpose of this project is to answer the following three questions: “Does offender ethnicity influence public support for vigilante behaviour?”; “Does victim ethnicity influence public support for vigilante behaviour?” and “In regards to public support for vigilante behaviour, is there an interaction between offender and victim ethnicity?” To answer these questions, the study employs a quantitative research approach. Specifically, a 2x2 between-subjects experimental design. Using instruments constructed by Haas (2010), over 120 individuals were surveyed to examine whether public responses to a vigilante scenario were influenced by the ethnicity of the vigilante and their victim, both separately and together. The methodology used enabled the researchers to identify whether such a relationship exists, and if so, its strength and directionality.

## **1.3 Personal Rationale**

My personal interest in vigilantism stems from my long-standing consumption of graphic novels and their related content. In my youth, I found myself drawn to characters such as Bruce Wayne, Frank Castle, and Jason Todd. These individuals performed extremely violent offences, yet did so under the pretence of doing this for ‘the greater good’. The behaviour of these characters, however, remained in the realm of fantasy as their actions were typically dramatized and deliberately exaggerated. As I moved through my undergraduate studies in Criminology, I became curious about the relationship between the public and the police. In particular, how the public respond to inefficient policing. In reviewing this topic, I came into contact once again with the concept of vigilantism, but within an academic setting. I was now able to examine the real-world instances of what I had previously understood to be purely fictional behaviour.

#### **1.4 Significance of Research**

As previously mentioned, the current project represents the first attempt to examine the relationship between actor ethnicity and support for vigilantism. Given that both historical and present-day discriminatory behaviour has been justified via vigilante motives, this topic arguably requires urgent attention. Hence, this research is addressing a significant gap within the literature, and is helping to further build upon the available knowledge in this particular area.

Furthermore, an examination of support for such behaviour is necessary given the plethora of practical implications. Public support for criminal behaviours can have significant consequences for the actions surrounding such events. For example, public perceptions will influence the likelihood of reporting vigilantism, co-operation with police investigations, and jury decisions in such cases. Public support also arguably influences other areas; in particular, media representations of such actions and police responses to these incidents. Given the theoretical and practical implications of the project, the significance of the research is demonstrated.

#### **1.5 Scope of the Research**

The broader scope of this project is to examine the influence of vigilante and victim ethnicity upon public support for vigilante behaviour. However, as a result of the methodologies used, there are a number of limitations to this scope. Firstly, while the study was available on an international level, the majority of the participants did currently reside within New Zealand – meaning that the findings of this research are most applicable to this population. Secondly, the methodology was limited to using visual representations of ethnicity and focused on comparing Caucasians and African Americans; thus, the results of the study are only applicable to these two ethnic groups. Thirdly, only one vigilante incident (minor physical assault) was examined in the current project, making the results most relevant to this form of vigilantism. The findings of the current project will not extend to the more violent incidents that are often depicted by the mass media. Lastly, it is acknowledged that the current study is influenced by particular theoretical and conceptual frameworks regarding crime and ethnicity. Hence, it is recognised that this examination is not exhaustive and that there are other perspectives that can be used to explore this topic.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

The work that follows is broken down into a total of seven chapters. Chapter one has given a brief context to provide the reader with a broad understanding of what is to follow.

Chapters Two, Three and Four constitute the literature review of this thesis – these sections focus on providing a background into the topics of vigilantism, ethnicity and perceptions of crime, and the interception of ethnicity and vigilantism, respectively. This review identifies a number of gaps within the prior literature which the current study intends to address.

Chapter Five presents the reader with the methodology of the research; including the sample, research design, instruments, and the procedure that was used. Following on from the methodology, Chapter Six outlines the various results of this study. Finally, Chapter Seven provides an interpretation of these results, a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications, the strengths and limitations of this project, and possible directions for future studies.



## **Chapter Two: Vigilantism**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The current study attempts to examine the relationship between actor ethnicity and support for vigilante behaviour. To design and execute this project, it was necessary to conduct a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. The following three chapters present the findings of this review. They focus on the topics of vigilantism, actor ethnicity and perceptions of crime, and the relationship between vigilantism and ethnicity. Each chapter will explain core theories, outline the findings of previous research, and highlight the methodological strengths and weaknesses of these reports. The overall intention is to establish what is currently known in relation to the topic of interest and demonstrate how this thesis intends to contribute to the knowledge presently available.

The first part of the literature review centres on vigilantism. The four sections that follow will discuss the definition of vigilantism, the characteristics of vigilantes and their victims, the causes/motives of vigilante behaviour, and support for vigilante activity. Reference to historical vigilantism was not seen as particularly appropriate for this chapter. Instead, a description of this will be provided in Chapter Four where it is arguably most applicable.

### **2.1 Definitions of Vigilantism**

Prior to studying a topic, researchers attempt to form a comprehensive theoretical definition of the construct they wish to examine (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). A well-formed theoretical definition then assists researchers in developing a valid and reliable operational definition (McIntyre, 2005). With regards to vigilantism, there is disagreement within the literature as to how this concept should be defined (Haas, 2010). This debate extends to several aspects of the behaviour; including the legality of vigilantism, who can engage in such offences, who may become a victim of vigilante activity, and the motivations behind these behaviours (Haas, 2010). This discrepancy in definition creates problems of validity when attempting to compare the results of these various studies. Consequently, the comparisons that later follow should be interpreted with caution.

To further complicate the situation, the literature also includes a number of authors who did not provide any definition of vigilantism (Heald, 2006; Neapolitan, 1987; Schadt & DeLisi, 2007; Scully & Moorman, 2014). These articles did not offer any explanation as

to why a definition was absent. This seems to suggest that these researchers have falsely presumed that a common understanding of vigilantism exists. As the following paragraphs will illustrate, this is not the case.

Of those papers that did provide a definition, several authors made reference to Johnston's (1996) article 'What is vigilantism?' Within this reading, Johnston (1996) proposes that vigilantism could be defined as the planned (threatened) use of force/violence committed by private, autonomous citizens as a reaction to (perceived) deviance; performed with the intention of assuring personal and/or collective security. Johnston's (1996) work then goes on to outline and describe each of these six factors; providing a detailed discussion as to why each aspect must be present if an act is to be labelled as vigilantism.

With the exception of Johnston (1996), very few authors have attempted to provide and justify such a comprehensive description. Furthermore, while there was some disagreement pertaining to specific components, Johnston's (1996) definition was referenced to in many studies. Consequently, this thesis will employ the definition constructed by Johnston (1996); however, it is acknowledged that this is not necessarily exhaustive. Arguably, a more extensive and detailed explanation goes beyond the scope of this project. The following paragraphs provide a more in-depth discussion regarding the six components of Johnston's (1996) definition and acknowledge the opposing arguments that have been presented by other authors.

The first core feature of vigilante activity is the element of planning (Johnston, 1996). The vast majority of research agrees that, to be classified as vigilantism, an act must incorporate some form of planning, premeditation, and/or organisation (Dumsday, 2009; Haas, de Keijser, & Bruinsma, 2012, 2014; Johnston, 1996; Miller, 2013; Swanepoel, Duvenhage, & Coetzee, 2011). The amount of planning can vary, so long as some form of preparatory activity is involved. Johnston (1996) states that even 'spontaneous' vigilantism includes some form of preparation. Vigilantism requires members of the public to go beyond the act of a 'citizen's arrest' and to also punish the (perceived) offender. This decision to administer a punishment – while it can be made quickly – can still be considered a form of preparation. It is important to note that cases of self-defence are not classified as vigilante acts (Johnston, 1996); in such scenarios, individuals are instantaneously reacting to the (threatened) use of violence. However, it is possible for a self-defence situation to develop into a case of vigilante behaviour. For example, if the person chooses to continually assault

the precipitating offender despite their threat having been ceased, this could be considered a punishment and a form of vigilante activity (Haas, 2010).

The second feature proposed by Johnston (1996) is that vigilantism can only be carried out by private and autonomous citizens (Haas et al., 2012, 2014; Johnston, 1996; Miller, 2013; Swanepoel et al., 2011). Meaning that vigilante acts can only be performed by individuals who are not agents of the state, regime, or public institutions. Johnston (1996) argues that even when ‘off-duty’, agents of the state cannot be classified as vigilantes as they remain endowed with powers given to them by the state. As an example, Johnston (1996) suggested that members of the military or police forces cannot engage in vigilante activities.

This second aspect of Johnston’s (1996) definition has been contested by some researchers (Dumsday, 2009; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). Dumsday (2009) proposes that agents of the state can participate in vigilantism, so long as the individual acts anonymously and their actions are not performed at the request of the state. For example, a police officer while off-duty could perform vigilante actions so long as this behaviour is not willingly accountable to the state. In comparison, Rosenbaum & Sederberg (1974) suggest that political regimes may employ the services of vigilante groups to assist in social control. While this relationship may not be publicly expressed, it can still exist. The use of vigilante groups by political regimes has been documented in a number of studies (Baker, 2002; Buur & Jensen, 2004; Martin, 2012; Smith, 2004). For the purposes of this thesis, the literature review will include research that expands upon Johnston’s (1996) definition to include agents of the state.

The third element of vigilantism pertains to the (threatened) use of force and/or violence. The majority of the literature agrees that to be classified as vigilantism, an act must incorporate the actual or threatened use of physical violence (Dumsday, 2009; Johnston, 1996; Miller, 2013; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974; Swanepoel et al., 2011). This can include a wide range of behaviours; such as the use of verbal threats or intimidation, the destruction of property, and physical assault.

The fourth attribute proposes that vigilantism is a response to (perceived) deviance. The majority of researchers agree that vigilantism occurs as a reaction to a perceived or actual transgression of institutional norms (Johnston, 1996; Haas et al., 2012, 2014; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). These reactions can be divided into two types: ‘social control’ and ‘crime control’. Social control vigilantism is concerned with the maintenance of communal,

sectarian, or ethnic order and values; whereas crime control vigilantism is a response to an actual or perceived violation of a legal code (Johnston, 1996).

In relation to this, the fifth element of vigilantism considers its intentions. Johnston (1996) proposes that the aim of vigilante behaviour is to assure citizens that the established system of order will prevail (Miller, 2013; Swanepoel et al., 2011). This reassurance may only impact the vigilante themselves and reaffirm their personal security, or it may extend to other members of the local community to enhance the sense of collective security (Johnston, 1996). It is Johnston's (1996) fourth and fifth attributes that are crucial in distinguishing vigilantism from other forms of criminal activity. While the actions involved in vigilantism are criminal offences (*exempli gratia*: destruction of property, physical assault, homicide), it is the context in which this behaviour occurs that sets it apart from other illegal activities (Haas, 2010). Most offenders do not act in response to a precipitating deviance, nor are they motivated by ensuring personal or collective security. Instead, they are often depicted as acting out of self-interest and personal gain (Sutherland et al., 2015).

A small number of authors have expanded upon Johnston's (1996) description of vigilante motives. Dumsday (2009) suggests that vigilantism is a response to a violation of norms that the vigilante sees as being just or for the good of society. It is not necessary that the defended system of values be supported by many. Instead, vigilantes can defend norms that are unique to them – so long as “the value being defended must be one that an ideally rational agent would regard as at least arguably worth defending” (Dumsday, 2009, p.56). Furthermore, Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1974) argue that vigilantism does not have to focus on defending the established system. It is suggested that vigilante actions can be targeted towards the current state when the regime is viewed as being ineffective. This form of vigilantism attempts to remove the current state and replace it with a more efficient system.

This section of the literature review has focused on providing a comprehensive definition of vigilantism. As demonstrated, while some authors have attempted to provide a definition, there is considerable disagreement regarding the various components of vigilantism (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). While the methodology of this project adheres to Johnston's (1996) description, the literature review will include those papers that have employed differing definitions. This is due to the limited availability of relevant resources

## **2.2 Characteristics of Vigilantes**

Having established a definition of vigilantism, it is now necessary to consider what factors may influence public support for this behaviour. As vigilantism literature is limited, this review employed knowledge from the broader topic of perceptions of crime in general. This area has been more thoroughly researched and the conclusions more firmly supported (Taylor, Holleran, & Topalli, 2009; Warr, 1989; Williams, Demuth, & Holcomb, 2007).

After reviewing several studies, variables were identified that could potentially influence perceptions of vigilante actions. One of the most prominent themes in the literature was the notion that the characteristics of both the offender and the victim can impact how an offence is perceived (Romain & Freiburger, 2012; Schissel, 1993; Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2000, 2006; Williams et al., 2007).

This particular section will focus describing what is currently known about the characteristics of vigilantes. This review could only identify three articles which have attempted to discuss the characteristics of vigilantes in some detail. As it will be shown, this research is severely limited by its methodological flaws and the differing focal points of each study. Consequently, any conclusions drawn from this section are tentative and should be considered preliminary.

In 1984, Shotland and Goldstein presented a paper in which they discussed the role of bystanders in crime control. Within this article, they considered the differing types of bystander intervention and various models outlining how bystanders may control/prevent crime. Of particular interest to this review is the section focusing on what was labelled as 'spontaneous vigilantism'. Shotland and Goldstein (1984) proposed that four characteristics influence a third party's (not the victim) decision to engage in vigilante behaviour. Firstly, an individual is more likely to perform spontaneous vigilante actions if they strongly identify with the precipitating crime victim (Shotland & Goldstein, 1984). In particular, if individuals recognise that they themselves could have been the target of the original crime, they are more likely to intervene. Secondly, bystanders are more likely to engage in vigilantism if they perceive the original crime as being particularly threatening to the local community's standards and values (Shotland & Goldstein, 1984). Third, to participate in spontaneous vigilantism, individuals must be certain about both the nature of the crime and the identity of the offender (Shotland & Goldstein, 1984). These details may not actually be correct, but it is only necessary that the individual perceive them to be accurate. Fourth, bystanders are

more likely to engage in vigilantism if they have been regularly exposed to criminal activity and are frustrated by its presence (Shotland & Goldstein, 1984). These features are proposed to influence a person's decision to engage in 'spontaneous vigilantism'; id est. immediately react to a crime that was taking place or had just occurred.

Shotland and Goldstein's (1984) article outlined four aspects that are theorised to influence the decision to engage in vigilante behaviour – however, these are not stable characteristics of a person. Arguably, this article does not discuss who is most likely to engage in vigilantism, but which situations more likely to encourage vigilante response. It is further limited by its application to 'spontaneous vigilantism', as opposed to vigilantism in general (Shotland & Goldstein, 1984). Spontaneous vigilantism is the decision to punish the offender immediately after they have attempted or committed a precipitating crime (Shotland & Goldstein, 1984). This paper does not extend to those who dedicate considerable time to planning their vigilante action. In addition, it should be mentioned that Shotland and Goldstein (1984) do not provide any information regarding the original data set that these theories are based upon. Without this knowledge, the validity of this model is strongly questioned. These aspects should be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions based upon this paper.

A more in-depth article was published by Weisburd (1988). Weisburd (1988) visited 22 Jewish settlements. These areas experienced vigilante violence during the Gush Emunim movement, in which a right-wing activist group attempted to establish Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights (Weisburd, 1988). Over 500 self-administered surveys and 60 in-depth, open-ended interviews were completed. From this data set, Weisburd (1988) identified five characteristics related to the likelihood of participating in vigilante activity – leader position, gender, immigration status, previous victimisation, and support for vigilantism. Firstly, the study found that individuals who occupied a leader position were more likely to participate in vigilante behaviour (Weisburd, 1988). This finding is to be expected given the potential consequences of vigilantism, as well as its intended function of re-assuring the collective security of the community (Weisburd, 1988). The second aspect highlighted by the research was actor gender. It was found that males were more likely than females to participate in vigilante action (Weisburd, 1988). This could possibly be explained by the notion that vigilantism involved paramilitary operations which were viewed as predominately a male task. It could also be related to gender norms and

expectations regarding male and female behaviour (Weisburd, 1988). The third feature identified by Weisburd (1988) was immigration status. From the sample examined, immigrants were more likely to engage in vigilante behaviour. It was theorised that these individuals were particularly vested in the community as they had already made the decision to come to Israel at such a time. The fourth characteristic of vigilantes was previous victimisation (Weisburd, 1988). Individuals who had experienced prior personal victimisation were more likely to participate in vigilantism (Weisburd, 1988). The notion was that past victimisation creates a personal interest in the vigilante activity. The fifth and final attribution was support for vigilantism (Weisburd, 1988). As to be expected, participants were more likely to engage in vigilante behaviour if they expressed strong agreement with the perspective that settlers should act independently in response to 'Arab harassments' (Weisburd, 1988).

In comparison to Shotland and Goldstein's (1984) article, the features in Weisburd's (1988) paper are predominately stable characteristics of the individuals. However, these findings are also limited to the rather extreme context of Jewish settlements within Israel. Further research should be conducted to see if these variables still continue to have an influence outside of this setting. Furthermore, the results of this study are based upon self-reported data. This can prove to be both advantageous and a hindrance (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). On the one hand, talking to those who had direct experience with vigilantism can arguably provide more valid and reliable data –vigilantes should know their own behaviour. On the other hand, studies have shown that individuals employ deception in both self-report surveys and interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). This deceit is thought to be based around the need to appear socially desirable. For example, some participants may have stated that they had engaged in vigilantism to appear 'masculine' or 'brave', while others may have conceal their participation out of fear of retribution or prosecution. Despite these limitations, this project provides some foundational information that could be useful for future research.

The third article chose to examine vigilantism on a broader level. Kowalewski (1996) proposed a model outlining various attributes of countermovement vigilantism. One aspect of this model was to describe four main characteristics of those who belong to vigilante organisations. Firstly, it was suggested that vigilante groups possess a disproportionately high number of religious extremists, alcoholics, drug abusers, and criminals (Kowalewski,

1996). This is based upon the notion that vigilantism is an unconventional behaviour that is likely to attract ‘unconventional’ and socially marginalised individuals (Kowalewski, 1996). Secondly, Kowalewski (1996) proposed that vigilantes typically exhibit authoritarian personality characteristics. For example, such individuals are often aggressive, tough-minded, rigid, sadomasochists, and engage in black-white thinking (Kowalewski, 1996). Third, vigilantes are poorly trained and supervised for their roles – this would be expected given the illegal nature of their behaviour (Kowalewski, 1996). As a result, such individuals are not taught to appropriately react to deviance and this could explain the violence that is typically associated with vigilantism (Kowalewski, 1996). Fourth, Kowalewski (1996) suggests that a large number of vigilantes are forcibly recruited. In order to acquire large vigilante groups to counter dissents, the rights of citizens are violated during the recruitment process. Kowalewski (1996) did acknowledge that this model was not based upon adequate empirical evidence and required future testing.

Kowalewski’s (1996) archetype appears to focus on vigilantism as a group activity and the characteristics of those who are members of these groups. Consequently, this model may not necessarily be applicable to those who engage in vigilantism on an individual basis. Another criticism of this article is the arguable ‘vagueness’ of some of the conditions. It could be suggested that some of the aspects outlined by Kowalewski (1996) are broad statements. For example, the notion that vigilantes are often poorly trained and supervised within their roles. This is not a distinguishing feature of vigilantes – most members of the public would fall into this category. Very few individuals outside of state officials are trained to appropriately react to deviance. Furthermore, as previously stated, it is necessary to gather empirical evidence to determine whether this model is supported.

It is important to identify the limitations that are present within all studies which examine vigilantes – not only those that are present within the reviewed articles. These restrictions are a result of the nature of vigilantism, and while future projects may attempt to minimise these, they cannot be entirely controlled for. A core feature of vigilantism is that this behaviour entails criminal offending (Haas, 2010). Vigilantes often commit crimes such as assault, vandalism, destruction of property, and even homicide (Haas, 2010). Due to the illegal status of these behaviours, people are understandably more hesitant to disclose their participation in such activities (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; McIntyre, 2005). Individuals may fear potential retribution for past offences, or perhaps choose not to reveal this behaviour



as a result of the social desirability bias (McIntyre, 2005). Another aspect of vigilantism which may make it difficult to research is the motives of the offender. As previously explained, the intentions of the offender distinguish vigilantism from other forms of criminal activity (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). However, unless explicitly stated by the person of interest, it can be difficult to establish the motivation behind an offence. It is likely that many vigilantes go unidentified as these persons did not indicate that their crime was a response to a precipitating offence. A final factor to be considered is the difficulty of researching group behaviours. While vigilantism can be committed by single individuals, several studies have shown that this behaviour is most frequently a group activity (Kowalewski, 1982, 1996; Pedahzur & Perliger, 2007; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). As a result, it is often difficult to identify all of those who participate. Even though researchers can examine who has been caught, there is still a considerable number of persons who go unrecognised and whose characteristics go unacknowledged. These are three of the most significant challenges that studies have and will continue to face when investigating vigilantes.

As it has been shown, the literature examining the characteristics of vigilantes is very limited. The previous studies have typically employed a narrow focus and their reliability and validity have yet to be tested. Consequently, the conclusions that can be made at this stage are tentative and very few. This topic requires further consideration as vigilantes are often stand in direct opposition to the state and have been shown to garner considerable public support (Adinkrah, 2005; Baker, 2002; Buur & Jensen, 2004; Dumsday, 2009; Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2014). This information is important as it has both practical and theoretical implications. Having a comprehensive understanding vigilantes can assist with criminal profiling/offender apprehension, crime prevention, and understanding how such persons are perceived by the public, police, and criminal justice system in general. While the current thesis does not examine the characteristics of vigilante directly, it does consider how these features may influence public perceptions of such behaviour. An improved understanding in this area will allow future researchers to design their studies based on what is known about vigilantes. This should hopefully lead to more in-depth and useful results.

### **2.3 Characteristics of Vigilantes' Victims**

Similar to vigilantes themselves, the literature surrounding their victims remains sparse and lacks cohesion. Only one paper could be located that dedicated considerable space to the discussion of vigilante victims (Adinkrah, 2005). Several articles often provided a 'passing

mention' of victims; however, the decision was made not to use these works as their descriptions were far too brief and typically centred on one or two specific victims (Ayyildiz, 1995; Kowalewski, 1982, 1996; Martin, 2012; Omach, 2010; Yanay, 1993). Consequently, very little is known regarding the characteristics of those who become the victims of vigilantes in modern society.

Adinkrah (2005) conducted an examination of newspaper articles describing instances of vigilante homicide in Ghana, Africa between 1990 and 2000. From this sample of articles, the researcher noted that individuals with particular demographic characteristics were disproportionality represented. The first characteristic of interest was gender. From the sample, the vast majority of victims were identified as being male. (Adinkrah, 2005) The newspapers provided limited information regarding victims' ages – but from the data that was available, it appeared as though victims were typically between 25 and 60 years of age (Adinkrah, 2005). Similarly, the data regarding the socio-economic status of the victims was also restricted. Often the victims were simply 'unidentified'. Of those who were recognised, the majority were described as being “unemployed, menially employed, and poor” (Adinkrah, 2005, p.417).

This study possessed a number of limitations. The use of newspaper articles by Adinkrah (2005) is a limited methodology. Firstly, it relies upon the newspapers reporting the incidents. There are likely more instances of vigilantism homicide than are reported in the newspaper, but the decision is made not to report on all cases (Adinkrah, 2005). Secondly, the information included in these articles is potentially biased. This will depend upon the political agenda of the paper, as well as the author's intention to represent the victim as 'innocent' or 'deserving'. As noted by Adinkrah (2005), the articles often made reference to the criminal background or history of the victim – so as to justify the vigilante's behaviour towards them. In addition, the conclusions drawn were very vague. Several individuals will fall into the category of being a male of low socio-economic status between the ages of 25 and 60. The usefulness of this knowledge is debatable. Thus, conclusions from this article should be viewed with caution and comparisons made with future studies to confirm whether they are supported.

As with studying offenders, there are also aspects which make the examination of vigilante victims difficult. Firstly, victims of vigilantism are either actual or perceived

offenders themselves. Such individuals may be unwilling to disclose their victimisation as it could potentially result in prosecution for their previous offence. Secondly, some people may not recognise that they are victims of vigilantism. That is, they believe that they are simply a victim of ‘normal’ criminal offending. Without being able to correctly label themselves, they cannot confer their status to researchers.

This section has reviewed the available literature that has discussed the characteristics of vigilantes’ victims. As it has been shown, there is very limited information available. One theme was the notion that victims of vigilantes are typically persons who hold low status positions within society. This may be because these individuals are easier to assault and the consequences for doing so are less serious than if the person was of higher status (Adinkrah, 2005). Due to the limited amounts of literature, this conclusion should be viewed tentatively and significantly more research is required in this area to determine whether these notions are supported by empirical evidence. In particular, research should make attempts to directly contact victims of vigilantes so as to gain a better and more direct understanding of this phenomenon.

## **2.4 Motives/Causes of Vigilante Behaviour**

The next area of interest is the motives behind vigilante behaviour. This particular section focuses on the causes of vigilantism and the reasons why individuals decide to engage in this activity. Given that the motives of vigilantes differ from those of ‘typical’ offenders, this is an important aspect to consider. Specifically, vigilantes are often portrayed in the media as having ‘noble intentions’, which may explain why these persons often garner public support (Haas, 2010; Haas et al. 2014). For example, vigilantes are often presented as assaulting individuals who commit particularly violent and/or sexual crimes – exempli gratia child molesters (Adinkrah, 2005; Haas, 2010). As this chapter will demonstrate, however, the motives of vigilantes vary considerably and these differences may affect perceptions of such crimes. In the paragraphs that follow, three posited motives for vigilante behaviour will be discussed.

In 1974, Rosenbaum and Sederberg published a paper in which they divided vigilantism into three typologies – crime control, social group control, and regime control. Each form of vigilantism is described as having a specific set of motivations. Although limited, there is some literature available which provides support for this model (Adinkrah,

2005; Haas, 2010; Pedahzur & Perliger, 2003). The majority of articles have focused solely on the concept of crime control vigilantism as this appears to match the common understanding of vigilante behaviour (Haas, 2010). As the name suggests, ‘crime control’ vigilantism refers to behaviours that target individuals who are believed to have violated the formal legal code (Pedahzur & Perliger, 2003; Rosenbaum & Sedeberg, 1974). The motive behind this behaviour is to ‘deliver justice’ and punish the (perceived) offender for their precipitating crime. This acts as a way of rectifying the injustice done to the precipitating victim, as well as discouraging other potential offenders and assuring the collective security (Johnston, 1996; Rosenbaum & Sedeberg, 1974). In this scenario vigilantism can be seen as a way to fulfil the ‘just-world hypothesis’ (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014). This refers to the belief that the world is a fair place in which individuals receive treatment that is appropriate for how they behave (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014). In reference to offending, victims deserve compensation and offenders deserve to be punished (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014).

A further aspect that motivates crime control vigilantes is disillusionment with the state’s ability to enforce legal codes. Within these situations, state and law enforcement groups are perceived to be inefficient, corrupt, or lenient towards criminals (Adinkrah, 2005; Baker, 2002; Heald, 2006; Martin, 2012; Omach, 2010; Tankebe, 2011). This specific motivation for vigilante behaviour is the most frequently discussed amongst the literature (Johnston, 1996; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). Furthermore, this theory is supported by empirical evidence. Numerous studies have repeatedly found that vigilantism is often the result of perceived or actual state ineffectiveness (Baker, 2002; Buur & Jensen, 2004; Haas, 2010; Martin, 2012; Pedahzur & Perliger, 2003; Smith, 2004; Swanepoel et al., Weisburd, 1988).

In 2002, Baker suggested that this motivation for vigilantism could be viewed in terms of anomie (strain) theory. The concept of anomie, developed by Emile Durkheim in 1893, refers to a situation in which social norms have broken down and they no longer control the activity of individuals (Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 2007; Williams & McShane, 2010). In 1939, Robert Merton further developed and redefined this concept. Specifically, Merton proposed that societal norms – in the form of societal goals and the acceptable means for achieving them – cause anomie (Lilly, et al., 2007; Merton, 1939; Williams & McShane, 2010). In this context, anomie was defined as a disjuncture between societal

goals and the legitimate means to achieve these ideals (Merton, 1939; Williams & McShane, 2010). This disparity is a consequence of the way in which society is structured. Societies establish both 'desirable' goals for people to achieve and socially acceptable means of reaching these goals (Lilly, et al., 2007; Merton, 1939; Williams & McShane, 2010). However, the access to these legitimate means is not equally distributed amongst members of society. As a result, individuals experience anomie when they are denied the means to reaching the goals established by society. In response to this anomie, people can engage in various adaptations (Lilly, et al., 2007; Merton, 1939; Williams & McShane, 2010). For example, individuals may choose to adhere to the established goals but will employ non-approved means to achieve these (Merton, 1939; Williams & McShane, 2010). This response is known as innovation. In the context of vigilantism, societies often promote the idea of a fair and just criminal justice system that can apprehend and punish offenders (Johnston, 1996). Individuals are taught that this is a desirable state of affairs. This need, however, may not be met by the current system in place. Specifically, the justice system of any country is not infallible; with some nations experiencing considerable miscarriages of justice due to corruption and bribery present within the system (Adinkrah, 2005; Baker, 2002; Buur & Jensen, 2004; Swanepoel et al., 2011; Tankebe, 2009, 2011). These offenders who 'slip through the cracks' demonstrate to the public that the societal goal of a fair and unbiased justice system is not being achieved. Consequently, in order to achieve justice, individuals may resort to crime control vigilantism (Baker, 2002; Johnston, 1996; Rosenbaum & Sedeberg, 1974).

The second cause of vigilante behaviour is seen in social group control. This form of vigilante behaviour occurs when individuals or groups feel threatened by proposed changes to the current class, secular, and/or political system (Buur & Jensen, 2004; Johnston, 1996; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). Individuals may feel threatened by segments of society that are moving upwards, or who are advocating change regarding the distribution of values. To maintain the established social order, these individuals engage in vigilante behaviour. Only one study could be found that empirically examined this perspective (Pedahzur & Perliger, 2003). Pedahzur and Perliger (2003) applied the triple typology of vigilantism to the case study of Jewish settler violence in Israel that emerged during the 1970s. The study found exemplars of both group and individual violence which could be defined as social group control vigilantism. Currently there are no attempts to

incorporate criminological theory into this perspective. It could be argued, however, the labelling theory is applicable within this situation. Labelling theory proposes that actions are not inherently deviant or criminal in their nature (Burke, 2014; Lemert, 1951; Muncie, 2010; Tannenbaum, 1938; Williams & McShane, 2010). Instead, these acts only become perceived as deviant once elite or ruling groups label them as such. This labelling process is likely to serve the interests of elite groups (Lilly, et al., 2007; Tannenbaum, 1938; Williams & McShane, 2010). With regards to social group control, attempts to redistribute values and resources are not inherently deviant acts. However, such dissent threatens the interests of the elite and such groups are consequently labelled as being deviant (Burke, 2014; Lilly, et al., 2007; Williams & McShane, 2010).

The final form of vigilantism proposed by Rosenbaum & Sedererg (1974) is regime control vigilantism. This type of vigilantism differs considerably from both crime and social group control. In comparison to the previous typology which is intended to maintain the status quo, the purpose of this behaviour is to alter state regimes. These alternations can range from changing specific sections to the removal of the entire system – with the offenders intending to establish what they perceive to be a more effective regime (Pedahzur & Perliger, 2003; Rosenbaum & Sedererg, 1974). As would be expected, the targets of these crimes are not private citizens, but rather persons who are perceived to be working for the state and responsible for the ineffective regime. Pedahzur and Perliger (2003) examined this form of vigilantism in their analysis of Jewish settlement violence. The authors found evidence which demonstrated that regime control vigilantism was present in this environment. In terms of theories, regime control vigilantism could also be explained using anomie theory. Within this scenario, the socialisation process teaches individuals that the ideal government is an efficient, incorruptible, and unbiased system (Pedahzur & Perliger, 2003; Rosenbaum & Sedererg, 1974). This goal is unachievable in both Western and non-Western societies. As a result, individuals are willing to employ ‘innovative’ techniques to obtain this goal (Pedahzur & Perliger, 2003; Rosenbaum & Sedererg, 1974). For example, some people are motivated to engage in regime control vigilantism in an attempt to instate a new government.

The above paragraphs have provided a review of the literature concerning motivations for engaging in vigilante behaviour. As with previous sections of this work, there are a number of limitations to the findings that are available. Firstly, once more, the

amount of literature available was limited. Of the papers that were available, the vast majority focused on causes of crime control vigilantism. Arguably, more research needs to examine the causes of social group control and regime control vigilantism. This is particularly important as the three forms of vigilantism are not mutually exclusive and often occur simultaneously. For example, individuals who feel as though current law enforcement officials are ineffective in protecting ethnic minorities may practice both crime control vigilantism and protest the current distribution of values and resources. In response to this dissent, elites may then develop vigilante groups who practice social control vigilantism. Hence, more than one form of vigilantism is possible within a situation and all three require attention.

The second limitation present is the lack of vigilante participants. Only one study reporting including the views of vigilantes (Weisburd, 1988). However, even this survey approach did not directly ask participants why they decided to engage in vigilante behaviour. This is arguably a significant limitation. While it is necessary to develop theories surrounding causes of vigilantism, these models need to be compared to the responses of those who have actually practiced vigilantism. Without consulting vigilantes directly, studies may develop incorrect models and potentially miss intervening variables. For example, state poverty may result in individuals being unable to use the available criminal justice system and the system itself in being underfunded and under-staffed. As a result, vigilantism may not necessarily be a response to state ineffectiveness, but state poverty. Furthermore, interviews with vigilantes may reveal that such behaviour was performed out of self-serving needs and desires – not with the intention of protecting the community. Thus, future research should involve vigilantes in the construction and testing of causes of vigilantism.

Related to the previous limitation is the third restriction upon previous research – a lack of grounded theory approach. It appears as though the previous research into causes of vigilantism has failed to employ a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is the systematic method of developing a theory from qualitative data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The advantage of this approach is research is the removal of biases and preconceptions that may alter findings. For instance, the vast majority of available literature has assumed that vigilantism arises as a response to perceived state ineffectiveness. Consequently, when reviewing case studies and data, researchers have arguably focused on

data which confirms this perspective and disregarded data which suggests other possible theories. Employing a grounded theory approach in future research could help to extend the number of available theories and consider notions that had previously been ignored due to preconceptions.

## **2.5 Support for Vigilante Behaviour**

The previous sections have focused on highlighting aspects of vigilantism that may influence attitudes towards such behaviour. This has included the characteristics of both perpetrators and victims of vigilantism, as well as the motivation/causes behind vigilante action. The current section will review evidence directly related to the topic of interest – attitudes towards vigilantism. In the following paragraphs, the researcher will describe what is currently known regarding support for vigilantism. This will include the characteristics of those who support or disapprove of vigilantism, and the reasons they provide for these attitudes. The available literature has examined both police and public attitudes towards vigilantism. The literature regarding these two populations has been separated for the purposes of this review – this decision was based upon the different relationship that each group forms with vigilantism. Vigilantism can be seen as a direct challenge to police legitimacy; whereas the same behaviour can be seen as benefiting members of the public and supporting their values.

Within the literature, two main hypotheses have been proposed to explain support for vigilante behaviour: the confidence hypothesis and the situational hypothesis (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). The confidence hypothesis is similar to the proposed causes of crime control vigilantism. Specifically, members of the public are more likely to support vigilante behaviour if they possess low confidence in the criminal justice system (Haas, 2010). This can include various aspects of this system: police, courts, rehabilitation, and prisons. This lack of confidence can refer to a general trend (diffuse confidence) or the confidence may be specific to the situation (Haas, 2010). In comparison, the situational hypothesis suggests that support for vigilantism is influenced by the characteristics of the vigilante situation. Individual's judgements regarding vigilantism will be influenced by characteristics of the vigilante and the victim, and characteristics of the vigilante act as well as the precipitating criminal act (Haas, 2010). Citizens are arguably more likely to support vigilantism if they perceive the vigilante as being justified and the victim as deserving, and the vigilante act as an appropriate response to the initial crime. These



hypotheses are not mutually exclusive and it is intended that both theories may simultaneously influence support for vigilantism (Haas, 2010).

Adinkrah (2005) and Tankebe (2011) examined police attitudes towards vigilantism within the setting of Accra, Ghana. In 2005, Adinkrah conducted 35 structured interviews with a sample of law enforcement officers based in the city of Accra. The majority of this sample were males (approx.70%) and had been a member of the Ghana Police Service for an average of eleven years. In terms of experience with vigilantism, 60 percent had personally either witnessed or investigated a vigilante homicide during their law enforcement career. When asked to express their feelings towards vigilantism, the entire sample stated that they viewed vigilante activity negatively. The reasons provided for such a perspective included: the potential for innocent people to become victims of vigilantes; the perspective that vigilantism could impeded investigations by causing offenders to flee; and the belief that vigilantism was causing rising fear of crime amongst the public. Furthermore, it was suggested that vigilantism may encourage a ‘survival of the fittest’ environment in which physically dominant groups exert their will on weaker persons.

Similar perspectives were found in Tankebe’s (2011) survey of police attitudes towards vigilantism. Tankebe’s (2011) study focused on examining the relationship between police attitudes towards self-help policing and organisational commitment, experiences of corruption, and attitudes towards police use of force. To study these relationships, a self-administered survey was completed by a sample of 181 police officers within Accra, Ghana. The sample consisted predominately of males (approx.66%), with the majority of officers having attained a secondary school education. The survey found that the majority (59.8%-83.2%) of participants (strongly) disagreed with four statements that supported public engagement in vigilantism. However, 68.2 percent of the sample did (strongly) agree that the legal system within Ghana was too lenient with criminals. The study found that police support for vigilantism was partially explained by three variables – commitment, corruption, and use of force. Firstly, those officers who expressed a greater commitment to the Police organisation were significantly less likely to indicate support for vigilante behaviour. Secondly, officers who had experienced corruption were significantly more likely to express support for public vigilantism; whereas officers who indicated that they were satisfied with anti-corruption reforms were less likely to express such support. Third, officers who expressed support for police use of force were significantly more likely to support public use

of vigilante violence. These two studies found that police officers predominately view vigilante behaviour negatively, but that certain characteristics can influence these perceptions.

Research has also examined public perceptions of vigilantism. A select number of studies have attempted to analyse personal characteristics that may influence public support for vigilantism. Zizumbo-Colunga (2010) employed data collected via the 'Americans Barometer' survey to examine public support for vigilantism within Mexico. The final sample included a total of 1,560 face-to-face interviews within Mexican households. The study measured attitudes towards vigilantism by asking participants how much they supported 'citizen administered justice' within Mexico. The study found that individuals were more likely to support vigilantism if they lived in rural areas, experienced high levels of neighbourhood insecurity, and/or if they expressed support for a direct government. In comparison, participants were less likely to express support vigilantism if they were wealthier and older. Finally, individuals were more likely to express support for vigilantism if they possessed low confidence in law enforcement – so long as they indicated high levels of social capital (interpersonal trust).

Schadt & DeLisis (2007) examined the relationship between public support for vigilantism and attitude towards the death penalty. A sample of 218 undergraduates from a United States University were administered the Criminal Justice Values Survey. This sample contained mostly females (64%), Caucasians (87%), and individuals between the ages of 18 and 22 (94%). The survey itself employed four items to examine attitudes towards the death penalty and six items to measure support for vigilantism. The study found that male respondents indicated more support for vigilante activity than female students; however, ethnic status did not appear to influence support. In addition, a regression model indicated that participants who expressed approval for vigilante justice were significantly more likely to also support the death penalty.

In 2013, Miller examined the relationship between religious characteristics and support for vigilantism. Miller (2013) employed a sample of 563 students from a United States university. Of the sample, the majority were female (58%) and Caucasian (52%), with the average participant being 20.1 years old. Participants completed an online survey that outlined three vignettes describing vigilante responses to crimes that differed in severity. After reading these vignettes, participants were asked three questions concerning whether the

vigilante was justified, whether the vigilante should be legally responsible for injury, and if the vigilante should receive a more lenient sentence in light of the precipitating offence. Participants also completed various scales that measured: fundamentalism, evangelism, devotionism, and intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity refers to the extent that a person practices religion as a result of internal beliefs and rewards; whereas extrinsic religiosity is the degree to which an individual endorses religion for external, self-serving reasons. The study found that both religious beliefs and characteristics were related to punishment towards vigilantism. Specifically, devotionism and intrinsic religiosity were consistently related to participants being punitive towards vigilantes. In comparison, evangelism, fundamentalism, and extrinsic religiosity were related to more lenient responses in punishing the vigilante. The effect of these characteristics was mediated by the type of crime perpetrated by the vigilante's victim. Specifically, participants appeared to be lenient towards vigilantes who injured a sex offender, regardless of religious characteristics. These three studies highlight the available evidence regarding the characteristics of those individuals who are more likely to support vigilantism. However, because these projects examined three separate topics – demographics, death penalty attitudes, and religious characteristics – there is not enough evidence to currently draw any conclusions.

In reference to the previously discussed hypotheses, past research has attempted to examine whether perceptions of police or situational characteristics influence public support for vigilantism. During ethnographic research, Smith (2004) developed three main theories to account for public support of vigilantism within Nigeria. The first model suggests that vigilantism was supported in Nigeria as the initial crimes were committed against trading market; these markets were viewed as economically essential and symbolically central to citizens in the area. This perspective corresponds with the situational hypothesis (the notion that the situational characteristics of vigilantism may influence support for such behaviour). The second model argues that vigilantism was supported as it protected the traditional kinship-based patron-client relationship between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The precipitating crimes were seen as threats to this relationship. This theory does not appear to align with either hypothesis, suggesting that a relevant hypothesis should be developed. The third model proposes that support for vigilantism emerged from the perception that Nigerian police were ineffective in resolving crime and protecting citizens. Consequently, members of the public were willing to support vigilantism as it attempted to provide a solution to

ineffective law enforcement. This approach corresponds to the confidence hypothesis (the concept that support for vigilantism is influenced by a person's confidence in the criminal justice system).

Though not explicitly stated, Neapolitan's (1987) study can be seen as an examination of the situational hypothesis. The research was conducted to examine vigilante behaviour and attribution biases. However, in order to study this topic, the researcher designed a series of vignettes that manipulated situational characteristics. In particular, Neapolitan (1987) constructed a series of six vignettes describing ambiguous situations in which both participants engage in vigilante behaviour. Throughout these six vignettes two variables were manipulated: participant characteristics and vigilante response. After reading one of these vignettes, participants were required to respond to a series of forced choice and open-ended response statements. The sample was a total of 240 students recruited from introductory sociology courses from a United States university. The study found that manipulation of situational characteristics influenced participants' responses. Specifically, respondents were more likely to justify a lone vigilante shooting at a group of offenders if the individual was described as a 'student' and the group described as 'a gang of four teenagers'; this is in comparison to a lone vigilante who is a 'stranger' and a group of vigilantes who are 'a group of four students'. Furthermore, the participants were more likely to justify the vigilante behaviour of the group of students, as opposed to the actions conducted by a gang of teenagers. The gang members were also more likely to be perceived as violent in comparison to the group of students. Finally, the actions of the lone vigilante (firing a gun) were seen as less justified when the shooting resulted in an injury. As it can be seen, Neapolitan's (1987) research provides evidence to suggest that situational variables such as vigilante characteristics and responses can influence public support for such behaviour.

In 2009, Tankebe conducted a study which examined the relationship between confidence in police and attitudes towards vigilantism. Tankebe (2009) received a total of 374 completed questions from a random selection of households from the Census Enumeration Areas in Accra, Ghana. The final sample consisted predominately of males (apprx.60%), with an average age of 31 years and an age range of 18 to 70 years. During the 12 months prior to the survey, approximately 53% of participants were victims of crime; and 34.5% of the sample has a recent direct contact with the police. In terms of influence, perceptions of the police had a limited effect on support for vigilantism. Participants were

significantly less likely to express support for vigilantism if: they perceived leaderships as doing well in tackling police corruption, they rate the quality of police treatment of citizens as being high, and if they perceived the police as being trustworthy. Assuming that these variables can be seen as reflections of confidence in the police, this study can be seen as providing evidence which supports the confidence hypothesis.

A 2011 study by Haas et al. provided evidence which supported both the confidence and situational hypothesis. Haas et al. (2011) constructed a series of ten vignettes which described a precipitating crime, a formal response, and a vigilante response. Across these ten vignettes, two situational factors were manipulated: precipitating crime and formal sentence for precipitating offender. During the first part of the experiment, participants read one vignette and responded to a scale that examined support for the specific vigilante act. A month later, participants completed a measure that assessed their confidence in the criminal justice system in general. For both scales, participants indicated their agreement with various statements on a seven-point Likert scale – from fully disagree to fully agree. A total of 1,930 respondents completed both parts. Of this sample, 48% were male, with an average age of 49 years, and a total age range of 16 to 89 years. The study found that both experimental factors influenced the participants' outrage at the vigilantism, empathy with the vigilante, and desire to punish the vigilante. More severe crimes elicited more empathy with the vigilante and less desire to punish them. And support for vigilantism was greater when the original offender was acquitted rather than sentenced. The study also found that support for the criminal justice system influenced all three measures of support for vigilante behaviour. Higher levels of confidence was associated with greater outrage at the vigilante behaviour, less empathy with the vigilante, and a stronger desire for the vigilante to be punished. Thus Haas et al. (2012) produced data which supported both the confidence and situational hypothesis.

A later study by Haas et al. (2014) provided further support for both hypotheses. In this later experiment, the researchers manipulated two situational factors: police responsiveness to the precipitating crime and the extent of vigilante violence. Participants were presented with one of four vignettes that described police and vigilante responses to a shoplifting offence. Following this, participants completed a questionnaire measuring support for vigilantism and diffused confidence in the police. This questionnaire measured agreement with various statements using a seven-point Likert scale. A final sample of 385

individuals was recruited during train-rides in the Western part of the Netherlands. The majority of participants were male (55%), the average age was 35 years, and a total of 62% indicated that they were highly educated. The study found that the average level of support for the vigilante across all four conditions was below the midpoint of the scale, indicating a general lack of support for the vigilante. Furthermore, the average response overall for diffuse confidence in police was slightly above the midpoint; suggesting moderate confidence in police. The study found that participant support for vigilantism within their vignette was influenced by manipulating police responsiveness and vigilante violence. Support for vigilantism was negatively associated with both police responsiveness and vigilante violence. These relationships, however, were independent. With regards to diffuse confidence, this factor was a significant predictor of support for vigilantism. In particular, those who possessed greater diffuse confidence in police were less likely to support vigilantism.

The final limitation of this topic is the lack of real-world exemplars in Western research. When examining attitudes towards vigilantism, research in Western nations has employed fictional examples and vignettes. Arguably, studies should attempt to use examples of actual incidents of vigilantism that are relevant to the participants. By discussing real-world vigilantism, individuals may find the topic more relatable and accessible – which could ultimately influence results.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

While not exhaustive, this chapter of the literature review has provided an extensive examination of the evidence regarding vigilantism. The review began with a discussion of defining vigilantism, the characteristics of vigilantes and their victims, where vigilantism is most likely to occur, and the causes/motivations behind vigilante actions. It was argued that these features were relevant as each could influence an individual's perception of a vigilante act. The chapter then focused on examining previous studies which have researched attitudes towards vigilantism. Throughout this report, it became evident that very few conclusions could be made due to limitations in previous research. There was sufficient evidence to suggest two statements. Firstly, a large number of vigilantes engage in such behaviour as a response to perceived ineffectiveness of state mechanisms. In particular, crime control vigilantism was typically a result of the perceived inefficiency and ineffectiveness of law enforcement. Secondly, support for vigilante actions appears to be influenced by perceptions of the police, as well as the situational characteristics of the event. Even these two

conclusions are not thoroughly supported and should still continue to be investigated by future research.

Of the limitations discussed, the three most common problems discussed were: 1) a lack of research; 2) a lack of real-world exemplars and actual vigilantes/victims used within the studies; and 3) the cultural differences between nations that create difficulty in comparing international research. The first limitation can be addressed by simply conducting more research within each topic. This will develop a large data-base of information from which conclusions can later be drawn. The second limitation suggest that future research should study vigilantism by incorporating as many real-world exemplars and vigilantes as possible. This is particularly necessary in examining Western attitudes towards vigilante behaviour. Addressing this limitation will help to ensure that the models created and the conclusions drawn from research are accurate and valid. The third limitation recommends that nations with dissimilar cultures and experience with vigilantism should avoid attempting to compare results. Arguably, a theory examining relatively rare cases of vigilantisms within the United States is not applicable to addressing vigilantism that occurs on a daily basis within African nations. Future research should address these limitations to improve the validity of later studies and to ensure that accurate evidence is collected. Despite these limitations, however, the previous research has provided a foundation for future studies and has arguably made contributions to our current knowledge and understanding of attitudes towards vigilantism.

## **Chapter Three: Actor Ethnicity & Perceptions of Crime**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter will focus on the examining the relationship between actor ethnicity and perceptions of crime. This will consider how offender and victim ethnicity may influence perceptions both individually and together as an interaction. As stated in Chapter Two, no prior study could be located that examined the influence of actor ethnicity in the context of vigilantism. As a result, this review will discuss the issue from a broader perspective – the effect of actor ethnicity upon perceptions of crime in general. While not exhaustive, this review will highlight key theories and empirical evidence that prove to be useful in hypothesising how actor ethnicity may influence public support for vigilante behaviour. This chapter will begin with a description of the methodologies used by previous studies, including their strengths and weaknesses. This will then be followed by an explanation as to how offender and victim ethnicity individually effect perceptions of crime and how they also interact. Once having established the findings, the review will then outline various theoretical explanations which account for these results.

Before proceeding, it is first necessary to establish two key definitions. Of particular importance is the distinction between ethnicity and race. This thesis will define race as the division of individuals into groups based upon physical characteristics; most notably, skin colour (Cregan, 2012). Conversely, ethnicity refers to identification with a social group on the basis on shared culture, language, and spatial location (Cregan, 2012). Despite these two concepts having separate definitions, these terms have been used in various ways by academics. For example, some articles only refer to one concept while others use the terms interchangeably (Clow, Lant, & Cutler, 2013; Romain & Freiburger, 2012). This thesis will employ the term ethnicity as the term race lacks biological validity and has been used historically to maintain social inequality and discrimination (Cregan, 2012). The review, however, will include studies that have used the terms race and/or ethnicity.

### **3.1 Previous Approaches to Studying Ethnicity and Perceptions of Crime**

As there is a vast amount of research in this particular area, the review will not describe the methodological approach of each study individually – as was done in Chapter Two. Instead, this section will outline the main approaches that have been employed and discuss their respective strengths and weaknesses.



A core distinction lies between studies that have used real-world data to support their conclusions, and those that have developed theories on the basis of presenting participants with hypothetical scenarios (Huebner & Bynum, 2008; Saucier, Hockett, Zanoliti, & Heffel, 2010; Sommers, Goldstein, & Baskin, 2014; Stevenson, Sorenson, Smith, Sekely, & Dzweiro, 2009). For the former, researchers gather data from the criminal justice system to test their hypotheses. This can include information pertaining to conviction rates, mental health referrals, sentence lengths, and parole decisions (Breda, 2003; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010; Romain & Freiburger, 2013; Sommers et al., 2014). This data is then examined to identify various trends and patterns.

This use of real-world data possesses a number of advantages. In terms of collection, this approach is often a convenient one as the data has usually been previously collated by the criminal justice system (Huebner & Bynum, 2008; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010). Furthermore, this methodology often yields large samples sizes of over 500 cases which improves the generalisability of the results (Romain & Freiburger, 2013; Sommers et al., 2014). The external validity of the study is further enhanced by the fact that the researchers have made use of examples which demonstrate that these trends are present in the real-world (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2008; Peck, Leiber, & Brubaker, 2014).

Despite these strengths, there are weaknesses present in this methodology. A particular concern is the lack of depth in the data (Huebner & Bynum, 2008; Taylor et al., 2009). While numerous cases are examined, the information regarding each incident is limited to the variables that the criminal justice system has viewed as being relevant (Huebner & Bynum, 2008). The data does not typically extend beyond the demographic characteristics of the offender/victim and the independent variable of interest. Consequently, this methods does not allow for the examination of more in-depth topics; for example, the reasoning behind jury, judge or parole board decisions (Breda, 2003; Holleran, & Topalli, 2009). In addition, while the results may be generalizable to the studied area, many researchers have noted that caution must be exercised in applying these conclusions beyond the location of the study sample (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2008; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010). With regards to studying vigilantism, this method does not appear to be plausible for the current study. In comparison to non-Western contexts, very few acts have been officially labelled as examples of vigilantism in modern Western society (Haas, 2010). As a result, a sample based upon recent official data would be small compared to other

forms of criminal activity. Furthermore, the collection of such a sample would go beyond the scope of the current thesis and would be more suited for a future project.

Conversely, the use of an experimental methodology would be more appropriate for the current study. This approach requires the researcher to develop hypothetical scenarios which are then presented to the participants and their perceptions gauged (McAbee & Cafferty, 1982; Stevenson et al., 2009; Saucier et al., 2010). For example, the researcher may construct two vignettes that outline an example of physical assault between two adult males. The content of these two vignettes is identical, with the exception of the offender's ethnicity – in one vignette he is depicted as being Caucasian, and in the other African American. The presentation of the vignette can occur in a number of ways. For instance, it may be constructed to appear as a newspaper article or stylised to look like the notes from a courtroom case (Bottoms, Davism & Epstein, 2004; Lipton, 1983; Willis, 1992). Participants are exposed to one of these vignettes and their perceptions of the crime are measured. These perceptions can be gauged by examining factors such as perceived crime severity, offender/victim guilt, and behavioural attributions (Benjamin, 1989; Clow et al., 2013; Willis, 1992).

As with any method, there are limitations associated with the use of an experimental methodology. As the conclusions are developed from a somewhat controlled environment, the results are less externally valid than those derived from criminal justice data sets (Bottoms et al., 2004; Saucier et al., 2010). Another issue within this approach is sample bias. A number of studies that employed this methodology noted that their samples were typically biased towards Caucasian undergraduate students as these individuals are most readily accessible for such research (Bottoms et al., 2004; Clow et al., 2013; Willis, 1992). This bias further restricts the ability to generalise the conclusions made. Finally, it should be noted that this methodology measures attitudes but not real-world behaviours. Prior research has illustrated that the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is not direct – there are other factors which may mediate the influence of attitudes (Pennington, Gillen, & Hill, 2016; Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, 2015). Furthermore, it has been shown that individuals are not able to accurately predict their own reaction to a particular situation (Kurtz, 2016; Wilson & Gilbert, 2005).

That being said, a number of strengths are associated with this experimental approach. Of particular importance is the ability to manipulate the independent variable of interest while controlling for potential mediating factors (Clow et al., 2013; Maeder, Yamamoto, & Saliba, 2015). This helps to improve the internal validity of these studies and assist in establishing causality (McIntyre, 2005). In addition, this methodology has the opportunity to explore the reasoning behind respondents' decisions and provides greater depth to the conclusions reached. It is because of these strengths that the current study decided to adopt an experimental approach in examining the relationship between actor ethnicity and support for vigilante behaviour. This methodology was within the scope of the current thesis and enabled the research to account for a number of variables while controlling the actor ethnicity.

### **3.2 Offender Ethnicity & Perceptions of Crime**

Having considered how prior research has examined this topic of interest, it is now time to discuss the findings of these projects. The first actor to be considered is the offender. Research regarding the influence of offender ethnicity can be divided into two typologies. Within the first school of thought, the majority of academics agree that ethnic minority offenders are viewed more negatively in comparison to their ethnic majority counterparts (Breda, 2003; Clow et al., 2013; Crawford, 2000; Field, Beven, & Pedersen, 2008; Huebner & Bynum, 2008; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Maeder et al., 2015; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2008; Peck et al., 2014; Shepherd, Luebbbers & Dolan, 2013; Spohn & Sample, 2013). For example, several studies have demonstrated that African American offenders are perceived to be more aggressive, blameworthy, and guilty than Caucasian offenders who commit the same crimes (Field et al., 2008; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Rector, Bagby, & Nicholson, 1993; Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). These attitudes can then be seen to influence real-world behaviours. Specifically, research has consistently demonstrated that, when compared to Caucasians who have committed the same offence, African Americans receive harsher punishments (Crawford, 2000; Crawford, Chiricos, & Kleck, 1998; Crow & Johnson, 2008; Kansal, 2005; Peck et al., 2014; Spohn & Sample, 2013). The effects of these negative perceptions then extend to factors such as referrals to mental health services and parole decisions (Breda, 2003; Huebner & Bynum, 2008; Kaba et al., 2015; Mansion & Chassin, 2016).

In contrast to this, the second perspective proposes that ethnic majority and minority offenders are perceived and treated equally by the criminal justice system (Benjamin, 1989; Jennings, Richards, Smith, Bjerregaard, & Fogel, 2014; Kleck, 1981; Menaker & Franklin, 2013). The academics from this school of thought suggest that disparities between cases are not a result of ethnic discrimination, but rather, other factors (Jennings et al., 2014; Kleck, 1981). For example, Kleck (1981) examined over 35 years of execution rates and over ten years of death-sentencing rates. From this data set, it was concluded that differences in cases were a result of variables such as prior criminal record, defendant income or occupation, and whether the case was a felony or non-felony killing – not the ethnicity of the offender (Kleck, 1981). It is important to note that this perspective has garnered less espousal within the academic community and there is considerably less empirical evidence to support it.

### **3.3 Victim Ethnicity & Perceptions of Crime**

The second actor to be considered is the victim. Unlike the research examining offender ethnicity, there appears to be one dominant perspective – ethnic minority victims are viewed more negatively than ethnic majority victims (Briggs & Opsal, 2012; Taylor et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2007). It has been repeatedly demonstrated that minority persons are viewed as being more blameworthy for their victimisation (Baumer, Messner, & Felson, 2000; Cramer, Clark III, Kehn, Burks, & Welch, 2014). Furthermore, participants often empathise and sympathise less with ethnic minority victims (Cramer et al., 2014). These attitudes then results in the differential treatment of cases involving ethnic minority victims. For instance, lesser punishments are assigned to those who victimise African Americans, as opposed to those who victimise Caucasians (Baumer et al., 2000; Kleck, 1981; Williams et al., 2007). Results such as these demonstrate that ethnic minority victims are devalued by the criminal justice system.

### **3.4 The Interaction of Offender & Victim Ethnicity on Perceptions of Crime**

In addition to having separate effects, it has been shown that both the ethnicity of the offender and the victim interact (Bottoms, Davis & Epstein, 2004; Hilinski-Rosick, Freiburger & Verheek, 2014; Sommers, Goldstein, & Baskin, 2014; Willis, 1992). The majority of the research has focused on examining the perceptions of inter-racial crimes. Once again, the findings illustrate a bias that disadvantages ethnic minority persons and advantages ethnic majority individuals (Hanke, 1995; George & Martinez, 2002; Sommers

et al., 2014). For example, within inter-racial crimes, African American offenders are perceived as being more blameworthy and their crime as more severe than Caucasian offenders within similar offences (Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010; Saucier et al., 2010; Sommers et al., 2014). Likewise, African American victims of inter-racial crimes are perceived as being more culpable and their victimisation as less serious in comparison to Caucasians who are victims of inter-racial crimes (Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010; Saucier et al., 2010; Sommers et al., 2014).

As it can be seen, the majority of the evidence demonstrates that actor ethnicity does influence perceptions of criminal activity. In particular, these relationships discriminate against ethnic minority persons – whether they occupy the position of offender or victim. This research, however, does not include the crime of vigilantism. Chapter Two described how the motivations surrounding vigilante activity are different to those which motivate typical offending (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). In particular, vigilantes are often portrayed as ‘seeking justice’ and punishing offenders who escape the criminal justice system (Johnston, 1996; Rosenbaum & Sederberger, 1984). As a result of these distinct motives, it is possible that actor ethnicity may have a differing effect within the context of vigilantism. This gap is one that the current study intends to address.

### **3.5 Theoretical Explanations**

Sections 3.2 to 3.4 demonstrated the influence of actor ethnicity upon perceptions of crime. The chapter will now outline some of the theories that may account for these findings. It is important to note that this review will not be exhaustive. Instead, the description will focus on those theories that are most applicable in discussing public support for vigilante behaviour. In particular, reference will be made to stereotypes, labelling theory, in-group favouritism, and the sympathy perspective.

### **3.6 Stereotypes**

The first explanation to be discussed is stereotypes. A stereotype can be defined as a cognitive heuristic that contains beliefs about an individual based upon their membership to a particular group (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010; Smith et al., 2015). These heuristics provide over-generalisations for all members who are believed to belong to their assigned groups (Dovidio et al., 2010). While these assumptions assist people in processing large amounts of information, they can have significant negative consequences (Dovidio et

al., 2010; Smith et al., 2015). In particular, negative stereotypes about ethnic groups have been shown to have far-reaching consequences such as discrimination and prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2010; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Smith et al., 2015). Due to these significant consequences, theorists have attempted to determine which variables are associated with stereotype use (Devine, 1989; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997).

An example of such explanations is Devine's (1989) dissociation model. This approach distinguishes between the knowledge of social stereotypes and the belief in the accuracy of stereotypes (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013). Devine (1989) proposed that individuals could be divided into two groups – low and high-prejudice persons. The model explains that all persons – both high and low in prejudice – possess knowledge of prevailing cultural stereotypes (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013). The content of these stereotypes is acquired via socialisation during childhood. This knowledge is presumed to automatically activate when encountering a member of a stereotyped group (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013). Once again, this activation occurs in both low and high-prejudice persons. The two groups differ, however, in regards to their beliefs about the accuracy of these stereotypes (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013). Members of the low-prejudice group are thought to possess “egalitarian, non-prejudicial beliefs, which tend to be acquired later in the socialisation process” (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013, p.288). Once an automatic stereotype has been activated, low-prejudice persons engage in controlled processing – that is, they make a conscious effort to overtly replace the discriminatory stereotype with egalitarian, non-prejudicial beliefs (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013). In comparison, high-prejudice individuals do not engage in within this process and accept the stereotypical beliefs.

With regards to criminal activity, studies have consistently demonstrated that ethnic stereotypes exist (Gordon, Michels, & Nelson, 1996; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Madriz, 1997; Welch, 2007). For example, it is presumed that African Americans not only constitute the majority of offenders, but that their crimes are also more violent and aggressive (Gordon, Michels, & Nelson, 1996; Madriz, 1997; Welch, 2007). Stereotypes such as these can account for the differences identified in sections 3.2 to 3.4. When adhering to these beliefs, members of the criminal justice system are more likely to prosecute, convict, and administer harsher sentences to African American offenders.

Similarly, when occupying the position of victim, the aggression and violence associated with African American stereotypes may encourage others to perceive these individuals as being more blameworthy for their victimisation (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997). Devine's (1989) dissociation model may also explain why not all findings within this field are consistent. Specifically, scenarios in which both African American and Caucasian offenders are treated equally may be a result of low-prejudicial persons engaging in controlled processing. Such findings are rarer because fewer individuals possess the necessary knowledge to practice this process.

### **3.7 Labelling Theory**

A side effect of stereotypes is what is known as 'labelling'. Based upon the stereotypes they are associated with, individuals are then labelled by other members of society. Labelling theory is a criminological approach which emphasises the importance of societal reactions to behaviour (Lemert, 1951; Tannenbaum, 1938; Williams & McShane, 2010). This perspective proposes that actions are not inherently 'normal' or 'deviant' – these labels are applied by society. Persons who engage in 'deviant' acts are subsequently labelled as such (Burke, 2014; Lilly et al., 2007; Muncie, 2010; Tannenbaum, 1938). These labels can have significant consequences for these individuals (Burke, 2014; Lemert, 1951; Muncie, 2010; Tannenbaum, 1938). Tannenbaum (1938) explained that labelling an individual as 'criminal' influences how other members of society will react to this person and how they may perceive themselves. As to be expected, persons who are labelled as 'deviants' are more likely to be perceived as and treated negatively by society (Tannenbaum, 1938).

Labelling theory was further developed by Lemert (1951) who proposed the concepts of primary and secondary deviance. Primary deviance refers to deviant actions that are committed by an individual but go unrecognised as such (Lemert, 1951; Lilly et al., 2007; Williams & McShane, 2010). As they are not appropriately identified, the person avoids being labelled as a deviant and this concept does not influence their identity (Lemert, 1951; Lilly et al., 2007; Williams & McShane, 2010). In comparison, secondary deviance occurs when individuals engage in deviant acts and are recognised as doing so (Lemert, 1951; Lilly et al., 2007). In response, society treats the individual as if they are deviant and one of two scenarios may occur. Fearing social rejection and shame, the 'deviant' ceases their behaviour to ensure social acceptance (Lemert, 1951; Lilly et al., 2007; Williams & McShane, 2010). Or, they may continue with the behaviour and

potentially adopt the label ‘deviant’ as part of their identity and self-concept (Lemert, 1951; Lilly et al., 2007).

The next stage of labelling theory is the self-fulfilling prophecy. In 1963, Becker made use of Merton’s (1948) ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ to demonstrate how labels can influence behaviour. After having been assigned the label of ‘criminal’ society alters the way it treats this individual. The person is ‘singled out’ and is given ‘special treatment’ (Becker, 1963; Lilly et al., 2007). Other members of the public presume that this person is of poor character and is likely to reoffend in the future. Faced with these continuous negative reactions, some individuals go on to internalise the label of criminal as part of their self-concept (Becker, 1963; Lilly et al., 2007). They come to believe that they are deviant and should behave in such a manner. Thus, the concept of deviant moved from being a mere label of a specific behaviour to an aspect of the individual’s identity and behaviour. For a number of individuals, ‘offender’ will become their master status. A master status refers to a trait that is the primary identifying characteristic of an individual (Lilly et al., 2007). Once obtained, this master status is very difficult to remove.

Concepts such as the labelling theory, self-fulfilling prophecy and master status can be used to explain the discrepancies described in sections 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4. As a result of ethnic stereotypes, people are more likely to assign the label of offender to African Americans and other ethnic minority members. Due to this label, members of the criminal justice system deliberately focus more of their efforts in prosecuting and punishing minority offenders. In comparison, they may be more willing to label the illegal behaviours of Caucasians as resulting from other origins (for instance, mental health issues). This can partially account for the overrepresentation of African Americans within the criminal justice system. It may also explain why they are given harsher punishments and perceived differently – the label of criminal is more readily applied to them and likely to become their master status. In comparison, Caucasian offenders may have other labels applied to them.

### **3.8 In-Group Bias**

Stereotypes and labels assist members of society into organising themselves and others into groups. Using this and other content, individuals who share particular traits often come together and typically express similar attitudes and beliefs (Pennington, Gillen & Hill, 2016; Smith et al., 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Williams & Burek, 2008). Persons who belong to



this group are known as ‘in-group’ members, and those who do not are ‘out-group’ members. Despite belonging to a group, people still recognise other in-group members as being unique individuals (Pennington et al., 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Williams & Burek, 2008). In comparison, out-group members are perceived as being homogenous and sharing the same attitudes and beliefs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Williams & Burek, 2008). Associated with this perception is what is known as intergroup bias - the favouring of in-group members and derogation of out-group persons (Brewer, 1999, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This bias can result in adjustment to real-world behaviours. For example, studies have demonstrated that in-group members are more likely to be extended trust, empathy, and positive regard to each other, in comparison to out-group individuals (Brewer, 1999, 2004).

As with stereotyping, however, there are conditions under which this bias may work against in-group members. In particular, a number of studies have identified what is known as the ‘black sheep effect’ (Mendoza, Lane, & Amodio, 2014; Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). In-group members who perform well are evaluated more positively than comparable out-group persons (Mendoza et al., 2014). However, in-group members who perform poorly face harsh evaluation and can be excluded from the group (Mendoza et al., 2014; Marques et al., 1988). This black sheep effect appears to be most pronounced among those who identify strongly with their group (Biernat, Vescio, & Billings, 1999; Mendoza et al., 2014). It has been suggested that the reason for this phenomenon is that deviant in-group members pose a threat the positive image of the group – and by extension, the evaluator (Biernat et al., 1999; Mendoza et al., 2014; Marques et al., 1988).

This intergroup bias can provide an explanation for the findings highlighted in sections 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4. The majority of the criminal justice system consists of Caucasian persons (Brewer, 2004). As a result, these persons will recognise Caucasian offenders and victims as being in-group members. Conversely, African Americans will be viewed as belonging to the out-group. This accounts for those findings which favour Caucasian offenders and victims, as well as those that disadvantage African Americans in the same position. Specifically, leniency is more likely to be afforded to in-group offenders than out-group criminals. Furthermore, greater empathy is expressed towards in-group victims as opposed to those who belong to an out-group. The caveat of the ‘black sheep effect’, however, can also explain those studies which reported null findings or results which even favoured African American offenders (Mendoza et al., 2014). Judges and juries who identify

strongly with their Caucasian group membership will evaluate in-group criminals more harshly than out-group persons who engage in the same behaviour. It is 'expected' that out-group members will behave poorly, but in-group offenders threaten the positive image of the group and require an appropriate punishment (Mendoza et al., 2014).

### **3.9 Sympathy Perspective**

The final theory to be reviewed is the 'sympathy perspective'. Unlike the previous concepts, the sympathy perspective is a comparatively recent construct (Lyons, 2006). In contrast to the stereotype theory, this approach proposes that schemas surrounding social groups will incite a sympathetic response to minority individuals (Lyons, 2006). This sympathetic response is said to be triggered by a sensitivity to power differences between those belonging to ethnic majority and minority groups (Lyons, 2006; Rodin, Price, Bryson, & Sanchez, 1990). Knowledge of these power discrepancies is thought to originate from a multitude of sources. For instance, educational campaigns, social movements and protests, hate-crime legislation and victim advocacy programmes, are all thought to have illustrated that violence against minority groups requires urgent attention (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino, 2002; Lyons, 2006).

Of particular importance to this perspective are discriminatory actions performed by individuals who occupy positions of great status and power (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino, 2002; Lyons, 2006; Rodin et al., 1990). Studies have found that incidents are perceived as more negative and prejudice when the offender holds status advantage over the victim, in comparison to when minorities perform the same actions against majority members (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino, 2002; Lyons, 2006; Rodin et al., 1990). Unlike victims with higher status, individuals with less social power lack the opportunities and resources to fight against such behaviour (Lyons, 2006). Furthermore, these victims stand to lose more than those in higher positions (Lyons, 2006; Rodin et al., 1990).

In terms of explaining the findings from sections 3.2 to 3.4, the sympathy perspective would suggest that the discrimination against African American victims and offenders is indicative of a lack of social sensitivity and understanding. The studies which demonstrated a lack of ethnic disparity would be considered examples of this sympathy perspective in action.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has centred on the discussion of the influence of actor ethnicity upon perceptions of crime. The first section focused on outlining the methodological approaches by previous studies. In particular, it distinguished between those reports that have used real-world data and those which gathered information by presenting participants with hypothetical scenarios (Huebner & Bynum, 2008; Saucier et al., 2010; Sommers et al., 2014; Stevenson, et al., 2009). Both the strengths and limitations of these approaches were considered with the section concluding that the use of a hypothetical situation was more appropriate for this thesis. The second topic of discussion was the influence of actor ethnicity upon perceptions of crime. This centred on comparing how ethnic minority and majority persons are perceived and treated by the criminal justice system. When compared to their Caucasian counterparts, African American offenders and victims were consistently disadvantaged (Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010; Saucier et al., 2010; Sommers et al., 2014).

Following on from this, the chapter moved forward with an examination of possible theoretical explanations. In particular, the following theories were presented: stereotypes, labelling theory, in-group bias, and the sympathy perspective. For each model, the review provided a description of the theory and its core concepts, as well as its explanation for the findings of previous studies. Despite not being exhaustive – such a discussion would go beyond the scope of this thesis – this chapter has provided an in-depth examination of the influence of actor ethnicity upon perceptions of crime. In particular, as Chapter Seven will demonstrate, it has highlighted those theories most applicable in studying the relationship between actor ethnicity and public support for vigilante behaviour.

## **Chapter Four: Ethnicity & Vigilantism**

### **4.0 Introduction**

The final chapter of this literature review focuses on examining the relationship between ethnicity and vigilantism. It will demonstrate that ethnicity can be influential in all three forms of vigilante behaviour – crime, social, and regime control. This link will be established using both historical and modern exemplars as evidence. As with Chapter Three, it will be shown that these associations typically disadvantage ethnic minority persons. The illustration of this relationship highlights the significance of researching this topic; in particular, why it is crucial to examine the influence of actor ethnicity upon support for vigilantism.

### **4.1 Crime Control Vigilantism & Ethnicity**

The first type of vigilantism to be considered is that of crime control. As established in Chapter Two, crime control vigilantism occurs when members of the public punish individuals who are perceived to have violated a formal legal code (Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). This section will demonstrate that crime control vigilantism is ethnically biased within the Western context. Specifically, the vigilante most commonly identifies with the ethnic majority whereas their victim typically belongs to an ethnic minority group (Bailey, Tolnay, Beck, & Laird, 2011; Jacobs et al., 2005; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). The evidence indicates that this disparity has been prominent throughout history and remains a core feature of modern vigilantism (Bailey et al., 2011; Jacobs et al., 2005).

The most common historical examples of this discrepancy have been drawn from the United States. The practice of lynching, a common form of an ‘unofficial’ death penalty, was predominately used against former African American slaves (Jacobs et al., 2005; Steiker & Steiker, 2015). This punishment was administered in response to a range of crimes. For example, (attempted) homicide, (attempted) sexual assault of a Caucasian woman, and aggravated assault (Steiker & Steiker, 2015). It is important to note that this informal punishment system was employed against comparatively few Caucasian persons (Jacobs et al., 2005; Steiker & Steiker, 2015). The use of this penalty also existed at a time during which the official criminal justice system was openly biased against African Americans, and the list of punishable crimes for minority members was considerably longer than that of ethnic majority persons (Steiker & Steiker, 2015).

In modern society, Western vigilantism has shifted from a group-activity to a more individualist approach; however, the prominence of ethnic minority victims remains a common theme. A common case is the assault or murder of African Americans that is frequently hidden by the guise of self-defence or protection of property (Brooks, 1998; Carlson, 2016; Ward, 2015). An example of such an incident is the case of Bernhard Goetz. On December 22, 1984, Goetz (Caucasian) was riding a subway train when he was approached by a group of four African American men (Carlson, 2016; Crane, 1988; Juliano, 2012). In the events that followed, Goetz fired a total of five shots at the four men and subsequently fled the scene (Carlson, 2016; Juliano, 2012). On December 31, Goetz handed himself over the police. Initially, he claimed that the men had attempted to ‘mug’ him and that he was acting in self-defence (Carlson, 2016; Crane, 1988). This claim, however, has been highly contested. While the men admitted to ‘pan-handling’, there was no indication that they verbally or physically posed an immediate threat to Goetz (Juliano, 2012).

Rather than self-defence, Goetz’s behaviour can be seen as an example of vigilantism. This incident features the same criteria that were outlined in Chapter Two when discussing the definition of vigilantism. Goetz acted as a private and autonomous citizen, who employed force against four individuals. His behaviour was shown to be premeditated when he later admitted to having planned the attack and purchasing the firearm in preparation (Carlson, 2016; Crane, 1988). Goetz stated he had been reacting to deviance in the form of an ‘attempted mugging’. The argument could be made, however, that Goetz was acting in response to a broader deviance – the African American ‘threat’. As noted in Chapter Three, there are well-known stereotypes which depict African Americans as aggressive and violent offenders (Madriz, 1997; Welch, 2007). These representations often mean that people interpret the same behaviour performed by African Americans and Caucasians, differently. Thus, had the men been Caucasian, it is far less likely that Goetz would have used a firearm. With regards to motivations, it was noted that Goetz had previously been assaulted and was dissatisfied with police response (Carlson, 2016; Juliano, 2012). Thus, police incompetency and the desire to preserve his ‘personal security’ could be seen as Goetz’s motivating factors.

The Bernhard Goetz incident is one of many similar attacks. Cases such as these typically involve a Caucasian assaulting an African American person who presents no

immediate physical threat (Ward, 2015). While most of these perpetrators have not stated that their motives were ethnically biased, such admission is not necessary. There is sufficient empirical evidence to demonstrate that Caucasians still possess discriminatory views of African Americans (Madriz, 1997; Welch, 2007). The prevalence of these stereotypes may explain why ethnic minority victims are disproportionality targeted in incidents of crime control vigilantism. Their actions are more likely to be incorrectly interpreted as deviant and perceived as a threat, hence, individuals are more likely to respond with vigilantism.

#### **4.2 Social Group Control Vigilantism & Ethnicity**

The next form of vigilante behaviour to be discussed is social group control. As outlined in Chapter Two, the goal of this activity is to maintain the current system of order and values (Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). This occurs when people oppose the current system of resource distribution and attempt to improve the socio-economic standing of a 'low-ranking' group. Within the context of ethnicity, this refers to vigilantes who have opposed those who have tried to better the social position occupied by ethnic minorities (Belew, 2014). As with crime control vigilantism this phenomenon has existed at both a historical and modern level.

Once again, the United States provides useful exemplars. During the Civil War and following the emancipation of African American slaves, Caucasians felt threatened by the changes being made to a social system that was extremely advantageous for them (Belew, 2014; Hagen, Maokvi, & Bearman, 2013; Phillips, 1987). Understandably, African Americans had opposed their enslavement and supported actions that sought to improve their social standing – even if only marginally. Consequently, to control this 'threat', members of the public (and state) would take it upon themselves to informally police this minority group (Belew, 2014). Such 'policing' typically involved selecting an African American, accusing them of a crime, and implementing a violent and often lethal form of punishment (Jacobs et al., 2005; Phillips, 1987). While the guise of crime control vigilantism was used, the true intentions of these vigilantes were often well-known. These persons were attempting to revert African Americans to their prior subordinate status (Jacobs et al., 2005; Phillips, 1987). This form of social group control vigilantism has remained prevalent during more recent times. In particular, the assault and murder of Civil Rights activists present during the 1940s-1960s (Jacobs et al., 2005). It should be

acknowledged that while the majority of the victims were African Americans, there were a small number of Caucasian victims (Belew, 2014). These individuals were victimised as they too sought to improve the status of African Americans and adjust the resource distribution accordingly (Belew, 2014; Jacobs et al., 2005).

While this form of discriminatory violence is no longer acceptable, examples of social group control vigilantism are still evident within the modern United States. Caucasians have moved away from overt displays of violence, to more 'subtle' vigilante tactics. African Americans face daily forms of discrimination, all of which can be seen as attempts to maintain ethnic inequality (McConahay, 1983; Welch, 2007). Common examples include: refusing employment, denial of service, and the over-policing of African Americans (Jacobs et al., 2005; McConahay, 1983; Welch, 2007). Some would suggest that this behaviour is 'merely' discrimination, however, it does include the five features of vigilantism. There is often some form of premeditation (i.e. the person has made the prior decision to behave this way), and the activities are performed on a voluntary basis by citizens who are autonomous of the state. Furthermore, it is not necessary that the threat of force be overtly made; instead, African Americans experience the constant threat of police involvement – an action that often results in violence being used against them (Jacobs et al., 2005; Welch, 2007). The perceived 'deviance' that these vigilantes are reacting to is the attempts by African Americans to receive equal treatment in modern society (Belew, 2014). Thus, the motive behind this behaviour is to preserve the inequalities between ethnic groups, and thereby maintain the collective security of the ethnic majority (Belew, 2014). As it has been shown, acts of ethnic discrimination within modern society can be viewed as examples of social control vigilantism.

Similar to crime control vigilantism, social group control has disproportionately targeted ethnic minority persons as they have continuously struggled to improve their position within society. As individuals have moved towards more 'subtle' expressions of discrimination, it is becoming increasingly difficult to detect these activities (McConahay, 1983). Consequently, social control vigilantism remains a significant obstacle in African Americans achieving equality within the United States.

### **4.3 Regime Control Vigilantism & Ethnicity**

The final form of vigilantism is that of regime control. While the previous two typologies focused on maintaining the legal code and status quo, the intention of this behaviour is to alter state regimes (Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). These alterations can range from specific segments to the removal of the entire system (Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). The goal of the vigilante is to not only remove the undesired sections, but to also implement what they perceive to be a more effective organisation (Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). While this behaviour has been employed by minority groups in an attempt to remove discriminatory systems, it has also been used by ethnic majorities to reinstate these administrations (Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974; Steers, 2014). As societies have moved closer towards to achieving the goal of ethnic equality, some ethnic majority members have overtly and covertly opposed this change (Belew, 2014; Campbell, 2013; Jacobs et al., 2005; Steers, 2014). In an attempt to reverse the progress that has been made, specific groups/individuals have directly targeted the regimes which have implemented this social change. As with crime and social group control, regime control vigilantism has occurred in both a historical and modern context.

A historical example of this behaviour is the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. On the evening of April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was shot in the back of the head by stage actor John Wilkes Booth (Charnwood, 2006; Steers, 2014). This assassination was motivated by the conclusion of the Civil War. The war between the Northern and Southern states was driven by several factors – one of which was the possible emancipation of African American slaves (Charnwood, 2006; Steers, 2014). Those who supported the Southern movement (the Confederates) vehemently opposed this proposition and felt that this infringed upon their constitutional rights (Charnwood, 2006; Steers, 2014). Booth aligned himself the Confederate side and the goals they stood for. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, President Lincoln gave a speech in which he made reference to the abolition of slavery. This speech was reported as inciting Booth and prompted him to shoot the President in the days that followed (Charnwood, 2006; Steers, 2014). Lincoln's assassination is an example of regime control vigilantism, performed with the intention of changing the government that stood in place. Booth opposed the implementation of what he – and others at the time – perceived to be an inefficient system (Steers, 2014). The goal of this assassination was to ensure that the system of slavery and overt ethnic discrimination remained in place.



The use of regime control vigilantism remains a prominent theme within modern society. These activities have expanded to not only include members of state, but also persons of significant influence who advocate systems of social equality (Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). Despite not holding official positions within the government, these persons still exert considerable power and influence over state officials. In particular, they are seen as valuable due to their popularity with members of the public (Martin, 2000; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). For example, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. can be seen as a form of modern regime control vigilantism. While not a member of the state, King was a prominent figure in the Civil Rights movement which sought to achieve equality for African Americans (Martin, 2000; Ling, 2015). On April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968, King was shot dead by James Earl Ray on a motel room balcony in Memphis, Tennessee (Martin, 2000; Ling, 2015). While there has been much speculation as to the true motives of Ray, one of the most recurring themes is that his act was driven by ethnic discrimination (Martin, 2000; Ling, 2015). King, along with several others, was advocating for the equal rights of African Americans within the United States (Martin, 2000; Ling, 2015). Despite not ending the movement, it can still be argued that King's assassination was nevertheless an attempt to hinder this effort. As with Lincoln's assassination, this homicide also possesses the features of vigilantism. A violent act was planned and carried out by a private and autonomous citizen. This homicide was motivated by the perceived deviance of the Civil Rights movement; and by trying to disrupt this group, Ray was attempting to reassure the collective security of the ethnic majority.

While less common than the other typologies, regime control vigilantism has still been employed to discriminate against ethnic minorities. Both individuals and groups have stood in opposition to governments that have sought to advance the social and legal standing of ethnic minority groups. The intended goal of these acts is to remove these systems and revert to one that more overtly favours the ethnic majority.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

A discussion of the methodologies was not included in this chapter due to the lack of relevant practices. By focusing on historical data, these authors have typically employed text-based resources (Belew, 2014; Hagen et al., 2013; Jacobs et al., 2005; Phillips, 1987; Steiker & Steiker, 2015). For example, newspaper articles, eye-witness descriptions, and autobiographies. These are often supplemented with the limited statistics of the time. This

methodological approach is not appropriate for the current study and did not guide the data collection. That being said, this review will briefly acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of this procedure. In terms of advantages, the use of historical sources provides the researcher with the opportunity to gather large quantities of data with relative ease and low cost (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). That being said, the validity of these sources can be highly contested (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). Studies have often noted contradictory descriptions of the same event, making it difficult to discern what actually occurred.

The length of this chapter is a reflection of the restrictions present within the literature. The research examining the relationship between vigilantism and ethnicity is limited in terms of focus. The vast majority of the literature has discussed the historical use of vigilante violence to control ethnic minorities within the United States (Jacobs et al., 2005; Steiker & Steiker, 2015). In particular, reference is often made to the use of crime control vigilantism prior to and following the emancipation of African Americans. The use of Rosenbaum and Sederberg's (1974) typology within the context of ethnic discrimination is unique to this thesis. This chapter has demonstrated that all three forms of vigilante behaviour – crime, social, and regime control – have been repeatedly used to persecute ethnic minorities. Furthermore, it has been shown that this bias exists both historically and within modern society. Hence, the review has highlighted importance of considering how actor ethnicity may influence support for vigilantism – and in doing so, justifies the significance of the current study.

## **Chapter Five: Methodology**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The previous three chapters of this thesis examined the literature most relevant to this topic. This included definitions of and public support for vigilantism, the relationship between actor ethnicity and perceptions of crime, and the intersection between vigilantism and ethnicity. The strengths and limitations of previous methodologies were highlighted, as well as identifying gaps that the current study intends to address. In order to meet the outlined objectives, this research project relied predominately upon quantitative design and methodology. The chapter that follows describes the study's aims, research paradigm, methodological justification, and research design. Furthermore, it includes an explanation of the specific procedures, pilots, and the ethical considerations of the project.

### **5.1 Aims of the Research**

As demonstrated in the literature review, there is limited empirical research which has examined public attitudes towards vigilantism. In particular, experimental manipulation is scarce. This study will continue to build upon such research and provide a better understanding of public support for vigilantism in a predominately Western setting. In addition, this project will focus on the influence of actor ethnicity upon support for vigilante behaviour. This is a topic that has so far been neglected, despite prior literature demonstrating that actor ethnicity can influence perceptions of crime.

While they provide a useful starting point, it cannot be assumed that the conclusions of previous research readily apply to vigilantism. Unlike typical criminal activities that are portrayed as being motivated by greed and lack of self-control, vigilantes are often presented as having 'noble' intentions and administering punishment to those who deserve it. These unique motivations could potentially mean that previous findings are not applicable. To assess this, the current study proposes the following research questions:

- Does offender ethnicity influence public support for vigilante behaviour?
- Does victim ethnicity influence public support for vigilante behaviour?
- Do victim and offender ethnicity interact to influence public support for vigilante behaviour?

## **5.2 Hypotheses**

Based upon the theories and findings discussed in Chapter Three, the researcher tentatively suggests the following hypotheses:

- Participants will indicate the most support for a scenario that includes a ‘light complexion’ vigilante and a ‘dark complexion’ victim.
- Participants will indicate the least support for a scenario that includes a ‘dark complexion’ vigilante and a ‘light complexion’ victim.

## **5.3 Research Paradigm**

A research paradigm can be defined as the intellectual structure and underlying assumptions upon which research is based (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012). Each research paradigm possesses four distinct features: an axiology, epistemology, ontology, and methodology (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012). Axiology refers to the values present within the research, including how the researchers’ own values may influence the project (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012). Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, and discusses ‘how we know what we know’; whereas ontology concerns the nature of reality and its characteristics (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012). Methodologies are the procedures used by researchers to investigate what they believe can be known, and the rationales behind these procedures (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012).

The type of paradigm adopted is influenced by both the questions that are being investigated and the methods used to carry out these investigations. The current study adopts a positivist paradigm. The axiology of positivism proposes that the researchers do not allow their own values to influence the research; while the ontology argues that there is a single and concrete reality that can be properly understood (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012). The positivist epistemology suggests that the only defensible form of scientific findings originate from observable evidence, thus, legitimate knowledge claims can only derive from the scientific method (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012). The world is thought to conform to permanent laws of causation. These causal relations can be correctly identified through research that is impartial, objective, and repeated. With regards to methodology, positivists prescribe to empiricism – the notion that observation and measurement are the core of scientific endeavour (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012). Typically, positivists use methods such

as: nomothetic experiments, laboratory experiments, confirmatory analysis, quantitative analysis, and deduction (Creswell, 2014; Seale, 2012).

#### 5.4 Justification for Quantitative Research Approach

The decision to use quantitative research methods within the current study is justified. As with all methodologies, there are both strengths and weaknesses within the quantitative approach (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). Unlike qualitative procedures, quantitative methods enable this study to not only identify the relationships between variables, but to also determine the strength and directionality of these relationships (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). Furthermore, this approach was selected based upon the methodologies used in prior studies that have examined public support for vigilante behaviour (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014).

#### 5.5 Research Design

To answer the proposed research question, the author employed a between-subjects experimental design. A total of four vignettes were constructed that varied systematically on two situational factors: 1) the visual ethnicity of the vigilante and 2) the visual ethnicity of the vigilante's victim. Both variables consisted of two levels - 'light' and 'dark' complexion, resulting in a 2 x 2 factorial design – *See Table 1.0*. Excluding this manipulation, the content of the vignettes remained identical.

Table 1.0

*Overview of experimental conditions.*

	Ethnicity of Vigilante	Ethnicity of Vigilante's Victim
Condition 1	Light complexion	Dark complexion
Condition 2	Dark complexion	Light complexion
Condition 3	Dark complexion	Dark complexion
Condition 4	Light complexion	Light complexion

Accompanying the vignettes was a survey consisting of five sections: support for vigilantism in general, Vignette A and its responses, Vignette B and its responses, the right wing authoritarianism scale, and demographics. The primary dependent variables within

this project were the responses to Vignettes A and B. The former measured blame for and empathy towards the precipitating crime victim, as well as outrage towards and the desire to punish the precipitating offender. The latter gauged empathy and blame towards the vigilante's victim, in addition to outrage and the desire to punish the vigilante. The three remaining sections – demographics, right-wing authoritarianism, and support for vigilantism in general – were included as potential moderating factors.

For every participant, the items were presented in the following order:

1. Support for vigilantism (Appendix A)
2. Vignette A and corresponding responses (Appendices B & C)
3. Vignette B and corresponding responses (Appendices D & E)
4. Right-wing authoritarianism scale (Appendix F)
5. Demographic information (Appendix G)

## **5.6 Materials**

The scales within the first three sections of the survey were predominately drawn from Haas' (2010) study. Haas' (2010) scales were selected for three main reasons. First, very few studies have examined public support for vigilantism, meaning that limited selection was available. Second, Haas (2010) demonstrated that their scales were internally reliable. Third, given the project time-line and resources, it was not feasible to design, construct and pilot new scales.

It should be noted that not all of the scales constructed by Haas (2010) were used in the current project. Use of the entire questionnaire went beyond the scope of this thesis and it was felt that a survey of greater length would discourage participants from completing the entire questionnaire.

## **5.7 Support for Vigilantism in General (Haas, 2010)**

The first instrument completed by participants was a short questionnaire that measured general support for vigilante behaviour (Haas, 2010). This scale consisted of a total of eight statements, with participants indicating how strongly they agreed with each item on a 7 point Likert scale (*1 = fully disagree, 7 = fully agree*). These items examined approval of vigilante behaviour, desire to punish vigilantism, and whether participants felt vigilantism

was justified (Haas, 2010). For each participant, the eight items were presented in a randomly generated order.

The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .82, indicating that the scale possesses a moderate-strong internal reliability, and that the items within the scale are measuring the same construct. An individual item analysis indicated that if item seven (*Citizens who take the law into their own hands form a danger to society*) was removed, the Cronbach's alpha would increase to .83. It was decided that this increase did not warrant the removal of the item and all eight questions were included in the final analyses.

In addition to Haas' (2010) original scale, the researchers also included an open ended question – "*If you would like to, or feel it is necessary, please provide the reasoning behind your answers. This can be one specific item, or multiple items*". This provided participants with the opportunity to expand upon their responses, explain inconsistencies between answers, and/or give general feedback on the scale.

This scale was included to test two relationships. The first is the association between support for vigilantism in general and responses to the specific vigilante act described. While most would assume that a positive relationship exists, it is possible that participants view vigilante acts on a case-by-case basis, meaning that there is a lack of relation between the two. The second is the relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and support for vigilantism in general. Previous vigilantism studies have yet to consider right-wing authoritarianism; however, it is plausible that a relationship may exist. For instance, it is possible that aggression towards law-breakers may encourage high authoritarians to support vigilante behaviour (Altemeyer, 2006). That being said, it could also be suggested that those who score highly on this scale dislike vigilantism as it can be seen as a transgression against authorities (Altemeyer, 2006).

### **5.8 Vignette A – Precipitating Offence**

The first experimental factor is the visual ethnicity of the precipitating crime victim (*the would-be vigilante*). Manipulating this variable allowed the researchers to investigate three critical concerns. First, whether the ethnicity of the precipitating crime victim influences responses to the initial vignette. Second, whether the ethnicity of the vigilante influences responses to the second vignette. Third, whether the ethnicities of the vigilante and their victim interact to influence perceptions of the vigilante response. Based upon the previous

literature, it is suggested that the ethnicity of the precipitating crime victim (and future vigilante) will affect these three areas (Breda, 2003; Briggs & Opsal, 2012; Clow et al., 2013; Crawford, 2000; Peck et al., 2014; Shepherd et al., 2013; Spohn & Sample, 2013; Taylor et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2007)

In Vignette A, participants are presented with a brief description of a precipitating crime. The short article outlined an incident involving destruction of property. Specifically, the story describes how Aiden Wilmore goes outside to investigate a series of loud noises. Once outside, Mr Wilmore sees that his car windows are being broken by a stranger with a baseball bat. Before Mr Wilmore can confront and properly identify the (precipitating) offender, the stranger flees the scene. To indicate the ethnicity of the precipitating crime victim (Mr Wilmore), the article included a head and shoulders shot. A photograph of the precipitating offender was not included, nor was a description outlining ethnicity.

The vignette was stylised to appear as though it was a newspaper article found online. This included features such as: a newspaper title, author name, tabs indicating different sections of the website, and advertisements down the side of the page. The researchers chose to do this so as to make the article feel more ‘authentic’ – to help immerse the readers and potentially create the belief that this was a real-life event (Bottoms et al., 2004; Lipton, 1983; Willis, 1992).

A total of four different versions of Vignette A were constructed. These four vignettes remained identical in written content. The only factor that was varied was the photograph of Mr Wilmore. A total of four photos were used – two African American individuals and two Caucasian individuals. The inclusion of four actors allowed the researcher to compare the responses both within and between ethnic groups (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). This ensured that perceptions were not influenced by factors unrelated to ethnicity of the victim. For example, participants’ reactions to the vignette could have potentially been affected by the perceived likeability, trustworthiness, or attractiveness of the specific actor – rather than their ethnicity (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012).

Within this section, it is necessary to justify the decision to present the variable of ethnicity via photographs. To assess the influence of ethnicity, the majority of relevant literature has either provided written descriptions or used visual aids (photographs) – both of these methods possess limitations (Bottoms et al., 2004; Lipton, 1983; Willis, 1992).



Specifically, it is possible for participants to detect either method and identify ethnicity as being the variable of interest. This identification can then bias responses to the questionnaire. Participants may be influenced by the social desirability bias and provide false answers so as to not appear discriminatory (McIntyre, 2005). For the current study, it was felt that a written description of the precipitating crime victim would be more noticeable than a photograph. In addition, it could be argued that a newspaper would be more likely to use a photograph of the crime victim if one was available.

The final aspect that requires explanation is the choice of precipitating crime. As previously mentioned, the first vignette outlines an incident of property destruction. This typology of crime was deliberately selected for three main reasons. Firstly, crimes of this nature are more commonplace in society, which means that a participant is more likely to have experienced this crime either directly or vicariously through family and friends (New Zealand Police, 2016). It is also arguably easier for participants to imagine this crime and respond to the questions that follow, as opposed to a more infrequent and extremely violent offence. Secondly, as illustrated in the literature review, the majority of previous vigilantism research has typically used examples of crimes that are perceived as being very serious, violent, and/or sexual (Adinkrah, 2005; Buur & Jacobs et al., 2005; Jensen, 2004; Miller, 2013). Very few studies have examined vigilante responses to less violent and more frequent crimes – thus, the current study is helping to address this gap (Haas et al., 2014). Third, while the destruction of property can be readily identified as a crime, it is not one that typically evokes an extremely strong emotional reaction. In comparison, crimes such as homicide or sexual assault can incite intense emotional responses which may bias the results (Haas, 2010). Such emotions could potentially ‘hide’ the influence of victim or vigilante ethnicity.

## **5.9 Responses to Vignette A**

After reading Vignette A participants were presented with a short questionnaire to measure their responses. To do this, the study employed a modified version of the pilot scale constructed and used by Hass (2010). The decision was made to use Haas’ (2010) pilot scale rather than their final product which lacked several questions present in the initial version. The researcher used the pilot version as it allowed them to further test these items, as well as gain what is arguably valuable information. The decision to include all these items was further supported by the Cronbach’s alpha for the each of the subscales.

The overall section included four subscales, each measuring a different variable: empathy with the precipitating crime victim; outrage at the precipitating offender; blame for the precipitating crime victim; and desire to punish the precipitating offender. All four scales employed the same design. Participants were presented with a series of statements regarding the vignette and were asked to indicate on a 7 point Likert scale how strongly they agreed with each statement (*1 = fully disagree, 7 = fully agree*). For each participant, the order of these items was randomised within each subsection. All four of these subscales possessed Cronbach's alphas that indicated moderate to strong internal reliability - .71; .79; .81; and .70, respectively. These scores demonstrate that the items within each scale were measuring the same construct. Individual item analyses found that Cronbach's alpha did not increase considerably with the removal of any items. Thus, the decision was made to include all the items in the final analysis.

To expand upon Haas' (2010) survey, the current study also introduced two open-ended questions in the final subscale of this section (desire to punish the precipitating offender). These items asked why participants felt that the precipitating offender deserved to be punished, and how they (the participant) would have reacted if they were in Mr Wilmore's situation.

### **5.10 Vignette B: Vigilante Response**

The second experimental factor was the visual ethnicity of the vigilante's victim (*the precipitating offender*). Manipulating the ethnicity of the vigilante's victim allowed the study to examine two critical topics. Firstly, whether the ethnicity of the vigilante's victim influenced responses towards the vigilante event. Secondly, to establish if the ethnicities of the vigilante and their victim interacted to influence perceptions of the act. Previous studies have demonstrated that actor ethnicities – both individually and together – influence perceptions of criminal activities (Baumer et al., 2000; Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Kleck, 1981; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010; Saucier et al., 2010; Sommers et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2007). It is possible, however, that these findings may not be applicable to the unique situation and motives of vigilantism.

In Vignette B, participants were provided with an article outlining a vigilante response to the events in Vignette A. Vignette B described the physical assault of the offender from the precipitating crime. The article describes how Mr Wilmore, several days

after the incident in Vignette A, is visiting his local supermarket. While walking through the car park, he approaches and recognises the stranger who broke his windows. As he nears the person, he identifies the stranger as another student from his university - Jackson Lewis. Mr Wilmore approaches Mr Lewis as he loads groceries into his car. Once he reaches Mr Lewis, Mr Wilmore physically assaults him – leaving him with a broken nose, black eye, and a mild concussion. The article included a head and shoulders shot of the vigilante’s victim (Mr Lewis) to indicate their ethnicity. As it had been included in the previous article, the photograph of the vigilante (Mr Wilmore) was not included in Vignette B – nor was a written description. The researcher felt that including both photographs within the same article may further highlight the variable of actor ethnicity – which could potentially bias results.

In terms of style, the second vignette was also designed to appear as though it was an online newspaper article. Vignette B also included a newspaper title, author name, tabs indicating different sections of the website, and advertisements down the side of the page. This was to continue the ‘authentic’ feel of the vignettes and to hopefully encourage participants to immerse themselves.

Similar to Vignette A, a total of four different versions of Vignette B were constructed. These four vignettes remained identical in written content. The only factor that varied was the photograph of Mr Lewis. The same four photos that were used in Vignette A were used in Vignette B – two Caucasian and two African American males. Once again, the inclusion of two actors for each ethnic category was done to control for the possibility that participants’ responses may be influenced by non-ethnic aspects of the characters. Furthermore, the inclusion of two actors from each ethnic group allowed for the measurement of participant responses to intra-racial scenarios. As with Vignette A, the decision to present Mr Lewis’ ethnicity using a photograph was based on the notion that this would be less noticeable and therefore less likely to suggest the variables of interest.

Similar to the precipitating crime, the researcher made the deliberate decision to employ physical assault as the vigilante response. It was necessary to select a crime that could be arguably seen as proportional to the precipitating offence. While the destruction of property could be readily seen as a more ‘equal’ response, the use of this crime would require a more detailed explanation – outlining why Mr Wilmore had a weapon on hand

and how he identified Mr Lewis' car. To keep the length of the vignette acceptable, the researchers decided to employ a physical assault as the vigilante response. Further, vigilante scenarios in real-life situations are often not equally proportionate to their precipitating crimes.

The researchers believe that this event meets Johnston's (1996) definition of vigilantism. Firstly, the event does include some form of premeditation (Johnston, 1996). While Mr Wilmore did not visit the supermarket with the intention of assaulting Mr Lewis, as he moved closer he was provided with the opportunity to decide whether or not to assault him. This cannot be seen as self-defence – Mr Lewis' transgression occurred days before and he was not currently posing a threat to Mr Wilmore. Hence, the decision to continue approaching Mr Lewis, rather than revealing his identity to the Police, indicates some form of planning on Mr Wilmore's behalf. Second and third, Mr Wilmore is acting of his own free-will and is not acting on behalf of the government – meaning he meets the criteria of private agency and being an autonomous citizen, respectively (Johnston, 1996). Fourth, Mr Wilmore's assault clearly contains the use of force against Mr Lewis. Fifth, as established in the previous Vignette, Mr Wilmore experienced a transgression of institutional norms, id est. the destruction of his property (Johnston, 1996). The sixth criterion is harder to establish in any vigilante event – it involves the motives of the vigilante. While the newspaper would have not been in a position to discuss the motives of Mr Wilmore, it is reasonable to suggest that he committed the assault so as to assure himself that 'justice' would prevail (Johnston, 1996). Mr Wilmore's assault on Mr Lewis can be seen as a punishment, administered to reassure his personal security (Johnston, 1996).

It is worth noting here that Police intervention is **not** mentioned in either Vignette A or B. It decided to keep participants' attention focused on the precipitating crime and vigilante response. It was felt that the introduction of the Police could bias participants' responses. Specifically, it may seem contradictory if Mr Wilmore had contacted the police when the crime initially happened, but decided to assault Mr Lewis when presented with the opportunity – as opposed to giving the police this information.

### **5.11 Response to Vignette B (Haas, 2010)**

After reading Vignette B, respondents were given another short questionnaire to examine their perceptions of the event. As with the previous vignette, the researchers used a

modified version of the pilot scales constructed by Hass (2010). It was felt by the researchers that all of the items from the survey were relevant, and that the Cronbach's alphas for these scales supported this decision. As previously mentioned, Haas' (2010) scales were used based upon convenience, their demonstrated internal reliability, and the fact very few studies provided such instruments.

Similar to the previous response section, this segment contained four subscales. These four scales measured empathy with the vigilante's victim; outrage at the vigilante; blame for the vigilante's victim; and desire to punish the vigilante. All four scales used the same design. Participants were presented with a series of statements regarding Vignette B and asked to indicate on a 7 point Likert scale how strongly they agreed with each individual statement (*1 = fully disagree, 7 = fully agree*). For every subscale, the order of these items was randomised. It is important to note that the questions included in the scales were almost identical to those which measured responses to Vignette A. For example, "*I pity Mr Wilmore*" for Vignette A and "*I pity Mr Lewis*" for Vignette B. This was done to ensure that the results of the individual scales could be meaningfully compared. All four of these subscales possessed Cronbach's alphas that indicated moderate to strong internal reliability – 0.88; 0.79; 0.85; and 0.85, respectively. These scores demonstrate that the items within the scale were measuring the same construct. Individual item analyses found that Cronbach's alpha did not increase considerably with the removal of any items. Thus, the decision was made to include all the items in the final analyses.

As with the Response to Vignette A section, the current study introduced two additional open-ended questions. These items were introduced to examine the motives of the participants. In particular, why they felt that the vigilante deserved to be punished, and how they (the participant) would have react if they were in Mr Wilmore's situation (again).

#### **5.12 Right Wing Authoritarian Scale (Altemeyer, 2006)**

Having finished the previous sections, participants were asked to complete the Right Wing Authoritarianism scale (Altemeyer, 2006). This scale is designed to measure three separate variables: authoritarian submission; authoritarian aggression; and conventionalism. Individuals who exhibit authoritarian submission believe that the established authorities are legitimate and should be submitted to (Altemeyer, 2006). Authoritarian aggression refers to a general aggressiveness directed towards those who are perceived to violate regulations

and are targeted by established authorities (Altemeyer, 2006). Those scoring high in conventionalism express a high degree of adherence to the traditions and social norms of society (Altemeyer, 2006). As it can be seen, the concepts within this scale do not appear to be completely distinct of one another and they arguably overlap considerably. This is illustrated in the questions of Altemeyer's (2006) scale. For example, one item in the questionnaire states: *Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the "rotten apples" who are ruining everything*. This statement could arguably be measuring both authoritarian submission as well as authoritarian aggression. It appears to simultaneously submit to the established authorities and suggest aggressiveness to those who violate regulations. As a result of this, the researchers made the decision to analyse the scale as a whole rather than to divide it into three subscales.

The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .92, indicating strong internal reliability. Individual item analyses indicated that Cronbach's alpha did not increase with the removal of any of questions. Thus, the decision was made to include all the items within the final analysis. This scale included a total of 22 items. Each presented participants with a single statement, to which they had to indicate the strength of their agreement. Respondents were provided with a 9 point Likert scale to place their answers upon ( $-4 = \text{very strongly disagree}$ ,  $+4 = \text{very strongly agree}$ ).

Of the previous research examining vigilantism, none of the available studies had included a measure of right-wing authoritarianism. Given the unique motives of vigilante behaviour, this variable could be of particular interest. Specifically, the concept of right-wing authoritarianism could be used to explain support and disapproval towards vigilantism. Individuals who score high on this scale may disapprove of such behaviour as it can be seen as a usurping of state authority (Altemeyer, 2006). Simultaneously, right-wing authoritarians could potentially support vigilante behaviour. These activities may be seen as reinforcing traditional values and punishing those who violate the rules of established authorities (Altemeyer, 2006).

### **5.13 Ethical Issues**

As the current study involved participants, a number of ethical issues had to be addressed. In particular, the researcher needed to account for informed consent, participant risk,

anonymity, and the omission of the projects intent. For copies of the AUTECH approval forms, demonstrating that this concerns were addressed, please refer to Appendices H and I.

As a result of the socially sensitive topic (the influence of ethnicity), the research initially omitted certain details regarding the aim of the study. Participants were informed that the study was examining support for vigilante behaviour; however, they were not told the precise research question and hypotheses. That being said, there was no deception regarding what was required of the participants or what their role in the research would entail. Omitting the precise research question and hypotheses was necessary to prevent experimental demand and participant expectations from biasing results (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). The ethical requirement of disclosure and informed consent was managed via a written debriefing at the end of the experiment, and participants were presented with the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the project (for a copy of this debriefing, please refer to Appendix J).

Anonymity was guaranteed to research participants. The respondents provided basic demographic information that was not sufficiently detailed to allow them to be identified. Furthermore, if provided, contact details were not linked to specific responses. Participants may have provided such details to express a desire to participate, to ask the researcher a question, or to indicate interest in viewing the results once the study was completed.

With regards to risk, it was anticipated that completing the study would not harm participants. Participation was entirely voluntary and participants were made aware of the study topic and methodology (what would be required of them). Furthermore, participation was limited to persons at least 18 years or over, to ensure that respondents possessed the necessary cognitive capabilities to provide informed consent and complete the survey. While the subject of vigilantism may be sensitive to some individuals, this was likely to be a minority and these persons would know in advance the topic of the study. In addition, participants could withdraw from the study at any stage.

#### **5.14 Procedure**

Recruitment fliers and speeches attracted potential participants (see Appendix K). Those who expressed interest in completing the study were provided with a link to the online participant information sheet. This outlined the purpose, methodology, and any ethical concerns of the study (see Appendix L). Based upon this description, people were able to

provide their informed consent to participate. At the bottom of this information sheet, interested persons could select a button that progressed them onto the survey. There was a total of twelve different conditions to incorporate all the possible intra and inter-racial combinations, and participants were randomly assigned to one of these twelve conditions.

Participants first completed the scale that examined general support for vigilantism. If they wanted to, they could provide reasoning to support their decisions or provide clarification. Next, participants read the first vignette and responded to the questions that followed. After this, participants read the second vignette and answered the proceeding items. This was followed by the right-wing authoritarian scale. Finally, participants provided some basic demographic information which enabled the researchers to establish their sample parameters. After having completed the survey, respondents were provided with a page that debriefed them on the true purpose of the study and allowed them to provide any additional feedback. Furthermore, participants were also given the contact details of the researcher should they wish to express any concerns.

### **5.15 Pilots**

To ensure the quality of the instruments, the current study conducted two pilot surveys. The first survey was performed during the construction of the vignettes. After having decided to use visual representations of the vigilante and their victim, the author obtained a sample of head and shoulder photographs from the online website for the University of Texas at Dallas (Minear & Park, 2004). From this database, the researcher was able to download a large sample of photographs including males aged 18 to 25, of various ethnic backgrounds. The author sifted through the photographs and selected 16 individuals who were perceived to be similar in build and other features; eight of these persons were Caucasian and eight were African American. A pilot survey consisting of 20 respondents examined the perceived likability, trustworthiness, approachability, attractiveness, and friendliness of the chosen persons. Participants were presented with a small number of statements for each photograph and asked to indicate how strongly they agreed with the statement on a 7 point Likert scale (*1 = fully disagree, 7 = fully agree*). Based on the data collected, four faces were selected that scored similarly on these five attributes. This pilot was conducted to assist in minimising the effects that these five features may have had upon respondents' perceptions of the characters (McIntyre, 2005).



Once the vignettes were constructed, the final instrument was piloted on a sample of 25 respondents. This was to gather feedback about the survey and to establish if any concerns needed to be addressed. The respondents did not make any suggestions regarding the questions nor length of the survey. The only change that was made to the questionnaire was the order in which the items were presented. There was, however, no significant differences between the responses to the pilot and those of the final survey. As a result, the decision was made to include the pilot data in the final data set.

### **5.16 Sample**

A variety of sampling techniques were used within the current study. The researcher made use of international websites that are designed to encourage survey participation without providing rewards. In particular, the survey was featured on the following sites:

- Social Psychology Network
- Psychological Research on the Net
- The Inquisitive Mind

These websites were specifically used to target an international audience, as an attempt to minimise sample bias. For further recruitment, the researcher employed the use of social media websites. This included Facebook and Reddit. Attempts to recruit from AUT University were also made by employing fliers distributed across both the City and North Shore campuses, and by visiting lectures in-person to introduce the study and provide additional fliers (see Appendix B for a copy of the recruitment flier/email).

It is acknowledged that these techniques were still likely to produce a bias within the sample. However, this was unavoidable given the financial limitations and time restraints placed upon the study. A more thorough sampling procedure was beyond the scope of this thesis. The current study recruited a final sample of 126 participants. The initial sample included 169 responses. Participants' results were removed if they contained insufficient data – in this instance, if the participant failed to answer more than five questions throughout the entire survey. Additionally, a small number of participants were excluded as they indicated that they were unable to speak English fluently.

As previously established, this study contained four conditions; two intra-racial and two interracial (*Please refer to Table 1.0*). The number of vignettes within these individual

conditions, however, was not equal. There were a greater number of interracial vignettes. For example, the first Caucasian actor could only be involved in two intra-racial vignettes – one in which he was the vigilante and one in which he was the vigilante’s victim. In comparison, in the interracial vignettes, the same actor would play the role of vigilante twice and the role of victim twice (once for each African American actor). Consequently, while participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions, there was a greater chance of a participant being assigned to an interracial vignette. This can be seen in the numbers that completed the different conditions – Conditions One, Two, Three and Four were completed by 49, 38, 27 and 12 participants, respectively.

With regards to demographics, the research focused on the factors of sex, age, ethnicity, qualification, and previous victimisation (a copy of the demographics questions can be found in Appendix K). The variables were examined for both the overall sample and within the four conditions. In terms of sex, of the 124 participants who provided this information, the majority indicated that they were female (63.2%), in comparison to male (36.8%). A Goodness of Fit Chi Square test revealed that these differences in sex were statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1, N = 125) = 8.71, p = .03$ . The next demographic feature was participant age. From the information provided, the respondents ranged from 18 to 71 years of age, with an average age of 32 years and 2 months.

The next factor to be considered is participant education. The survey asked participants to indicate their highest level of educational attainment – with the options ranging from Secondary School Education to Post-Graduate Level Education. From the overall sample, the qualifications of the participants were as follows: Secondary School Education (26.19%); Certificate (14.29%); Degree (30.16%); and Post-Graduate Level education (29.37%). A Goodness of Fit Chi Square test revealed that these differences in education were statistically significant,  $\chi^2(3, N = 126) = 8.1, p = .043$ .

The participants were then asked to provide a YES/NO response to whether they had been previously victimised within the past 24 months. It was found that the majority of participants had not experienced victimisation within the past 24 months (76.19%). A Goodness of Fit Chi Square test indicated that the difference in size between these two groups was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1, N = 126) = 34.5, p < .01$ .

The final demographic factor to consider is participant ethnicity. Participants were asked to indicate which ethnic group(s) they most strongly identified with. The majority of participants identified themselves as belong to an ethnicity with European origins (62.70%). Participants in this category typically wrote that they were 'White', 'Caucasian', 'NZ European', 'European' or 'Pakeha'. The remaining participants were distributed across Maori/Pacifica (5.56%); African American (2.38%); Asian (9.52%); and 'Other' (5.56%). The final category included 'Hispanic', 'Native American', 'South African', 'Mexican', and 'Honduran'. It was also noted that 11.11% of the final sample indicated that they identified with more than one ethnic group. In addition, four participants chose not to provide information pertaining to their ethnicity. A Goodness of Fit Chi Square test indicated that the difference in size between these groups was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(5, N = 122) = 206.92, p < .01$ .

### **5.17 Quantitative Research Procedures - Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using IBM's SPSS (Statistical Programme for Social Sciences). A variety of analyses were performed to examine the data, including: goodness of fit chi square; independent samples t-test; simple regression; and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

## Chapter Six: Results

### 6.0 Support for Vigilantism in General

The possible responses for this scale ranged from 8 to 56, with participants scoring an average of 29.14 with a standard deviation of 9.11. This suggests that the average respondent expressed moderate support for vigilantism in a general sense. The section that follows compares participant scores across the four conditions, as well as examining the influence that demographic factors may have had upon general support for vigilantism.

#### *Support for Vigilantism in General – Comparing the Four Conditional Groups*

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the composite scores for participants across the four different conditions. This was done to establish whether there were pre-existing differences between the participants in these conditions – prior existing differences could be used to account for later disparities in responses. The ANOVA demonstrated that the average composite score for this scale did not differ significantly between the four conditions,  $F(3,118) = 1.62, p = .19, \eta^2 = .04$ . In terms of individual items, the ANOVA did identify a statistically significant difference for the eighth item (*Under no condition do I approve of people who take the law into their own hands – Reverse Coded*),  $F(3,123) = 4.74, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$ . Specifically, individuals from the fourth condition ('dark skinned' vigilante and 'dark skinned' victim) expressed greater agreement with this item in comparison to the other conditions.

#### *Support for Vigilantism in General – Influence of Demographic Characteristics*

Several tests were run to evaluate the relationship between demographic factors and scores achieved on this scale. An independent samples t-test assessed the association between participant sex and support for vigilantism in general. The analysis demonstrated that there was no significant difference in the composite scores for male ( $M = 30.29; SD = 9.46$ ) and female ( $M = 28.71; SD = 8.95$ ) participants,  $t(117) = .90, p = .37$ . There was, however, a statistically significant results for one item within the scale. In particular, for question four (*Some cases of citizens taking the law into their own hands are justified*), male participants ( $M = 5.37; SD = 1.69$ ) expressed stronger agreement with this statement than female respondents ( $M = 4.54; SD = 1.85$ ),  $t(123) = 2.49, p = .014$ .

A second independent samples t-test was performed to test the relationship between previous victimisation and general support for vigilantism. The test found that no statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables,  $t(118) = .60$ ;  $p = .55$ . Participants who had been victimised in the past 24 months ( $M = 30.35$ ,  $SD = 9.03$ ) scored similarly to participants who had not experienced victimisation during period ( $M = 28.87$ ;  $SD = 9.18$ ). The independent samples t-test did demonstrate significance for one question within the scale. Specifically, for item five (*Citizens who take the law into their own hands should always be prosecuted – Reverse coded*), participants who had experienced victimisation ( $M = 5.00$ ;  $SD = 1.62$ ) expressed stronger agreement with this statement in comparison to those who had not ( $M = 4.29$ ;  $SD = 1.56$ ),  $t(123) = 2.14$ ;  $p = .04$ .

A one-way ANOVA examined the relationship between education and support for vigilantism in general. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between participants' level of education and their composite score on for this scale,  $F(3,116) = 3.62$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ . A post-hoc analysis further revealed that the significant difference was between participants with certificate level education and those with post-graduate education (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .01$ ). On average, the certificate educated participants ( $M = 34.24$ ;  $SD = 8.16$ ) scored higher on this scale than post-graduate level respondents ( $M = 26.27$ ;  $SD = 9.89$ ). That being said, only three of the eight items achieved significance. For question three (*Citizens should take the law into their own hands more frequently*), participants with a certificate ( $M = 2.94$ ;  $SD = 1.26$ ) scored significantly higher than respondents with secondary school education only ( $M = 1.94$ ;  $SD = 1.22$ ),  $F(3,121) = 3.70$ ,  $p = .01$ ;  $\eta^2 = .08$ . This relationship neared significance at a post hoc level (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .053$ ). With question five (*Citizens who take the law into their own hands should always be prosecuted – Reverse coded*), post-graduate level participants ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ) expressed considerably less agreement with this statement than respondents with a certificate only ( $M = 5.50$ ;  $SD = 1.54$ ),  $F(3,121) = 6.92$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .15$ . This difference was also significant in the post-hoc analysis (*Tukey HSD*  $p < .00$ ). Finally, for question eight (*Under no condition do I approve of people who take the law into their own hands – Reverse coded*), certificate respondents ( $M = 5.41$ ;  $SD = 1.23$ ) scored higher than post-graduate participants ( $M = 3.86$ ;  $SD = 2.03$ ),  $F(3,121) = 3.67$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ . This also achieved significance at a post-hoc level (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .02$ ).

In contrast, no statistically significant relationship was found between participant ethnicity and support for vigilantism in general. For the overall composite variable, an ANOVA revealed no significant differences between ethnic categories,  $F(5,110) = 1.65$ ;  $p = .15$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ . With regards to individual items, two questions were found to be significantly related to participant ethnicity. Specifically, the researchers found that ethnicity influenced responses to question two (*If the government is not successful in their fight against crime, citizens are justified to take the law into their own hands*)  $F(5,114) = 3.05$ ;  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ ; and question seven (*Citizens who take the law into their own hands form a danger to society – Reverse coded*),  $F(5,116) = 2.58$ ;  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ . The post-hoc tests could not identify where the significance lay for Question two; however, for the seventh item, the difference between ‘Other’ ethnic minorities ( $M = 4.86$ ;  $SD = 1.22$ ) those with multiple ethnicities ( $M = 2.71$ ;  $SD = 1.44$ ) was statistically significant (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .04$ ). Those identifying with ‘other’ ethnic minority groups expressed greater agreement with this statement than those who identified with multiple ethnic groups.

Finally, the researcher correlated the scores for participants’ age and support for vigilantism in general. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant - yet weak - relationship between these two variables,  $r = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ . This association was found to have a negative direction; that is, the older the participant, the lower their support for vigilantism in general.

### ***Support for Vigilantism in General - Reasoning Behind Participants’ Responses***

The final aspect of this scale possessed a qualitative element. Expanding upon Haas’ (2010) scale, the researcher asked participants: “*If you want to, or feel it is necessary, please provide the reasoning behind your answers. This can be one specific item, or multiple items.*” A content analysis of the responses identified a number of recurring themes.

A core concept that many participants expressed was the desire/need to view incidents of vigilantism on a case-by-case basis. That is, they found it difficult to express support for this behaviour ‘in general’, and felt that each occurrence of vigilantism required separate analysis.

*“Would really depend on specifics of the case...”*

*“Only under certain circumstances would I feel comfortable/be OK with someone taking the law into their own hands...”*

*“It feels like it is hard to generalize or think of more than one specific case when answering the questions, in some cases I feel it more justified that a citizen takes the law into their own hands, but in other cases not so much...”*

*“...Case by case basis...”*

Some respondents went on to describe the situations in which they would support vigilante action. It was repeatedly explained that vigilantism could be justified if it occurred in response to the criminal justice system failing to administer what they perceived to be an appropriate punishment to the precipitating offender.

*“...The law states that someone is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. if for some reason a very guilty person is acquitted, and someone like the father of the daughter who was raped takes the law into their own hands that is understandable...”*

*“I believe that if an offender who was accused of murder or some other extreme crime was released because of some loop hole in the law even though the evidence was strong, I believe they should receive justice despite the judicial decision.”*

*“If the law can't sentence the offender then someone will have to. Like a vigilante of some sort.”*

In contrast to the previous theme, other respondents would state that vigilantism may have potentially negative, long-term consequences. In particular, participants would state that it was necessary for individuals to adhere the established rules of society.

*“Submitting to government authority and judgement in legal and criminal matters makes sense overall. They have access to more information than private citizens have, and one has to trust that they are generally reliable and have reasonably good judgement...”*

*“...in the long run it is not a good idea. Vigilantes generally do not give their victims any mercy or benefit of the doubt. They pose a threat to everyone since anyone could be caught in a compromising situation at some time that makes them look guilty when they really are not. Vigilantes would shoot first and ask questions later and that would lead to more innocent deaths...”*

## **6.1 Responses to Vignette A (Precipitating Crime Vignette)**

After having read the precipitating crime vignette, participants were then asked to complete a series of scales which measured their empathy and blame towards the precipitating crime victim, as well as their outrage and desire to punish the precipitating offender. This was then followed by a section that asked participants what they would do in Mr Wilmore's situation, in addition to whether the offender deserved a punishment (and if so, what type).

## **6.2 Empathy with precipitating crime victim**

The first subscale measured empathy with the precipitating crime victim. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .708, indicating that the scale was overall internally reliable and consistent. For two of the items (*I pity Mr Wilmore AND When reading this article, I realised that what had happened to Mr Wilmore could happen to me too*) Cronbach's alpha increased if they were removed (0.712 AND 0.709, respectively). However, given that the scale was only four items in length and that these increases were slight, the decision was made to leave both items in the final analyses.

The possible composite scores for this scale ranged from 4 to 28, with the average score being 23.26 and the standard deviation was 3.99. This data suggests that participants were typically empathetic towards the precipitating crime victim and the results of this scale did not vary greatly.

### ***Empathy with the Precipitating Crime Victim - Comparing the Four Conditional Groups***

An ANOVA compared the average scores of the respondents within the four different conditions. The results demonstrated that empathy with the precipitating crime victim did not vary across the four conditional groups,  $F(3,121) = 1.46$ ;  $p = 0.23$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ . Similarly, none of the individual items within the scale reached or neared statistical significance.

### ***Empathy with the Precipitating Crime Victim – Influence of Precipitating Victim Ethnicity***

An independent samples t-test was run to establish whether actor ethnicity influenced empathy with the precipitating crime victim. This test did not identify any statistically significant differences between participants who read a vignette with a 'light skinned' victim ( $M = 22.61$ ;  $SD = 4.13$ ) and those who read one with a 'dark skinned' victim ( $M = 23.73$ ;  $SD = 3.81$ ),  $t(121) = -1.57$ ;  $p = 0.12$ . Furthermore, none of the individual items within the scale approached or reached statistical significance.



### ***Influence of Participants' Demographic Characteristics***

A series of tests were conducted to determine if the participants' demographic characteristics influenced their expressed empathy. An independent samples t-test indicated that participant sex influenced empathy towards the precipitating crime victim,  $t(120) = -2.20$ ;  $p = .03$ . Specifically, female participants ( $M = 23.74$ ;  $SD = 3.59$ ) typically scored higher than male respondents ( $M = 22.11$ ;  $SD = 4.46$ ). In terms of particular items, one single item reached statistical significance. For item two (*I pity Mr Wilmore*), the male average score ( $M = 4.59$ ;  $SD = 1.81$ ) was significantly lower than that of female participants ( $M = 5.44$ ;  $SD = 1.51$ );  $t(123) = -2.84$ ;  $p < .01$ .

In comparison, an independent samples t-test did not identify a significant relationship between empathy for the precipitating crime victim and victimisation within the previous 24 months. The results suggested that this was a near significant relationship,  $t(121) = -1.69$ ;  $p = .09$ ; with those who did not experience victimisation ( $M = 23.54$ ,  $SD = 4.03$ ) expressing greater empathy than those who had ( $M = 22.13$ ,  $SD = 3.73$ ). With regards to individual items, two items on the scale did reach statistical significance. Specifically, for question one (*I find it terrible what happened to Mr Wilmore*), participants who had been victimised ( $M = 5.73$ ;  $SD = 1.26$ ) indicated less agreement than non-victimised respondents ( $M = 6.25$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ),  $t(124) = -2.31$ ;  $p = .02$ . Similarly, for question two (*I pity Mr Wilmore*), those who had been victimised in the past 24 months expressed less agreement ( $M = 4.60$ ;  $SD = 1.65$ ) than those who had not experienced victimisation ( $M = 5.31$ ;  $SD = 1.65$ ),  $t(124) = -2.06$ ,  $p = .04$ .

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a relationship between participant education and empathy with the precipitating crime victim. The ANOVA identified a near significant relationship between education level and composite scores for this scale,  $F(3,119) = 2.32$ ;  $p = .08$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . With regards to directionality, the difference between secondary school ( $M = 24.55$ ,  $SD = 4.04$ ) and certificate level participants ( $M = 21.94$ ,  $SD = 4.63$ ) was the biggest. Similarly, two individual items in the scale approached – but did not reach – statistical significance. For question one (*I find it terrible what happened to Mr Wilmore*), participants with a post-graduate qualification ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) expressed considerably less agreement than those with only a secondary school education ( $M = 6.45$ ,  $SD = .90$ ),  $F(3,122) = 2.62$ ;  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . In comparison, for question four (*I*

*feel for Mr Wilmore*) participants with secondary school education ( $M = 6.33$ ;  $SD = 1.11$ ) expressed stronger agreement with this item in comparison to those with certificate level education ( $M = 5.44$ ;  $SD = 1.42$ ),  $F(3,121) = 2.31$ ;  $p = .08$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ .

With regards to participant ethnicity, a one way ANOVA demonstrated that there was no statistically significant relationship between this characteristic and empathy for the precipitating crime victim,  $F(5, 113) = 0.47$ ;  $p = .80$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . This remained true when analysing the individual items within the scale.

Finally, Pearson's correlation was used examined the relationship between respondent age and expressed empathy for the precipitating crime victim. The analysis found that no statistically significant relationship existed,  $r = .13$ ,  $p = .15$ .

### **6.3 Outrage towards the precipitating offender**

The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .79, indicating that the scale possessed moderate internal reliability and that the items within the scale measured the same concept. An individual item analysis indicated that Cronbach's did not increase with the removal of any of the individual questions, thus, all the scale items were included in the final data analysis.

For this scale, possible composite scores ranged from 6 to 42, with the average score being 33.69 with a standard deviation of 6.43. This average suggests that participants expressed what could be viewed as moderate to strong outrage towards the precipitating offender.

#### ***Outrage towards the precipitating offender - Comparing the Four Conditional Groups***

A one-way ANOVA was performed to assess whether respondents in the four conditional groups expressed differing outrage towards the precipitating offender. The results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the different conditional groups,  $F(3,119) = 0.13$ ;  $p = .94$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Furthermore, the ANOVA identified no statistically significant relationships between the condition that participants were placed in and the individual items of the scale; nor did any of these items near statistical significance.

### ***Outrage towards the precipitating offender - Influence of Precipitating Crime Victim Ethnicity***

To determine whether victim ethnicity influenced outrage towards the precipitating offender, an independent samples t-test was run. The test indicated that there was no significant differences between respondents who read about a 'light skinned' victim and those who's vignette was about a 'dark skinned' victim,  $t(121) = 0.51$ ;  $p = .61$ . Similarly, no differences were detected when examining the individual questions within the scale.

### ***Outrage towards the precipitating offender - Influence of Participants' Demographic Characteristics***

An independent samples t-test established that there was no significant relationship between outrage towards the participating offender and participant sex,  $t(118) = -1.63$ ;  $p = .11$ . When examining the separate items of the scale, however, question one (*The stranger's behaviour is not justifiable in any way*) did reach significance,  $t(123) = -3.11$ ;  $p < .01$ . For this particular item, females expressed stronger agreement ( $M = 5.95$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) in comparison to male participants ( $M = 5.04$ ;  $SD = 1.90$ ).

In comparison to sex, previous victimisation was significantly related to outrage towards the precipitating offender,  $t(119) = -2.68$ ;  $p < .01$ . On average, participants who had experienced previous victimisation within the past 24 months expressed less outrage towards the precipitating offender ( $M = 31.03$ ;  $SD = 5.55$ ), in comparison to those who had not ( $M = 34.58$ ;  $SD = 6.50$ ). In terms of individual items, the first two questions reached significance. For question one (*The stranger's behaviour is not justifiable in any way*), participants who had been victimised ( $M = 4.93$ ;  $SD = 1.87$ ) expressed significantly less agreement with this statement than those who had not ( $M = 5.84$ ;  $SD = 1.48$ ),  $t(124) = -2.75$ ;  $p < .01$ . Similarly, previously victimised respondents ( $M = 4.63$ ;  $SD = 1.99$ ) obtained significantly lower scores than their counterparts ( $M = 5.67$ ;  $SD = 1.63$ ) for question two (*The stranger's behaviour is morally reprehensible*),  $t(122) = -2.87$ ;  $p < .01$ .

A one-way ANOVA demonstrated that there was no statistically significant relationship between participant education and outrage towards the precipitating offender,  $F(3,117) = 1.54$ ;  $p = .21$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ . In addition, none of the individual items within the scale approached or achieved significance.

In terms of participant ethnicity, a one-way ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between this characteristic and outrage towards the precipitating offender;  $F(5,112) = 0.67$ ;  $p = .65$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Furthermore, none of the individual items within this scale neared or reached statistical significance.

Pearson's correlation examined the relationship between the age of the participant and expressed outrage towards the precipitating crime victim. The analysis found that no statistically significant relationship existed,  $r = .14$ ,  $p = .12$ .

#### **6.4 Blame for precipitating crime victim**

For this scale, Cronbach's alpha was .805. This indicates that this scale is internally reliable and consistent. For the individual item analysis, it was found that the removal of one item would increase the Cronbach's alpha. Specifically, if the item "Mr Wilmore has himself to thank for the broken windows" was removed, the Cronbach's alpha would increase to .808. It was decided that this increase was not large enough to warrant the removal of the item, and the decision was made to include all items in the final data analysis of the scale.

The possible composite scores for this scale ranged from 5 to 35, with the average score from the entire sample being 8.98 and a standard deviation of 4.43. This suggests that the average participant expressed very little blame towards the precipitating crime victim.

#### ***Blame for precipitating crime victim – Comparing the Four Conditional Groups***

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether participants in the four differing conditions expressed different blame towards the precipitating crime victim. The results of the test showed that there was no statistically significant differences across the groups,  $F(3,119) = .65$ ;  $p = .58$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . Furthermore, none of the single items approached or reached statistical significance.

#### ***Blame for precipitating crime victim - Influence of Precipitating Crime Victim Ethnicity***

An independent samples t-test was run to examine the relationship between actor ethnicity and blame for the precipitating crime victim. This analysis showed that there was no statistically significant relationship for the composite scores of this scale,  $t(121) = -.02$ ;  $p = .98$ ). Similarly, none of the specific items neared or achieved significance.

### ***Blame for precipitating crime victim - Influence of Participants' Demographic Characteristics***

An independent samples t-test was conducted to analyse the relationship between participant sex and blame towards the precipitating crime victim. The results indicated that the differences between males ( $M = 9.95$ ;  $SD = 4.55$ ) and females ( $M = 8.38$ ;  $SD = 4.25$ ) approached statistical significance,  $t(119) = 1.92$ ;  $p = .06$ ). Similarly, the differences between male ( $M = 1.80$ ;  $SD = 1.08$ ) and female ( $M = 1.47$ ;  $SD = .96$ ) respondents for question five (*Mr Wilmore is stupid*) approached statistical significance,  $t(122) = 1.77$ ;  $p = .08$ ). Finally, for question one (*Mr Wilmore has himself to thank for the broken windows*), male participants ( $M = 1.85$ ;  $SD = 1.40$ ) expressed significantly greater agreement with this statement than females ( $M = 1.41$ ;  $SD = .78$ ),  $t(122) = 2.24$ ;  $p = .03$ .

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a relationship between victimisation within the past 24 months and blame towards the precipitating victim. The results indicated that there was a near significant difference,  $t(119) = 1.73$ ;  $p = .09$ . Participants who had been previously victimised, expressed greater overall blame towards the precipitating crime victim ( $M = 10.10$ ;  $SD = 4.89$ ) than those who had not experienced victimisation during this period ( $M = 8.57$ ;  $SD = 4.20$ ). Similarly, results for question one (*Mr Wilmore has himself to thank for the broken windows*) approached statistical significance,  $t(123) = 1.78$ ;  $p = .08$ . Participants with previous victimisation experience ( $M = 1.87$ ;  $SD = 1.48$ ) achieved higher scores for this item, in comparison to those without this experience ( $M = 1.47$ ;  $SD = .89$ ).

In terms of participant education, a one-way ANOVA indicated that there was no significant relationship between this variable and blame for the precipitating crime victim,  $F(3,117) = 1.55$ ;  $p = .21$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ . One item did approach significance – specifically, question two (*Mr Wilmore is (Not to blame... Completely to blame) for the broken windows*),  $F(3, 120) = 2.26$ ;  $p = .09$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . In terms of directionality, participants who had achieved secondary school education ( $M = 1.56$ ;  $SD = .91$ ) expressed less agreement with this statement than respondents who obtained certificate level education ( $M = 2.22$ ;  $SD = 1.44$ ).

A one-way ANOVA examined the relationship between blame for the precipitating crime victim and participant ethnicity. The test found that composite scores were not significantly related to ethnic identification,  $F(5,111) = 1.37$ ;  $p = .40$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . One

individual item, however, did achieve statistical significance. In particular, for question one (*Mr Wilmore has himself to thank for the broken windows*), a significant difference between the ethnic groups was identified,  $F(5,115) = 2.52$ ;  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ . Post Hoc analyses were conducted to determine the origin of this significance. It was found that a statistically significant difference was present between Caucasians and ‘Other’ Ethnic Minorities, (*Tukey HSD*,  $p = .03$ ). In terms of directionality, ‘Other’ Minorities ( $M = 2.42$ ;  $SD = 1.73$ ) placed more blame upon Mr Wilmore than Caucasians ( $M = 1.46$   $SD = .92$ ). A second significant post-hoc difference was identified between ‘Other’ minorities ( $M = 2.42$ ;  $SD = 1.73$ ) and those who identified as Maori/Pacific Island ( $M = 1.00$ ;  $SD < .00$ ) (*Tukey HSD*,  $p = .04$ )

Pearson’s correlation examined the relationship between participant age and expressed blame towards the precipitating crime victim. The analysis found that no statistically significant relationship existed,  $r = -.01$ ,  $p = .89$ .

### **6.5 Desire to punish the precipitating offender**

The next variable being measured was participants’ desire to punish the precipitating offender. For this scale, Cronbach’s alpha was reported as .70. While a higher score would be preferable, this still suggests a moderate internal reliability for the scale. In terms of individual item analysis, it was found that the removal of any item did not increase the Cronbach’s alpha. Thus, the researcher included all items in the scale for the final analysis.

The possible scores on this scale ranged from 4 to 28. On average, participants scored 24.68 points on this scale, with a standard deviation of 3.64. This suggests a high desire to punish the precipitating offender amongst participants with little spread in scores.

#### ***Desire to punish the precipitating offender - Comparing the Four Conditional Groups***

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between conditional allocation and desire to punish the precipitating offender. The results of the test showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the participants across the four conditions,  $F(3,115) = 0.84$ ;  $p = .47$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Furthermore, none of the individual items within the scale reached or neared statistical significance.

### ***Desire to punish the precipitating offender - Influence of Precipitating Crime Victim Ethnicity***

An independent samples t-test was performed to examine the association between victim ethnicity and desire to punish the precipitating offender. The results of this test indicated that there was a near significant relationship,  $t(115) = 1.75, p = .08$ . With regards to directionality, participants who read about a 'light skinned' victim ( $M = 25.25; SD = 3.02$ ) expressed a greater desire to punish the offender in comparison to those who's vignette described a 'dark skinned' victim ( $M = 24.09; SD = 4.13$ ). When examining the items individually, statistical significance was achieved for one question  $t(123) = 2.16; p = .03$ . Specifically, for question three (*The authorities should ignore the broken windows – Reverse Coded*), respondents with a 'light skinned' victim ( $M = 6.75; SD = .68$ ) indicated stronger agreement with this statement once reverse coded than those with a 'dark skinned' victim ( $M = 6.43; SD = .95$ ). Furthermore, the differences in scores approached statistical significance for question one (*The stranger should be prosecuted for what he did*),  $t(122) = 1.74, p = .09$ . Respondents to a 'light skinned' victim ( $M = 6.37; SD = 1.02$ ) indicated greater agreement with this item when compared to those who read about a 'dark skinned' victim ( $M = 5.98; SD = 1.39$ ).

### ***Desire to punish the precipitating offender - Influence of Participants' Demographic Characteristics***

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the relationship between participant sex and desire to punish the precipitating offender. The analysis identified that a statistically significant association was present,  $t(114) = -2.13; p = .04$ . Specifically, it was found that females obtained larger composite scores for this scale ( $M = 25.17; SD = 3.31$ ), in comparison to male participants ( $M = 23.68; SD = 4.06$ ). Furthermore, a near statistically significant difference between females and males was noted for question two (*The stranger should do penance for his behaviour*),  $t(120) = -1.87; p = .06$ . As with the composite scores, females expressed stronger agreement with this statement ( $M=5.74; SD=1.45$ ) than male participants ( $M = 5.18; SD = 1.87$ ). Similarly, the relationship between sex and responses to question four (*The stranger is...for the broken windows*) neared statistical significance,  $t(122) = -1.97; p = .051$ . Once again, females expressed stronger agreement with this statement ( $M = 6.59; SD = .99$ ) than male participants ( $M = 6.16; SD = 1.49$ ).

The next demographic variable to be analysed was the influence of previous victimisation upon the desire to punish the precipitating offender. An independent samples t-test highlighted that no statistically significant relationship existed between previous victimisation and composite scores for this scale,  $t(115) = -1.31$ ;  $p = .19$ . Similarly, the t-test did not identify any (near) significant relationships for the individual items in the scale.

A one-way ANOVA examined the association between the desire to punish the precipitating offender and respondents' education. The results did not detect a significant relationship between desire to punish and obtained education level,  $F(3,117) = 1.55$ ;  $p = .21$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . Similarly, none of the individual items within the scale approached or reached significance.

Following on from education, the researchers examined the relationship between participant ethnicity and their desire to punish the precipitating offender. A one-way ANOVA demonstrated that a significant relationship existed between respondent ethnicity and the composite scores for this scale;  $F(5,108) = 2.50$ ;  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ . In terms of directionality, the biggest difference for this scale was between African American participants ( $M = 20.67$ ;  $SD = 5.13$ ) and respondents who identified with multiple ethnic groups ( $M = 26.45$ ;  $SD = 1.81$ ). It is important to note that none of the post-hoc analyses achieve statistical significance. In terms of individual items, the ANOVA revealed that the two of the four questions reached statistical significance. For question two (*The Stranger should do penance for his behaviour*), three significant differences were noted,  $F(5,114) = 3.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ . Specifically, African American respondents ( $M = 2.33$ ;  $SD = 1.53$ ) scored significantly lower when compared to Caucasians ( $M = 5.69$   $SD = 1.45$ ), (*Tukey HSD*  $p < .01$ ); Asians ( $M = 5.42$ ;  $SD = 1.98$ ), (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .03$ ); and persons with multiple ethnicities ( $M = 6.07$ ;  $SD = 1.33$ ), (*Tukey HSD*  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, scores for question four (*The stranger is ... for the broken windows*) reached significance,  $F(5, 115) = 2.72$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ . Participants who identified as Caucasian ( $M = 6.62$ ;  $SD = .94$ ) obtained significantly higher scores than those who identified as Asian ( $M = 5.42$ ;  $SD = 1.73$ ), (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .02$ ). Finally, the scores for question one (*The stranger should be prosecuted for what he did*) neared significance,  $F(5, 114) = 2.10$ ,  $p = .07$ . The biggest differences for this item lay between Maori/Pacific Islander respondents ( $M = 6.71$ ;  $SD = .76$ ) and Asians ( $M = 5.33$ ;  $SD = 2.06$ ).



Pearson's correlation examined the relationship between the age of the participant and desire to punish the precipitating offender. The analysis found a significant – yet weak - positive relationship,  $r = .20$ ,  $p = .04$ . This indicates that as participant age increased, so did their expressed desire to punish the precipitating offender.

***What would you do if you were in Mr Wilmore's situation?***

After the scale which measured the desire to punish the precipitating offender, respondents were asked “*What would you do if you were in Mr Wilmore's situation?*” Participants were given a text box and allowed to write an explanation of any desired length. In analysing the responses given, a number of repeating themes were identified:

- The most common response given by participants was that they contact the police regarding the damage to the property.
- A smaller number of participants indicated that they would have pursued/chased the offender and attempted to detain him.
- An even smaller number had suggested that they would not have left their house, as they felt such behaviour was dangerous.

***Stranger Punishment: Decision, Reasoning, Points, and Type***

Participants were then asked a series of questions regarding the punishment of the stranger. Respondents were asked “*according to you, does the stranger deserve to be punished?*” to which the vast majority of participants answered ‘Yes’ (91.3%). When asked to provide their reasoning, as expected, the majority explained that the stranger had committed an offence which warranted punishment.

If they had indicated they felt that the stranger deserved to be punished, they were asked two additional questions - “*What type of punishment, and how much of it, does the stranger deserve according to you?*” and “*Imagine having to express the punishment that you just gave to the stranger in punishment points, with a minimum of 0 points and a maximum of 20 points. How many punishment points would you give to the stranger?*” In terms of punishment type, the most frequently suggest ideas were:

- Pay a fine to compensate the victim of the precipitating crime. This fine should be adequate enough to cover the cost of repairing the cars windows.

- A punishment involving a community sentence.
- A short prison sentence.

The average number of punishment points was 8.3. However, the standard deviation was 5.36, suggesting that there was great variance in participants' scores. An independent samples t-test showed that the ethnicity of the precipitating crime victim did not influence the number of punishment points administered to the vigilante,  $t(105) = -.62$ ,  $p = .54$ . Furthermore, an ANOVA demonstrated that there were no statistically significant differences between the different conditional groups,  $F(3,103) = .30$ ,  $p = .82$ .

### **6.6 Responses to Vignette B (Vigilante's Response Vignette)**

After having read the vignette outlining the vigilante's response, participants were then asked to complete a series of scales which measured their empathy and blame towards the vigilante's victim, as well as their outrage and desire to punish the vigilante. Following these scales, participants were asked once more what they would do in Mr Wilmore's situation, in addition to whether the Mr Wilmore deserved a punishment (and if so, what type).

### **6.7 Empathy with vigilante's victim**

The first scale measured participants' empathy with the vigilante's victim. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .88, indicating that the scale was internally reliable and that the items were attempting to measure the same construct. The individual item analyses indicate that the removal of any item would not increase the Cronbach's alpha. Hence, all items for this scale were included for the final analysis.

The possible composite scores of this scale ranged from 3 to 21. On average, for the total sample, participants achieved a composite score of 12.96, with a standard deviation of 4.90. This indicates that participants felt moderate empathy with the vigilante's victim.

### ***Empathy with vigilante's victim - Influence of Vigilante and Victim Ethnicity***

A two-way ANOVA was used to compare the effects of vigilante and victim ethnicity, as well as the interaction effect of these two variables, for scores regarding empathy with the vigilante's victim. The results indicated that the main effect for vigilante ethnicity was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 121) = 1.04$ ,  $p = .31$ ); nor was there a significant effect for the

ethnicity of the victim ( $F(1, 121) = .00, p = .98$ ). Similarly, the interaction between vigilante and victim ethnicity was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 121) = .10, p = .76$ ).

### ***Empathy with vigilante's victim - Influence of Participants' Demographic Characteristics***

The researchers performed an independent samples t-test but did not identify any statistically significant relationship between participant sex and empathy for the vigilante's victim,  $t(122) = -1.25, p = .22$ . In terms of individual items, question three (*I feel for Mr Lewis*) neared statistical significance,  $t(123) = -1.70, p = .09$ . Specifically, females ( $M = 4.38; SD = 1.81$ ) expressed greater agreement with this item in comparison to males ( $M = 3.83; SD = 1.65$ ).

The next variable to be examined was the influence of previous victimisation. An independent samples t-test demonstrated that there was no significant differences between those who had been victimised in the past 24 months and those who had not,  $t(123) = -0.46, p = .65$ . Furthermore, none of the individual items within the scale neared or reached statistical significance.

The results of a one-way ANOVA demonstrated that there was no statistically significant relationship between participant education and empathy with the vigilante's victim,  $F(3,121) = 1.45, p = .23, \eta^2 = .04$ . Similarly, none of the individual questions approached or achieved significance.

A one-way ANOVA highlighted a statistically significant relationship between the empathy expressed for the vigilante's victim and the ethnic identity of the participant,  $F(5,115) = 4.46; p = .001, \eta^2 = .16$ . It should be noted, however, that none of the post-hoc tests achieved statistical significance. The biggest difference in means lay between African Americans ( $M = 7.00; SD = 2.65$ ) and Maori/Pacific Islander respondents ( $M = 15.43; SD = 6.32$ ). In addition, statistically significant differences were identified for two of the individual items. For question one (*I find it terrible that Mr Lewis was beaten up*),  $F(5,116) = 4.10, p < .01, \eta^2 = .16$ , the difference between Maori/Pacific Island participants ( $M = 6.14; SD = 2.27$ ) and those multiple ethnic identities ( $M = 3.64; SD = 1.78$ ) was significant at the Post Hoc level (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .04$ ). Although the post-hoc analysis did not indicate directionality, there was a significant difference for question two (*I pity Mr Lewis*),  $F(5,116) = 3.17, p = .01, \eta^2 = .12$ . The biggest difference for this question was between African

Americans ( $M = 2.33$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ) and Maori/Pacific Island participants ( $M = 2.00$ ;  $SD = 1.00$ ).

Pearson's correlation examined the relationship between respondent age and empathy for the vigilante's victim. The analysis found that no statistically significant relationship existed,  $r = -.04$ ,  $p = .66$ .

### **6.8 Outrage at vigilante**

The next variable to be measured was outrage at the vigilante. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .79, indicating overall internal reliability and consistency. The individual item analysis demonstrated that Cronbach's alpha would increase if one item was removed. Specifically, if question four (*I feel sympathy Mr Wilmore*), increase to .81 if this item were removed. The decision was made that this increase was not substantial enough to warrant the items removal from the scale. Hence, the final analysis contained all of original seven items.

The possible composite scores for this scale were 7 to 49, with the average score from the overall sample being 31.61 and a standard deviation of 8.21. This suggests that participants were moderately outraged at the vigilante, but that responses varied.

#### ***Outrage at vigilante - Influence of Vigilante and Victim Ethnicity***

A two-way ANOVA was used to compare the effects of vigilante and victim ethnicity, as well as the interaction effect of these two variables, for composite scores for outrage the vigilante. The results obtained indicated that the main effect for vigilante ethnicity was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 121) = .68$ ,  $p = .41$ ); nor was there a significant effect for the ethnicity of the victim ( $F(1, 121) = .026$ ,  $p = .61$ ). Similarly, the interaction between vigilante and victim ethnicity was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 121) = .11$ ,  $p = .74$ ).

#### ***Outrage at vigilante - Influence of Participants' Demographic Characteristics***

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the relationship between participant sex and outrage toward to the vigilante. The results of the test did not identify any statistically significant relationships,  $t(113) = -.57$ ,  $p = .57$ . It should be noted, however, that two of the individual questions within the scale did approach significance. With question three (*I am angry at Mr Wilmore*), females ( $M = 4.25$ ;  $SD = 2.01$ ) scored higher than males ( $M = 3.59$ ;  $SD = 2.00$ ),  $t(118) = -.26$ ,  $p = .09$ . Similarly, for question six (*Mr Wilmore was completely*

*right in beating up Mr Lewis – Reverse Coded*), females ( $M = 5.96$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ) expressed greater agreement than male respondents ( $M = 5.41$ ;  $SD = 1.88$ ),  $t(122) = -1.83$ ,  $p = .07$ .

An independent samples t-test illustrated that there was no statistically significant relationship between previous victimisation in the past 24 months and outrage towards the vigilante,  $t(114) = -.21$ ,  $p = .84$ . Furthermore, none of the individual items in the scale approached or reached statistical significance.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine the relationship between participant education and outrage towards the vigilante. A statistically significant relationship was identified,  $F(3,112) = 2.99$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ . Post-hoc tests were conducted to determine the directionality of these differences. The difference between participants with certificate ( $M = 27.63$ ;  $SD = 8.07$ ) and secondary school education ( $M = 34.48$ ;  $SD = 7.63$ ) was significant (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .03$ ) – participants with certificate level education expressed less outrage towards the vigilante. In terms of specific items, question two (*Mr Wilmore's behaviour is morally reprehensible*) neared statistical significance,  $F(3, 122) = 2.22$ ,  $p = .09$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . The biggest difference lay between secondary school ( $M = 5.00$ ;  $SD = 1.80$ ) and certificate ( $M = 3.67$ ;  $SD = 1.81$ ) participants.

The next one-way ANOVA examined the relationship between participant ethnicity and outrage at the vigilante. The ANOVA did not identify any statistically significant relationship between participant ethnicity and composite scores,  $F(5,106) = 1.03$ ,  $p = .40$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . With regards to individual items, one question in the scale achieved statistical significance, with two other items nearing statistical significance. Specifically, question one (*Mr Wilmore's behaviour is not justifiable in any way*) reached statistical significance –  $F(5,115) = 3.59$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ . The post hoc analysis identified statistically significant differences between African Americans ( $M = 2.00$ ;  $SD = 1.00$ ) and Asians ( $M = 5.58$ ;  $SD = 1.78$ ), (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .033$ ); and between Asians, ( $M = 5.58$ ;  $SD = 1.78$ ) and 'Other' ethnic minorities ( $M = 2.71$ ;  $SD = 1.11$ ), (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .02$ ). Compared to participants identifying as Asian, African Americans and 'Other' ethnic minorities individuals, expressed greater agreement with this statement – indicating that they felt that the behaviour was not justifiable. Question three (*I am angry at Mr Wilmore*) neared significance  $F(5,111) = 2.24$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ ; with the biggest difference between African Americans ( $M = 2.00$ ;  $SD = 1.41$ ) and Maori/Pacific Island respondents ( $M = 5.17$ ;  $SD = 2.32$ ). Whereas for question six

(*Mr Wilmore was completely right in beating up Mr Lewis – Reverse Coded*), the largest difference was between ‘Other’ ethnic minority members ( $M = 4.29$ ;  $SD = 2.29$ ) and Asians ( $M = 6.17$ ;  $SD = 1.03$ ),  $F(5, 115) = 2.23$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ .

Pearson’s correlation examined the relationship between the age of the participant and expressed outrage towards the vigilante. The analysis found that no statistically significant relationship existed,  $r = -.02$ ,  $p = .87$ .

## **6.9 Blame for the vigilante’s victim**

The next variable to be examined was blame for the vigilante’s victim. The researchers performed a Cronbach’s alpha for the scale, and produced a score of .85. This indicates that the scale is consistent and internally reliable. Cronbach’s alpha did not increase with the removal of any of the individual items. As a result, the final analysis included all of the questions.

The possible composite scores for this scale ranged from 5 to 35. On average, participants scored 21.41 on this scale, with a standard deviation 7.31. This indicates moderate blame for the vigilante’s victim, but that scores varied considerably.

### ***Blame for the vigilante’s victim - Influence of Vigilante and Victim Ethnicity***

A two-way ANOVA was used to compare the effects of vigilante and victim ethnicity, as well as the interaction effect of these two variables, for composite scores for blame for the vigilante’s victim. The results obtained indicated that the main effect for vigilante ethnicity was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 119) = 2.63$ ,  $p = .11$ ); nor was there a significant effect for the ethnicity of the victim ( $F(1, 119) = 1.29$ ,  $p = .26$ ). Similarly, the interaction between vigilante and victim ethnicity was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 119) = .55$ ,  $p = .46$ ).

### ***Blame for the vigilante’s victim - Influence of Participants’ Demographic Characteristics***

An independent samples t-test examined the relationship between participant sex and blame for the vigilante’s victim. The analysis indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between sex and composite scores for this scale,  $t(120) = 1.26$ ,  $p = .21$ . Similarly, none of the individual items neared or achieved significance.

Similarly, an independent samples t-test highlighted that there was no statistically significant relationship between blame for the vigilante’s victim and participant victimisation

within the past 24 months,  $t(121) = -.18$ ,  $p = .86$ . None of the individual items approached or reached statistical significance.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to analyse the relationship between participant education and blame towards the vigilante's victim. The results did not identify a statistically significant relationship between respondent education and victim blaming,  $F(3,119) = 1.91$ ,  $p = .13$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . Nor did any of the specific items approach or achieve significance.

The researchers examined the relationship between participant ethnicity and blame for the vigilante's victim. To do this, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The results of the ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between blame for the victim and respondent ethnicity,  $F(5,113) = .83$ ,  $p = .53$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ . Furthermore, none of the individual items within the scale achieved or neared statistical significance.

Pearson's correlation examined the relationship between the age of the participant and blame towards the vigilante's victim. The analysis found a statistically significant relationship existed,  $r = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ . As participants became older, they expressed greater blame towards the vigilante's victim.

#### **6.10 Desire to punish the vigilante**

The final scale that measured responses to Vignette B was the 'desire to punish the vigilante' variable. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was found to be .85. This indicates that the scale is internally reliable and that the items are all measuring the same construct. Furthermore, it was found that removal of any item did not increase Cronbach's alpha; hence, the final analyses included all of the questions.

The possible composite scores for this variable ranged from 4 to 28, with participants averaging a score of 21.11 and a standard deviation of 5.81. This suggests a moderate to strong desire to punish the vigilante, with moderate variance in the scores.

#### ***Desire to punish the vigilante - Influence of Vigilante and Victim Ethnicity***

A two-way ANOVA was used to compare the effects of vigilante and victim ethnicity, as well as the interaction effect of these two variables, for composite scores for blame for the vigilante's victim. The results obtained indicated that the main effect for vigilante ethnicity was statistically significant ( $F(1, 120) = 11.66$ ,  $p = .001$ ). In comparison, there was no significant effect for the ethnicity of the victim ( $F(1, 120) = .11$ ,  $p = .74$ ). Similarly, the

interaction between vigilante and victim ethnicity was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 120) = 1.03, p = .31$ ).

With regards to the vigilante's ethnicity, participants expressed a significantly greater desire to punish a 'light skinned' vigilante ( $M = 22.84; SD = 4.82$ ) in comparison to a 'dark skinned' vigilante ( $M = 19.33; SD = 6.21$ ) – regardless of the ethnicity of the vigilante's victim. Furthermore, three of the individual questions reached significance, while the remaining item approached it. For question one (*Mr Wilmore should be prosecuted for what he did*), greater agreement was expressed when the vigilante was 'light skinned' ( $M = 5.41, SD = 1.64$ ) as opposed to 'dark skinned' ( $M = 4.29; SD = 1.99$ ),  $t(124) = 3.43, p = .001$ . A similar finding was identified for question three (*The authorities should ignore the assault – Reverse coded*) when comparing results for the 'light skinned' ( $M = 6.25; SD = 1.34$ ) and 'dark skinned' vigilante ( $M = 5.63; SD = 1.73$ ),  $t(124) = 2.22, p = .03$ . The same directionality was also identified for question four (*Mr Wilmore is...for the assault*) after comparing 'light skinned' vigilante ( $M = 6.16; SD = 1.11$ ) responses with those for 'dark skinned' vigilantes ( $M = 5.17; SD = 1.74$ ),  $t(124) = 3.80, p < .001$ . In addition, question two (*Mr Wilmore should do penance for what he did*) did approach significance,  $t(124) = 1.83, p = .07$ . As with the other items, those who read about a 'light skinned' vigilante ( $M = 5.02; SD = 1.78$ ) indicated greater agreement with this statement than those who's vignette described a 'dark skinned' vigilante ( $M = 4.40; SD = 1.99$ ).

### ***Desire to punish the vigilante - Influence of Participants' Demographic Characteristics***

An independent samples t-test indicated that participant sex was not significantly related to the desire to punish the vigilante,  $t(121) = -0.97, p = 0.33$ . Similarly, none of the individual items neared or reached significance.

Another independent samples t-test was used to examine the relationship between desire to punish the vigilante and participant victimisation the past 24 months. There was no statistically significant relationship regarding the composite scores for this variable,  $t(122) = -0.13, p = 0.90$ . Furthermore, none of the individual items within the scale neared or reached statistical significance.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between participant education and desire to punish the vigilante. The results identified a statistically significant



relationship,  $F(3,120) = 4.79, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = .11$ . The post-hoc analyses identified two statistically significant differences. The first was between post-graduate ( $M = 23.51; SD = 4.95$ ) and certificate ( $M = 19.06; SD = 6.24$ ) participants (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .03$ ). The second occurred between post-graduate ( $M = 23.51; SD = 4.95$ ) and degree ( $M = 19.11; SD = 6.25$ ) level respondents, (*Tukey HSD*  $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, three of the items reached statistical significance. For question one (*Mr Wilmore should be prosecuted for what he did*), a significant difference was identified between those who possessed a degree only ( $M = 4.16; SD = 1.99$ ) and those who had also obtained post-graduate qualifications ( $M = 5.68; SD = 1.56$ ),  $F(3,120) = 4.81, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = .11$ . This difference achieved significance within the post-hoc analysis (*Tukey HSD*  $p < .01$ ). The responses for question two (*Mr Wilmore should do penance for what he did*) also reached significance,  $F(3,122) = 4.00, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = .10$ . The post-hoc analysis identified a significance difference between those with post-graduate education ( $M = 5.49; SD = 1.68$ ) and those who had earned a certificate ( $M = 4.00; SD = 1.94$ ) (*Tukey HSD*  $p < .01$ ); as well as one between post-graduates ( $M = 5.49; SD = 1.68$ ) and individuals with degrees ( $M = 4.21; SD = 1.95$ ), (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .02$ ). The difference in scores for question three (*The authorities should ignore the assault – Reverse coded*) did achieve significance,  $F(3,122) = 1.86, p = 0.04, \eta^2 = .07$ . However, the difference between certificate ( $M = 5.28; SD = 1.90$ ) and post-graduate ( $M = 6.35; SD = 1.16$ ) respondents did not achieve significance at a post-hoc level.

Similarly, a statistically significant relationship was identified when it came to examining the desire to punish the vigilante and participants' ethnicity. A one-way ANOVA highlighted a significant relationship involving composite scores for this scale,  $F(5,114) = 2.99, p = 0.01, \eta^2 = .12$ . An examination of the means showed that African Americans ( $M = 14.67; SD = 3.79$ ) expressed less desire to punish the vigilante in comparison to Asian participants ( $M = 22.83; SD = 4.04$ ); however, this was not significant at a post-hoc level. Three of the four items also reached statistical significance. The biggest difference for question one (*Mr Wilmore should be prosecuted for what he did*) lay between African Americans ( $M = 2.33; SD = 1.53$ ) and Asians ( $M = 5.42; SD = 1.78$ ),  $F(5,114) = 2.55, p = 0.03, \eta^2 = .10$ . Similarly, for question two (*Mr Wilmore should do penance for what he did*), the largest difference was between African American ( $M = 2.33; SD = 1.53$ ) and Asian participants ( $M = 5.17; SD = 1.53$ ),  $F(5,116) = 2.69, p = 0.03, \eta^2 = .10$ . Post-hoc analyses, however, demonstrated that neither of these differences achieved significance. For question

three (*The authorities should ignore the assault – Reverse coded*) the largest difference stood between Caucasians ( $M = 6.16$ ;  $SD = 1.36$ ) and ‘Other’ ethnic minority respondents ( $M = 4.29$ ;  $SD = 1.80$ ),  $F(5,114) = 2.85$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ . Furthermore, this difference reached statistical significance at a post-hoc level (*Tukey HSD*  $p = .03$ ).

Pearson’s correlation examined the relationship between the age of the participant and the desire to punish the vigilante. The analysis found that no statistically significant relationship existed,  $r = .12$ ,  $p = .20$ .

### ***What would you do if you were in Mr Wilmore’s situation?***

As with the precipitating crime, after having read the vigilante response, the participants were asked once again to indicate what they would do if in Mr Wilmore’s situation. That is, what action would they take if they identified the person who destroyed their property?

- The vast majority of respondents indicated that rather than approach Mr Lewis, they would contact the police and indicate the identity of the stranger.
- A small number did suggest that they would confront Mr Lewis and would question the motives behind his actions.
- An even smaller number proposed that they would acted similar to Mr Wilmore and would have physically assault Mr Lewis.

### ***Vigilante Punishment: Decision, Reasoning, Points, and Type***

Similar to the previous section, the researchers asked the participants whether they felt that the vigilante (Mr Wilmore) deserved to be punished. While the majority of participants did indicate that they felt that Mr Wilmore did deserve to be punished (78.6%), it is worth noting that this number was smaller than those who had felt that the precipitating offender deserved to be punished (91.3%). When asked to provide a reasoning behind their response, the most common answers fell into one of the following categories:

- Mr Lewis’ prior behaviour does not excuse Mr Wilmore,
- Mr Wilmore committed a crime also, which warrants punishment.
- Physical assault is not an appropriate response to destruction of property.
- Mr Wilmore does not possess the right to take the law into his own hands.

As with the precipitating crime, those who had suggested that Mr Wilmore deserved to be punished, were asked to provide a type of punishment and assign him a number of punishment points from 0 to 20. In terms of punishment points, the average number of punishment points assigned to the vigilante was 7.37, with a standard deviation of 5.05 – slightly lower than the score assigned to the precipitating offender. Furthermore, an ANOVA demonstrated that there were no statistically significant differences between the different conditional groups,  $F(3, 74) = .22, p = .88$ . An independent samples t-test showed that the ethnicity of the vigilante's victim did not influence the number of punishment points administered to the vigilante,  $t(76) = .51, p = .61$ . Similarly, the ethnicity of the vigilante did not influence the number of punishment points they were assigned,  $t(76) = .21, p = .83$ .

The most frequently suggested ideas for punishment type:

- Community sentence.
- Fine; or reparation for Mr Lewis' medical bills.
- Short prison sentence.

### **6.11 Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale**

The final measure to be administered was the right wing authoritarian scale. The possible scores for this scale ranged from 22 to 198. The average score for participants on the feature was 65.82, with a standard deviation of 29.37. This suggests generally low scores but with considerable variance.

#### ***Conditions***

An ANOVA was conducted to examine whether differences in right-wing authoritarianism existed across the four conditional groups. The ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in the scores obtained for this scale,  $F(3, 115) = 2.00, p = .12, \eta^2 = .05$ .

#### ***Responses to Vignette A***

A series of Pearson's correlations were run to establish whether a relationship existed between right-wing authoritarianism and responses to vignette A. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and outrage at the

precipitating offender ( $r = .05, p = .60$ ); blame for the precipitating crime victim ( $r = .04, p = .65$ ); and desire to punish the precipitating offender ( $r = -.11, p = .27$ ). One relationship did approach significance. Specifically, the correlation between right-wing authoritarianism and empathy with the precipitating crime victim ( $r = .16, p = .09$ ). This suggests that as participants scored higher on the right-wing authoritarianism scale, they were more likely to express greater empathy towards the precipitating crime victim.

### ***Responses to Vignette B***

Similarly, the researcher conducted Pearson's correlations between the responses to vignette B and right-wing authoritarianism. The results indicated that there were no significant relationships between right-wing authoritarianism and empathy with the vigilante's victim ( $r = -.02, p = .84$ ); outrage at the vigilante ( $r = -.09, p = .33$ ); blame for the vigilante's victim ( $r = .11, p = .24$ ); and desire to punish the vigilante ( $r = -.15, p = .11$ ).

### ***Influence of Participants' Demographic Characteristics***

The final aspect to consider is the influence that demographic features have upon right-wing authoritarianism. Two independent samples t-tests illustrated that there was no significant relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and participant sex,  $t(116) = -.14, p = .89$ ; as well as right wing authoritarianism and previous victimisation  $t(117) = -.15, p = .88$ . Furthermore, Pearson's correlation did not identify a significant relationship between age and this scale,  $r = -.12, p = .19$ .

An ANOVA suggested that there was no statistically significant relationship between participant education and right-wing authoritarianism,  $F(3, 115) = .51, p = .68, \eta^2 = .01$ . In comparison, the researcher did identify a significant relationship between participant ethnicity and right-wing authoritarianism,  $F(5, 109) = 2.30, p = .05, \eta^2 = .10$ . Post-hoc analyses demonstrated that this statistical difference was between those who identified as Caucasians and those who saw themselves as belonging to the 'other' ethnic minority category (*Tukey HSD*,  $p = .05$ ). In particular, members of the ethnic majority group scored significantly lower on this scale ( $M = 60.81$ ;  $SD = 30.30$ ) in comparison to 'other' ethnic minority persons ( $M = 96.5$ ;  $SD = 16.12$ ).

## **Chapter Seven: Discussion**

### **7.0 Introduction**

As it was established in Chapter Two, academic literature regarding vigilantism is limited. The majority of works predominately focus on one of two topics – either historical vigilantism within Western nations or current vigilantism within non-Western countries (Adinkrah, 2005; Bailey et al., 2011; Baker, 2002; Jacobs et al., 2005; Philips, 1987; Smith, 2004). Within these papers, very few researchers have attempted to examine which factors may influence public support for vigilante activity (Adinkrah, 2005; Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014; Miller, 201; Tankebe, 2011). This knowledge gap is particularly concerning given the potential for such attitudes to affect behaviour and result in significant consequences (Adinkrah, 2005; Baker, 2002; Martin, 2012; Swanepoel et al., 2011; Tankebe, 2011). Of the research that could be located, none of the articles had yet to consider the influence that actor ethnicity may have upon perceptions of vigilantism. This was despite both the historical and modern links between vigilantism and ethnicity (Jacobs et al., 2005; Philips, 1987; Smith, 2004; Steiker & Steiker, 2015); and the empirical evidence demonstrating that actor ethnicity influences perceptions of criminal activity (Bottoms et al., 2004; Hilinski-Rosick, 2014; Sommers et al., 2014; Willis, 1992).

While some would suggest that previous research regarding crime and ethnicity is applicable to the context vigilantism, this may not be the case. The behaviours incorporated within vigilantism are criminal offences; however, the motives associated with vigilante activity make it a unique scenario (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). Vigilantes are often assumed to be acting in response to a precipitating crime and quite possibly, the failure of the criminal justice system to address this offence (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). As a result, while they are offenders in their own right, vigilantes may be viewed more positively than ‘typical’ criminals. This specific aspect of vigilantism could potentially mediate the influence of actor ethnicity and indicate that prior research may not be applicable within this context. Hence, the aim of the current study was to determine if offender and victim ethnicity influenced public support for vigilante behaviour.

While the previous research was not presumed to be applicable, it was still used in the design and construction of the methodology as well the development of the two hypotheses:

- Participants will indicate the most support for a scenario that includes a ‘light complexion’ vigilante and a ‘dark complexion’ victim.
- Participants will indicate the least support for a scenario that includes a ‘dark complexion’ vigilante and a ‘light complexion’ victim.

As the results indicated, these hypotheses were rejected and the null hypothesis was accepted. Chapter Six demonstrated that, for the majority of items, participant perceptions were not influenced by the ethnicity of the vigilante nor that of the victim. This held true when both actors were assessed independently of each other and when the interaction between the ethnicities was considered. Of the dependent variables, the study identified one statistically significant relationship. Specifically, the participants expressed a greater desire to punish the ‘light skinned’ vigilante in comparison to the ‘dark skinned’ vigilante – regardless of the ethnicity of their victim. There are two main possible explanations for this discrepancy.

The first theory which could account for this finding is ‘in-group favouritism’. As outlined in Chapter Three (Section 3.6), this is the tendency for people to favour in-group members and derogate out-group individuals (Brewer, 1999, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A caveat of this perspective, however, is the ‘black sheep effect’. This is notion that members who violate in-group norms are judged more harshly than out-group persons who engage in the same behaviour (Biernat et al., 1999; Mendoza et al., 2014; Marques et al., 1988). The majority of respondents in this study indicated that they resided in a Western nation and identified with the ethnic majority group of that country. Thus, for the majority of the sample, the ‘light skinned’ vigilante would have been seen as an in-group member and the ‘dark skinned’ vigilante as an out-group member. The ‘light skinned’ vigilante was judged more harshly as they were violating group norms by engaging in an illegal activity (assault) (Biernat et al., 1999; Mendoza et al., 2014; Marques et al., 1988). This violation of norms could threaten the group identity and positive image held by majority members (Biernat et al., 1999; Marques et al., 1988). Conversely, based upon negative ethnic stereotypes, this behaviour may have been ‘expected’ of the ‘dark skinned’ vigilante (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Welch, 2007). Due this ‘unexpected’ activity, the ‘light skinned’ vigilante was judged more harshly by his in-group peers (fellow ethnic majority members) (Biernat et al., 1999; Mendoza et al., 2014; Marques et al., 1988).

The second possible explanation for the significant finding is the ‘sympathy perspective’. To summarise Section 3.7 from Chapter Three, the sympathy theory proposes that some individuals are sensitive to the power differences between ethnic majority and minority groups (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino, 2002; Lyons, 2006; Rodin et al., 1990). Specifically, these persons are aware that ethnic minorities are consistently disadvantaged within society (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino, 2002; Lyons, 2006; Rodin et al., 1990). Of particular relevance to the current study is the knowledge that ethnic minority members experience significant discrimination within the criminal justice system (Hanke, 1995; George & Martinez, 2002; Sommers et al., 2014). These biases may explain why minority persons may feel the need to resort to vigilante behaviour. In comparison, ethnic majority members do not face the same discrimination and disadvantage and cannot justify their decision to engage in vigilantism (Lyons, 2006; Rodin et al., 1990). It could be suggested that the use of vigilantism by ethnic majorities is yet another example of this group attempting to assert social dominance. For example, despite having implemented a system that advantages them, ethnic majority individuals are ‘above the law’ and are perceived to be capable of policing themselves. The biases of the sample also provide more support for the ‘sympathy perspective’. The majority of respondents indicated that they had attained a Degree level of education or higher. Improved education has previously been linked with lower levels of overt discrimination and an improved understanding of social inequality (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013; Lyons, 2006). Due to their tertiary education, most participants were more likely to have understood social inequalities within the criminal justice system and adjusted their responses accordingly (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013).

As it has been shown, the main finding of the current study could potentially be explained by either ‘in-group favouritism’ or the ‘sympathy perspective’. Having considered the main findings of the independent variables, this chapter will now briefly discuss the remaining variables of interest.

### **7.1 Support for vigilantism in general**

From the mean and standard deviation, it can be said that participants expressed moderate support for vigilantism in general but that these scores did vary. One possible explanation for this finding is the instrument itself. Specifically, a number of items within this scale can be interpreted as ‘all or nothing’ statements. For example, ‘*Citizens who take the law into*

*their own hands should always be prosecuted*’ and *‘Under no condition do I approve of people who take the law into their own hands’*. The inflexible nature of these items could potentially explain why a moderate score was the average – while participants may have felt that vigilantism was not always justified, they perhaps recognised unique circumstances that could permit this behaviour. Consequently, they could not express full (dis)agreement with some items. This was further supported by the qualitative statements given by some participants. Numerous respondents stated that vigilantism needed to be assessed on a ‘case by case’ basis. Participants frequently acknowledged that they believed vigilantism was justified in some situations but not others, and as a result, they sometimes found it difficult to indicate their (dis)agreement.

The study found that participant sex, ethnicity, and previous victimisation did not influence support for vigilantism in general. In addition, when comparing the scores of the four different conditions, no significant differences were identified. Educational attainment, however, was significantly related to the responses for this scale. The biggest difference lay between Certificate and Postgraduate level participants, who possessed the highest and lowest scores, respectively.

There are several potential explanations to account for the significance of education. This discussion will briefly consider two opposing ideas. It should be noted that prior studies have not attempted to provide in-depth discussion regarding the relationship between education and support for vigilantism (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 214). As a result, these propositions are unique to the current thesis. The first explanation is that persons with a higher education are in a position to better identify the negative consequences of vigilantism. For instance, the punishment of innocent people, decreased co-operation with police forces, and the potential for this behaviour to be used in a discriminatory manner (Baker, 2002; Buur & Jensen, 2004; Haas, 2010; Tankebe, 2011). This increased knowledge then leads to less support for this activity. The lack of post-graduate education may mean that Certificate participants are not able to recognise the long-term outcomes for vigilantism.

In comparison, it could also be suggested that increased educational attainment is associated with a narrower understanding of vigilantism. Higher education is commonly associated with characteristics such as improved income, greater social standing, and the



ability to live in better protected areas (American Psychology Association, 2016; Burke, 2014; Lilly et al., 2007; Williams & McShane, 2010). These privileges mean that such individuals are less likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system by becoming offenders and/or victims (American Psychological Association, 2016; Pearlman et al., 2004; Burke, 2014; Lilly et al., 2007; Williams & McShane, 2010). As a result, post graduate persons are not in a position to properly understand why individuals may resort to supporting or engaging in vigilantism. Persons with a Certificate, however, usually occupy a lower socio-economic status. This position is associated with increased risk of offending and/or victimisation (American Psychological Association, 2016; Burke, 2014; Lilly et al., 2007; Williams & McShane, 2010). Hence, they are better able to empathise with vigilante behaviours and motivations. Both of these explanations could account for the significant relationship between participant education and support for vigilantism in general. Further research should be conducted to establish if either of these theories is correct.

## **7.2 Responses to Vignette A**

### ***7.3 Empathy with Precipitating Crime Victim***

Participants expressed strong empathy towards Mr Wilmore and without much variation in their responses. This suggests that the respondents were able to empathise with the precipitating crime victim and relate to their situation in some manner. This may indicate that the decision to focus on a single incident of property destruction was well-made.

There were no significance differences in empathy scores across the four conditional groups; and the ethnicity of the precipitating crime victim did not influence responses. In terms of demographic variables, participant ethnicity, education, and previous victimisation did not influence empathy towards Mr Wilmore. It was found, however, that participant sex was significantly related to empathy scores. Female participants typically expressed greater empathy than their male counterparts. This result could possibly be explained by societal gender norms and roles (Boudet, Petesch, Turk, & Thumala, 2013; O'Neil, 2015; Wienclaw, 2014). Specifically, certain norms encourage females to be more open in their expression of 'feminine' emotions such as sympathy and pity towards others (Boudet et al., 2013; Wienclaw, 2014); whereas males are often taught that the expression of such affects lacks masculinity and could be perceived as a weakness (O'Neil, 2015; Wienclaw, 2014).

#### ***7.4 Outrage at precipitating offender***

The average for this scale suggests that participants typically expressed moderate to strong outrage toward the precipitating offender. As with the previous scale, no statistically significant differences were identified between the four conditions, nor did the ethnicity of the precipitating victim influence scores. With regards to demographic variables, participant sex, education, and ethnicity did not affect the outrage expressed towards the precipitating offender. Previous victimisation, however, was significantly related to outrage scores. Individuals who indicated having been victimised in the past 24 months demonstrated significantly less outrage toward the precipitating offender. This result confirms the findings of some previous research but contradicts the results of others (Cook & Fox, 2011; Sironi & Bonazzi, 2016). Once again, it may be the unique intentions associated with vigilantism that cause participants' to view these situations differently.

#### ***7.5 Blame for Precipitating Crime Victim***

The results for this scale indicate that participants typically felt very little blame towards the precipitating crime victim. As with the previous scales, no significant differences were identified between the conditional groups; and the ethnicity of the precipitating crime victim did not affect the blame assigned to them. Furthermore, it was found that none of the demographic variables were significantly related to blame towards the precipitating crime victim.

#### ***7.6 Desire to punish precipitating offender***

The average and standard deviation of this scale suggest that the participants possessed a strong desire to punish the offender with little variance in their responses. The analyses indicated that the ethnicity of the precipitating crime victim not influence the desire to punish, nor were there any significant differences across the four conditions. It was also found that educational attainment and previous victimisation did not affect the participants' expressed desire to punish the offender. In comparison, participant sex was found to significantly influence scores. Female participants indicated a greater desire to punish the offender. As with the previous sex-related finding, this could be a result of societal gender norms and roles (O'Neil, 2015; Wienclaw, 2014). Males are often taught that aggression and violence are masculine and therefore desirable behaviours (O'Neil, 2015). As a result of this conditioning, it is possible that male participants felt that this behaviour was 'not that serious' (O'Neil, 2015; Wienclaw, 2014). Females, however, are frequently taught that

violence and aggression are undesirable and inappropriate social behaviours (Boudet et al., 2013; Wienclaw, 2014); hence, they expressed more desire to punish the precipitating offender.

Participant ethnicity was also found to be significantly related to expressed desire to punish the offender. It was found that African Americans, Asians, and ‘Other’ ethnic minorities scored significantly lower on this scale. The knowledge gained from previous studies could be used to account for these differences. Prior literature shows that those identifying with ethnic minority groups consistently face greater discrimination within society, including the criminal justice system (Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010; Saucier et al., 2010; Sommers et al., 2014). These experiences may considerably alter the participants’ desire to administer punishment. For example, these individuals may be in a better position to understand the social disadvantages can lead to offending behaviour. They may also recognise that the criminal justice system does not treat all offenders equally and that this offender could potentially face a punishment that is disproportional to the crime that they have committed (Crawford, 2000; Crawford et al., 1998; Crow & Johnson, 2008; Kansal, 2005; Peck et al., 2014; Spohn & Sample, 2013). Knowledge such as this may lead to a lesser desire to punish offenders.

## **7.7 Responses to Vignette B**

### ***7.8 Empathy with vigilante’s victim***

The results of this subscale suggest that the sample felt moderate empathy with the vigilante’s victim. This is in contrast to the responses to the initial vignette, in which participant’s indicated strong empathy towards the precipitating crime victim. Arguably, this is related to the behaviour of the vigilante’s victim in the previous vignette. That is, participants felt that this victim was more blameworthy for their assault and less deserving of their empathy.

In regards to the independent variables, the researchers found that the ethnicity of the vigilante did not influence responses to this scale. Similarly, the ethnicity of the vigilante’s victim did not affect the empathy expressed towards them. Furthermore, the combination of actor ethnicities did not interact to significantly influence participant’s scores. In terms of demographic factors, the study found that empathy with the vigilante’s victim was not related to participant sex, previous victimisation, or education.

Respondent ethnicity, however, was significantly related participant scores. African Americans, 'Other' ethnic minorities, and those identifying with multiple ethnicities expressed less empathy with the vigilante's victim. This finding could be related to the experiences that such groups have with the criminal justice system. As mentioned earlier, ethnic minority groups are considerably disadvantaged by the current social system (Bottoms et al., 2004; Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Sommers et al., 2014; Willis, 1992). In particular, those who offend against minorities often receive lesser punishments from the criminal justice system (Baumer et al., 2000; Kleck, 1981; Williams et al., 2007). Furthermore, ethnic minority victims often receive less sympathy and resources from the Police (Baumer et al., 2000; Cramer et al., 2014; Kleck, 1981; Williams et al., 2007). As a result, those who identify with minority ethnic groups may be more accepting to the notion of using vigilantism to administer punishments; and may feel less empathy towards those who receive such punishments. As with a previous explanation, this proposition is unique to the current thesis and could not be located in prior research.

### ***7.9 Outrage at vigilante***

These findings indicate that participants expressed moderate outrage towards the vigilante. It can be seen that the participants felt less anger towards the vigilante than they did the precipitating offender. It is possible that the participants felt that the vigilante was more 'justified' in performing his offence. The unique circumstances of the vigilante mean that his behaviour, while illegal, was not as offensive as that of the precipitating offender.

No statistically significant differences were identified when the four conditions were compared. Furthermore, it was also found that the ethnicity of the victim and the vigilante did not independently nor interactively affect the outrage expressed towards Mr Lewis. As for demographic factors, the researcher found that participant ethnicity, sex, and previous victimisation did not influence the scores obtained on this scale.

It was noted, however, that education was a statistically significant variable. In particular, certificate level participants expressed less outrage towards the vigilante when compared to those with secondary school education. Given the other findings pertaining to participant education, it is suspected that this difference is a result of a Type I error.

### ***7.10 Blame for the vigilante's victim***

The scores obtained in this scale suggest that participants expressed moderate blame towards the vigilante's victim, but that these scores also varied considerably. When compared to the blame expressed towards the precipitating crime victim, it could be argued that the respondents felt considerably more blame towards the vigilante's victim. That is, they felt that the previous actions of Mr Lewis somehow made him more blameworthy for his own victimisation – he essentially 'got what he deserved'.

In terms of actor ethnicity, the study found that the individual variables of vigilante and victim ethnicity did not influence the participants' blame towards the vigilante's victim. Furthermore, the variables did not interact to significantly affect respondents' scores for this scale. Similarly, the data analysis also found that none of the demographic variables influence participants' scores. Participant sex, ethnicity, education and previous victimisation were not related to the expressed blame towards the vigilante's victim.

### ***7.11 Desire to punish the vigilante***

When compared to respondents' desire to punish the precipitating offender, it could be argued that there was considerably less desire to punish the vigilante. Once again, this finding could be related to the unique situational characteristics of the act. That is, the respondents felt that while the vigilante deserved to be punished, the motives behind his behaviour (the previous events) weakened the strength of this desire.

In comparison to all the other measurements, desire to punish the vigilante was the only factor to be influenced by one of the independent variables. As previously discussed, the researchers found that participants were more likely to indicate a significantly greater desire to punish the vigilante when they were portrayed as being 'light skinned'. This effect occurred regardless of the ethnicity of the vigilante's victim. The data analysis indicated that the ethnicity of the vigilante's victim was not independently influential. Furthermore, the two independent variables did not interact to influence participants' scores.

As for demographic factors, the analyses demonstrated that prior victimisation and participant sex did not influence the expressed desire to punish the vigilante. Comparatively, both education and ethnicity were influential factors. In terms of ethnicity, the study found that African Americans and 'Other' Ethnic minorities expressed significantly less desire to punish the vigilante. As previously noted, this could be caused

by the different criminal justice experiences of these ethnic groups (Bottoms et al., 2004; Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Sommers et al., 2014; Willis, 1992). The continual disadvantages faced by these persons may result in more understanding and leniency towards those who engage in vigilante behaviour – explaining why they may feel a lesser desire to punish the vigilante (Bottoms et al., 2004; Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Sommers et al., 2014; Willis, 1992). With regards to education, the researchers noted that those with a Certificate or Degree level of education expressed significantly less desire to punish the vigilante in comparison to those with post-graduate level education. As previously mentioned when discussing support for vigilantism in general, there are two main possible explanations for such disparity. On the one hand, it could potentially be that those with a higher education disprove of vigilantism as they have a better understanding of the wider social consequences of this behaviour. Simultaneously, the privilege that is associated with higher education may mean that such persons are ignorant to the perceived needs by ethnic persons.

### **7.12 Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale**

From the data obtained, the majority of participants scored generally low on this scale, but these results varied considerably. For the variable of right wing authoritarianism, there were no significant differences across the four conditions.

With regards to support for vigilantism in general, the study did not identify a significant relationship between this and right-wing authoritarianism. A series of correlations were calculated to assess the relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and the various scales that were used to assess participant responses to Vignette A and B. The researcher found that right-wing authoritarianism was not related to participants' responses for any of these scales.

With regards to demographic factors, the author did not identify any significant relationships between right-wing authoritarianism and age, sex, education and previous victimisation. Participant ethnicity, however, was found to be related to scores on this scale. Post-hoc analysis demonstrated that this significant difference was between participants who identified as ethnic majority members and those who indicated that they belonged to an 'other' ethnic minority group. On average, ethnic majority individuals scored

significantly lower on the right-wing authoritarianism scale in comparison to ‘other’ ethnic minority persons.

### **7.13 Possible Explanations for Insignificant Findings**

The lack of significant findings is a particularly interesting phenomenon. The prior research predicted that the ‘dark skinned’ vigilante would be perceived most negatively, while the ‘light skinned’ vigilante would be granted more leniency (Crawford, 2000; Crawford, Chiricos, & Kleck, 1998; Crow & Johnson, 2008; Kansal, 2005; Peck et al., 2014; Spohn & Sample, 2013). This lack of significant findings requires consideration.

One possible explanation is that a relationship between ethnicity and support for vigilantism was not detected simply because no such relationship exists. A select number of theorists have posited that society overall (including the criminal justice system) is gradually becoming more ‘colour blind’ – that is, ethnicity is no longer viewed as a factor in decision making (Benjamin, 1989; Jennings et al., 2014; Kleck, 1981; Menaker & Franklin, 2013). Consequently, the lack of a significant relationship indicates that the participants did not use the ethnicity of the actors in as a factor in their decision making (Benjamin, 1989; Jennings et al., 2014; Kleck, 1981; Menaker & Franklin, 2013).

Another theory is that ethnicity does not appear to be factor in vigilante situations. As noted, previous studies have identified consistent biases against ethnic minorities and towards ethnic majority members (Crawford, 2000; Crawford, Chiricos, & Kleck, 1998; Crow & Johnson, 2008; Kansal, 2005; Peck et al., 2014; Spohn & Sample, 2013). While these may be present in ‘normal’ crime scenarios, it is possible that the unique circumstances of vigilantism take precedence over ethnic biases that exist. In a typical crime, there are two clearly identifiable roles – an offender and a victim; normally, one person acts as the offender and another as the victim. However, a vigilante situation is different as the actors each occupy two roles (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014). One is a precipitating offender and victim of vigilantism; while the other is a precipitating victim and vigilante offender (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014). Arguably, this creates a much more complex scenario – one which participants may find difficult to respond to; or one to which they do not apply their usual biases (id est. racist stereotypes). It is also possible that the infrequency of vigilantism makes it a difficult crime to respond to. Most people will not encounter vigilantism throughout their daily lives and will most likely learn of these

incidents through the mass media. This dissociation may make it more difficult for participants to interpret and react to these situations. Thus, these aspects contribute to the distinctive niche that vigilante acts occupy – which may help to explain why participants did not employ their racial stereotypes in evaluating the actors.

The unique motives associated with vigilantism may also help to explain the findings of the current study (Haas, 2010). The researchers noted that, when compared to the precipitating crime victim, the vigilante's victim received less empathy and greater blame. Similarly, participants expressed less outrage and a weaker desire to punish the vigilante as opposed to the precipitating offender. These results demonstrate that the initial role played by each actor later affects how their secondary role was perceived (Haas, 2010). It should be noted that this also provides support for the 'just-world hypothesis' – the notion that people 'get what they deserve' (Haas, 2010). In this case, the vigilante was presented with the opportunity to punish his initial persecutor and the vigilante's victim was receiving punishment for their prior behaviour.

The salience of ethnicity combined with the social desirability bias could potentially explain the results (Sommers & Ellsworth, 2000, 2001). As noted in the literature review and methodology, it can often be difficult to study the influence of ethnicity (Sommers & Ellsworth, 2000, 2001). The variable needs to present, but in such a way as to not attract the attention of respondents. While there are various different ways to manipulate race, these are often detectable (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). This is even more likely given that the current sample was biased towards academics – individuals who are more likely to have received training in research or to have participated in prior studies (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). These persons would be in a better position to identify ethnicity as the variable of interest. Once respondents have recognised that ethnicity was the focus of the study, this is likely to have resulted in the social desirability bias (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). This is the notion that participants will tailor/alter their responses in such a manner so as to appear socially desirable. In this instance, the participants would have manipulated their answers so as not to appear ethnically biased (McIntyre, 2005). Academics may feel additional pressure to adjust their answers as there are arguably social expectations regarding their behaviour (they are better educated, they should not be racist) (Devine, 1989). These factors could have combined together to produce inaccurate data and 'hide' the actual



influence of actor ethnicity on support for vigilante behaviour. In a later section, the researcher will discuss how to address this limitation in future studies.

Theories surrounding stereotypes could be used to account for the lack of significant findings. As the literature review noted, people use stereotypes as part of their decision making process (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). A common stereotype is that ethnic minority members are often aggressive and violent – which may account for why they are judged and punished more severely when compared to ethnic majorities (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Madriz, 1997; Welch, 2007). With this being said, if information is provided which disconfirms or does not align with a stereotype – participants may not employ these heuristics as a part of their decision making process (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). In the current study, the vigilante and their victim were portrayed as both being university students. While this may fit within stereotypes of ethnic majority members, this goes against widely held beliefs regarding ethnic minorities (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Madriz, 1997; Welch, 2007). Consequently, the participants did not employ their typical heuristics in evaluating the behaviour of the ethnic minority actors. It is also possible that the stereotypes were activated within the participants; however, they engaged in controlled processing (Devine, 1989; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013). They recognised that these images were not accurate representations of African Americans and made the conscious effort to employ non-prejudicial beliefs. Without employing the stereotype, the participants did not discriminately apply the label of ‘criminal’ to the ‘dark skinned’ vigilante. Furthermore, without the stereotypes and labels to prime them, the respondents did not engage in in-group favouritism and derogate the out-group members. Thus, the content of the vignettes did not encourage the adherence to stereotypes, labels, and in-group favouritism.

Another possible theory is the lack of information. Previous research has shown that the decision making process can be influenced by the amount of information given to participants (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). It is possible that the vignettes did not provide sufficient information and that this is why an ethnic bias was not identified (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). Perhaps the participants felt that the details given were not enough to warrant the use of ethnic stereotypes (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013; Smith et al., 2015). While evaluating the qualitative data, it was noted

that a number of respondents in the current study stated that they felt that the story was incomplete or that they were not provided with enough information.

The presentation of vigilantism may account for the distinct lack of findings. As prior research has noted, the majority of the public form crime-related opinions based upon what is presented to them in the mass media – this includes their perceptions of vigilantism (Haas, 2010; Haas et al., 2012, 2014; Johnston, 1996). Often, these portrayals of vigilantism fall into at least one of two categories. A common presentation of vigilantism is in the literal act of ‘an eye for an eye’. Vigilantes are often presented as inflicting the same act upon their victim that was enacted towards them (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). Based off of this ideal, it is possible that the respondents felt that the vigilante act presented was not a ‘true’ act of vigilantism. From this perspective, the vigilante should have committed a crime that was similar to the one committed against him; *id est*. he should have damaged the vehicle of his victim, as opposed to physically assaulting him. It may also be that the precipitating crime was not seen as warranting a vigilante response. A common theme within the media is the notion that vigilantism is a response to extremely violent or sexual crimes (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). For example, vigilante justice is often depicted as being performed against murderers or paedophiles. These individuals are arguably viewed as being ‘more deserving’ of their punishment. Perhaps in comparison to ‘normal’ victims of vigilantism, the portrayed person was seen as ‘less deserving’.

#### **7.14 Practical and Theoretical Implications**

The current study possesses both practical and theoretical implications. With regards to practical implications, both the methodology and results of this project could assist in developing future research. Despite its limitations, this thesis can be used by other academics when reviewing vigilantism-related literature, as well as when designing studies that examine similar topics. The strengths, limitations, and findings of this report can be used to direct and improve future projects – which will be demonstrated in the sections that follow.

Beyond academia, the practical implications for this project are heavily restricted. As mentioned previously, to the researcher’s knowledge, this is the first study to examine the relationship between actor ethnicity and support for vigilante behaviour. Consequently, the results of this report should be thoroughly tested and re-tested, before any ‘real-world’

implications are implemented. If future research supports these findings, there are a number of practical implications that follow. In particular, an effort would need to be made to establish if these attitudes transform into real-world behaviour. This could be done by comparing the verdicts and sentences handed down to vigilantes belonging to differing ethnic groups. This project also found that certain demographic variables may influence support for vigilantism behaviour. Consequently, research should additionally examine whether the sentences given to offenders differ according to the characteristics of the juries and judges that assess these cases.

Another significant finding of this project is the notion that – in some instances – members of the public are more lenient towards vigilantes and less sympathetic towards their victims. This could possibly translate into changes in real-world behaviour. For example, it could mean that persons are less willing to co-operate with police investigations because they believe that the vigilante's behaviour was justified. It could also indicate that juries are less likely to find vigilante offenders guilty or that judges may hand down lighter sentences.

On a theoretical note, this thesis also contributed to the academic knowledge regarding support for vigilantism in general. A finding of particular interest was that the participants repeatedly stressed the importance of evaluating vigilantism on a case-by-case basis. This suggests that support for specific instances of vigilantism does not necessarily indicate an overall general support for this behaviour and vice versa.

With regards to theoretical implications, the results of this study have contributed towards the development of criminological theory. In particular, if future research supports these findings, this further develops knowledge regarding crime and ethnicity. Specifically, this thesis suggests that there are potentially 'exceptions' to previous conclusions. The majority of the prior literature had suggested that public perceptions would be negative towards ethnic minority actors and more favourable towards ethnic majority actors (Bottoms et al., 2004; Hilinski-Rosick et al., 2014; Petrie & Coverdill, 2010; Saucier et al., 2010; Sommers et al., 2014). However, the research only identified one significant relationship – for the remaining items, the ethnicity of the vigilante and their victim did not separately (nor together) influence participants' responses. Furthermore, the one relationship that was found occurred in the direction that was opposite to that which was

predicted. That is, ethnic majority vigilantes were disadvantaged, as opposed to ethnic minority persons. These findings are important as they further develop upon the criminological knowledge available and seem to suggest that the unique context of vigilantism separates it from ‘typical’ offending.

### **7.15 Strengths of the Current Study**

As with all research projects the current study possesses both strengths and weaknesses. This section will outline the various strengths of this thesis, with the following section discussing the limitations of the project. This review is not exhaustive, but focuses on those factors which the author feels are the most crucial to the study. After this review, the researcher will describe how future research can incorporate these strengths and attempt to avoid these weaknesses.

One of the main advantages of this project is its examination of a previously unconsidered topic. The literature review demonstrated that a relationship exists between actor ethnicity and perceptions of crime; furthermore, that there is a link between ethnicity and vigilantism (Jacobs et al., 2005; Steiker & Steiker, 2015). In both of these relationships, ethnic minority individuals are consistently disadvantaged – whether they be in the position of offender or victim. Despite these associations, the author could not locate a previous study which examined the relationship between support for vigilante behaviour and actor ethnicity. While some may suggest that the findings of prior crime-related research could be applied to the scenario of vigilantism, this is arguably a flawed approach. As previously highlighted, a key distinguishing feature of vigilantism is the motives behind these offences. Vigilantes are often perceived to be acting under the guidance of ‘noble’ intentions. For example, vigilantes are often assumed to be acting in the place of a failing criminal justice system to ‘deliver justice’ (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996; Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974). Whether or not the intentions behind these acts fit this profile, members of the public may assume that they do and this remains the most stereotypical/common understanding of what vigilantism is (Haas, 2010; Johnston, 1996). The presumed motives may ‘override’ the effect of offender and victim ethnicity in vigilante scenarios – the results of the current study seem to suggest that for most variables, this is the case. Thus, due to a lack of previous and arguably non-applicable research, this project has begun the initial stages of examining an untouched topic.

Despite the financial and time limitations placed upon the current study, the researchers were able to introduce a number of features to ensure that the methodology was rigorous. For example, the decision to employ quantitative research methods enabled the project to not only establish whether a relationship existed, but to also determine the directionality and strength of this relationship. Furthermore, given the infrequency of vigilantism within New Zealand and the socially sensitive nature of ethnicity as a topic, qualitative methods would have gone beyond the scope of this thesis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Seale, 2012). To provide some form of depth and to perhaps establish directions for future research, participants were given the opportunity to provide the reasoning or justification behind their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Seale, 2012). This proved to be a wise decision, as it helped to highlight flaws within the scales, as well as giving the author the opportunity to partially understand the thought process that participants went through.

While some would suggest that the use of previously constructed scales is a limitation, this is arguably a strength of the current project. As demonstrated, there is very little research that has examined support for vigilante behaviour with an extensive and rigorous questionnaire. Of the studies which were reviewed, Haas' (2010) thesis represented the most comprehensive construction of a scale to date. Haas (2010) demonstrated that these scales were both valid and reliable – a finding which is supported by the current study. Hence, the decision was made to use this project as opportunity to assist in the testing and development of scales that may be used in similar future projects. In addition to supporting Haas' (2010) conclusions regarding the scale, this study also added depth by including additional open-ended questions. These proved to be valuable and provided the researchers with participant feedback which may assist in further refining the scales in future studies.

Not only was the main focus of the project an unexamined topic, but the researchers also incorporated variables that the majority of previous studies had neglected. For example, the precipitating and vigilante offences within this study were arguably very low in seriousness – at least in comparison with the examples that have been used in most prior studies (Haas, 2010; Miller, 2013; Neapolitan, 1987). It appears as if most researchers have adopted a 'stereotypical' view of vigilantism as being a violent response to a typically violent crime. For instance, the violent assault or homicide of an individual who has

sexually assault a child (Haas, 2010; Neapolitan, 1987). While these are forms of vigilantism, it is important that less violent forms of this behaviour be examined – as with typical criminal offending, vigilante responses exist upon a spectrum. This study is one of few to have examined a relatively common and non-serious scenario; that is, the minor assault of a person in retaliation for the destruction of property. However, as previously noted, these forms of offending arguably require examination as their frequency means that participants are more likely to have direct and indirect experience with these crimes. This arguably makes the situation more relatable and may assist participants in providing more accurate responses. Furthermore, the use of very violent offences may cause a significant emotional response with participants and potentially detract from the effect of actor ethnicity. As it can be seen, the choice in precipitating crime and vigilante response are a core strength of the current study.

Another factor considered in the current study is the influence of previous victimisation upon support for vigilante behaviour. The literature review found that very few projects had thought to include this factor when measuring the demographic variables of the participant. Previous studies have demonstrated that prior victimisation can influence an individual's fear of, attitudes towards, and/or perceptions of criminal behaviour (Sironi & Bonazzi, 2016). Based upon this, it could be suggested that these persons may also perceive vigilantism differently to those who have not experienced victimisation directly. Thus, the decision to include this in the current research was a considerable attribute.

A final strength of the study was the use of two pilots despite the limited time-frame of the project. These pilots helped to develop the content and structure of the surveys used. As outlined in the methodology, the first pilot was done in order to select four actors who measured similar in the features of likability, trustworthiness, friendliness, attractiveness and approachability. This would assist in controlling for the possibility that the participants may have been responding to aspects of the actors other than their ethnicity. The second pilot was used to test the content and structure of the surveys. Unlike Haas' (2010) study, the current project did not have a sample pool which could be surveyed at two separate intervals – the precipitating and vigilante offences had to be presented at the same time. The second pilot greatly assisted with developing the most efficient way possible to present participants with all the necessary content. It was also crucial in determining the usefulness

of the additional questions which had been introduced. These two pilots were extremely useful in introducing strength to the study's methodology.

### **7.16 Limitations of the Current Study**

While there were limitations present within the current project – as there are in all studies – the majority of these could not be avoided due to the financial and time constraints which were placed upon the study. Where possible, the researcher did attempt to introduce measures that would minimise these; however, the following three issues still restricted the study considerably.

As previously noted, the researchers were limited to the use convenience sampling. As a result of this, the study obtained a sample size that was smaller than desired. This small sample size does limit the findings of the study in two main ways. Firstly, it is possible that the current sample size was not large enough to detect the effect of actor ethnicity. This potentially explains why the hypotheses were not supported and why the results of the current study contradict those of prior ethnic criminological research. Secondly, the use of convenience sampling resulted in a biased sample. A quick examination of the sample statistics demonstrates that the sample was biased towards females, ethnic majorities, and individuals with tertiary education. Due to these characteristics, the generalisation of the current results is heavily restricted. Arguably the data that has been collected is not representative of a wider population, and caution should be taken when attempting to apply these results to others. These are two of the main disadvantages caused by the use of convenience sampling within this project.

While the topic of the study was important, the scope of this project was limited. In order to sustain participant interest and due to time-constraints, the researcher excluded some aspects of Haas' (2010) original scale. In particular, this study did not examine participants' attitudes towards the criminal justice system (police, courts, and prisons). Variables such as these were excluded in favour of less researched features (such as the right wing authoritarianism scale) and so as to encourage participants to complete the survey in its entirety. Given the completion rate of this study (74.5%), the researcher arguably made a sensible decision. Another restriction upon the scope of the project was the use of only one precipitating crime and one vigilante response. This was necessary given the small number of participants and the use of four conditions in total (one condition

for each ethnic combination). Consequently, the results of the current study can only be applied to similar scenarios – physical assaults in response to property damage – which does limit the generalizability of the study. Once again, however, given the frequency of these offences, this is also an advantage of the chosen focus. The final way in which the scope is restricted is the actor ethnicity which is incorporated. The current study only employed actors of two ethnic groups – Caucasian and African American. This decision was made based upon the recognisability of both groups to participants on an international level. The decision to use a less well-known ethnicity could have potentially confounded the results. Once again, this limits the ability of the results to be generalised. The findings of this project do not extend to additional ethnic groups – for example, Hispanics, Maori, and Asians. These aspects of the study were restricted out of necessity; however, they did result in limiting the scope of this project.

The final limitation of the current study was the salience of actor ethnicity. As previously established, there are various ways that researchers may examine the influence of ethnicity upon participants' perceptions (Bottoms et al., 2004; Lipton, 1983; Willis, 1992). Common examples of these include written descriptions, the use of photographs, or the presentation of video clips. After having reviewed the literature and considering the restrictions placed upon the current project, the researcher made the decision to employ photographs to present the variable of ethnicity. The researchers felt that an image of the actors would also be more fitting for a newspaper article and potentially help with respondent immersion. However, as a small number of participants pointed out, it was still evident to some that the variable of interest was actor ethnicity. This was also enhanced by the sample bias towards more educated persons who would have a better understanding of the research process. As a result, the findings of this study may not be an accurate representation of respondent's actual attitudes towards the vignettes presented (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). It is possible that participants may have adjusted their behaviour accordingly to present a more favourable image of themselves (McIntyre, 2005; Seale, 2012). While these are not the only limitations present within the current study, they are arguably the three most significant which this thesis has the ability to discuss in-depth. The next section will present possible ways for future research to address these disadvantages and improve the studies which follow.



## **7.17 Directions for Future Research**

Examining this thesis identifies a number of directions for future projects. Specifically, the strengths, limitations, and findings of this study can be useful in guiding later research. The following paragraphs will consider these three aspects and demonstrate how they may later assist other academics.

As repeatedly mentioned, the current study considered a topic that had previously been untouched by researchers – the relationship between actor ethnicity and public support for vigilantism. The findings of this report seem to indicate that the context of ethnicity ‘interferes’ in the typical relationship between actor ethnicity and perceptions of crime. Consequently, more research should be conducted to establish whether these results are supported. If future testing demonstrates that ethnic biases are ‘less present’ within incidents of vigilantism, later studies may want to focus on determining what are the causal factors for this difference.

While the current project made the contribution of examining a less violent vigilante scenario, the researcher encourages future projects to study the influence of actor ethnicity in a range of differing cases. That is, future researchers should consider examining the effect of different types of precipitating crimes and vigilante responses. It is possible that ethnic biases may exist, but only within certain situations. For example, these biases may be prevalent in those cases involving precipitating crimes of a sexual or violent nature.

As previously noted, it has been recognised that studying the influence of actor ethnicity is not a factor that is easily hidden from participants. There are various ways to present this variable; images, videos, and written descriptions are common examples. However, simply identifying or presenting an individual’s ethnicity can draw participants’ attention to this attribute – making it more likely that they will successfully identify this as the variable of interest. Having recognised this, respondents are motivated to adjust their answers so as to appear less ethnically biased and more socially desirable. Future research should try to use different methods to manipulate this variable and compare the results of these differing methods to identify if these do change participants’ responses. A better funded project would be able to take advantage of more secure methods.

Another avenue for later studies to consider is the continuing use and development of Haas’ (2010) scales. The current project found more evidence to suggest that these scales

– while possessing limitations – are the most valid and reliable available at this time. To help stream line future studies, it is important to develop and refine a set of standardised scales that be trusted to produce reliable and valid results. At this point in time, no such scales exist for examining public support for vigilante behaviour. Those constructed by Haas (2010) were shown to be the most comprehensive and in-depth. If later research can continue to further develop and expand upon these instruments, it will prove to be a useful endeavour for those interested in the field of vigilantism.

Another finding of significance that future studies should attempt to explore, is the uniqueness of each case of vigilantism. When examining the responses to the ‘support for vigilantism in general’, it became apparent that numerous participants felt that it was difficult to provide responses to this scale. In particular, it was repeatedly mentioned that participants felt that they needed to view each incident of vigilantism on a case-by-case basis. They could not indicate support for this behaviour ‘in a general sense’. Instead, they felt that some instances of vigilantism were more justifiable than others. It would be useful if future research examined which instances of vigilantism were supported and which ones were not. From a more in-depth examination of this, a model could be constructed outlining which factors are the most and least important in predicting public (dis)approval of vigilante behaviour. This could also prove to be beneficial as it would give other studies a point of comparison for establishing effects. For example, if a particular example of vigilante behaviour is shown to be extensively supported, researchers can manipulate various aspects of the scenario to determine if these impact such support. A more in-depth examination of those cases which are (not) condoned, may help to provide ‘base lines’ for later projects.

The final direction that this report will highlight is the need for future research to examine this topic from a qualitative perspective. Using a qualitative methodology would assist in uncovering the thought process and reasoning behind participants’ responses. This procedure should be used not only in examining the influence of actor ethnicity, but when considering the broader topic of support for vigilantism. This process could also reveal different concepts which had not been previously considered.

### **7.18 Conclusion**

The current study represents the first attempt to empirically examine the relationship between public support for vigilante behaviour and actor characteristics. In particular, this research was conducted to determine whether victim and vigilante ethnicity influence support for vigilantism; and whether these two characteristics interact.

The results of this thesis appear to support the null hypothesis. The data collected indicated that the ethnicity of the vigilante's victim did not influence participant's perceptions. Furthermore, the victim's ethnicity did not interact with that of the vigilante to create any significant effects. With regards to the vigilante's ethnicity, only one significant relationship was identified. Respondents expressed as greater desire to punish the 'light skinned' vigilante in comparison to his 'dark skinned' counterpart. It was theorised that this finding was either a reflection of the 'black sheep effect' or evidence of the sympathy perspective.

Overall the current study has made a valid attempt at beginning to address the question of whether actor ethnicity influences public support for vigilante behaviour. Despite its time, financial, and methodological limitations, a number of (in)significant findings were identified that require further investigation. It is hoped that this project will inspire other academics to continue examining this topic for future research.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Support for Vigilantism in General (Haas, 2010)

*For the items below, please indicate how strongly you agree on the following scale:*

*1. Fully Disagree ..... 7. Fully Agree.*

1. If an offender is not sentenced by the legal system, I approve of it when a citizen takes the law into his own hands.
2. If the government is not successful in their fight against crime, citizens are justified to take the law into their own hands.
3. Citizens should take the law into their own hands more frequently.
4. Some cases of citizens taking the law into their own hands are justified.
5. Citizens who take the law into their own hands should always be prosecuted. - **recode**
6. If an offender is not sentenced by the legal system, I find it understandable for a citizen to take the law into his own hands.
7. Citizens who take the law into their own hands form a danger to society. - **recode**
8. Under no condition do I approve of people who take the law into their own hands. - **recode**

## Appendix B: Vignette A (Precipitating Crime Vignette)

# The New Zealand Daily

[National](#)[Opinion](#)[Business](#)[World](#)[Sport](#)[Entertainment](#)[Travel](#)[Property](#)[Life & Style](#)[Classifieds](#)

### Local student left with three broken windows

12:14 PM Friday January 10, 2014

A local university student has had to pay for car repairs after a late night visit from an unidentified figure.

Aiden Wilmore is a third year university student, studying to earn a degree in Mechanical Engineering. At the moment, he is flatting with two friends in a small house, located near student housing. Late last Wednesday evening, Mr Wilmore was editing a report that was due the next morning. While reviewing the conclusion, he heard a loud noise from the street outside. Looking through his bedroom window, however, Mr Wilmore was unable to see the cause of the sound. Sitting back in his chair, he quickly forgot about the noise and resumed his work. A few minutes later, however, he heard the noise once more. Curious, he quietly slipped on his shoes and stepped outside.



Aiden Wilmore

As he walked towards the mail box, Mr Wilmore noticed a movement out of the corner of his eye. Squinting into the dark, he saw a figure standing next to his car. Before Mr Wilmore could react, the stranger lifted a baseball bat into the air and struck the passenger side of the car. The sound of glass shattering told him that his window was broken. Looking at the rest of his vehicle, he realised that three of his car windows were shattered. Stepping forward, Mr Wilmore began yelling at the stranger. Taken by surprise, the figure dropped the baseball bat and backed away underneath the street lights. Seeing the person more clearly, Mr Wilmore noted that the figure was a young man. As he took a step forward, the unidentified man fled.

The next day Mr Wilmore arranged for the windows on his car to be fixed, and had to rely upon the bus in order to hand in his assignment.

#### National headlines

Auckland motorway:  
Construction delayed once again

Taylor murders: Suspect arrested

Auckland house prices continue to rise: Buyers beware

Pet owners reminded to micro-chip their dogs

Movie scenery helps to boost tourist numbers

New Zealand wine: Grown locally, appreciated around the world

Parties in disagreement over latest economic policy

Superheroes cheer up patients at children's hospitals

#### World headlines

Nations and their debt: Who owes who?

Global sports events: Improving or worsening international relations?

"We won't back down": Threat issued to terrorist groups

Oil prices continue to drop

Presidential visit to continue, despite anonymous threats

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our home loans are  
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understand.*

Click [here](#) for more information.

**GNB**

## Appendix C: Responses to Vignette A (Haas, 2010)

*For the items below, please indicate how strongly you agree on the following scale:*

*1. Fully Disagree ..... 7. Fully Agree.*

*For items with \* the labels are 1 = not to blame and 7 = completely of blame*

Aversive State:

1. I find it terrible what happened to \*vigilante\*
2. I pity \*vigilante\*
3. When reading this article, I realise that what happened to \*vigilante\* can also happen to me
4. I feel for \*vigilante\*
5. \*precipitating offender's\* behaviour is not justifiable in any way
6. \*precipitating offender's\* behaviour is morally reprehensible
7. I am angry at \*precipitating offender\*
8. I feel sympathy for \*precipitating offender\*
9. \*precipitating offender's\* behaviour is understandable
10. I feel for \*precipitating offender\*

Blame:

11. \*vigilante\* has herself/himself to thank for the car collision/sex crime
12. \*vigilante\* is ... for the car collision/sex crime\*
13. \*precipitating offender\* is ... for the car collision/sex crime\*

Derogation

14. \*vigilante\* is unwise
15. \*vigilante\* is irresponsible
16. \*vigilante\* is stupid

Desire for punishment

17. \*precipitating offender\* should be prosecuted for what he did
18. \*precipitating offender\* should do penance for his behaviour
19. The authorities should ignore the car collision/sex crime

**1. According to you, does X (the precipitating offender) deserve to be punished?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

*[If yes: go to question 2]*

*[If no: go to VIGNETTE B]*

**2. What type of punishment, and how much of it, does X deserve according to you?**

[Open question; enough room to specify more than one sentence/punishment]

**3. Imagine having to express the punishment that you just gave to X in punishment points, with a minimum of 0 points and a maximum of 20 points. How many punishment points would you give to X?**

[Open question + specified area to fill in the points]



## Appendix D: Vignette B (Vigilante Response)

# The New Zealand Daily

[National](#) [Opinion](#) [Business](#) [World](#) [Sport](#) [Entertainment](#) [Travel](#) [Property](#) [Life & Style](#) [Classifieds](#)

### Local student receives broken nose and black eye

3:47 PM Tuesday January 14, 2014

Only three days after having his windows broken, Aiden Wilmore came face-to-face with the unidentified male.

Last Wednesday evening, Mr Wilmore had his car damaged after being visited by an unidentified figure. The stranger managed to destroy three of vehicles windows before fleeing. Three days after the incident, Mr Wilmore was visiting the supermarket in his freshly repaired car. He managed to secure a parking space at the rear of the lot, and made his way through the other vehicles. As he approached the entrance to the store, he saw a familiar face. Loading groceries into a near-by car was the man who had broken his windows only days before. As he approached the person, Mr Wilmore recognised the man as Jackson Lewis. Mr Lewis is a second year Structural Engineering student who lives in a neighbouring suburb. Mr Wilmore and Lewis had seen each other in passing at various university functions and events.



Jackson Lewis

Once he was close enough, Mr Wilmore grabbed the man by his shirt and threw two punches. Both hits targeted Mr Lewis' face. Following this, Mr Wilmore released the man and continued walking towards the supermarket. Mr Lewis was left with a broken nose, black eye, and a mild concussion.

Accidents can happen. Don't let the unexpected catch you unaware. Make sure you and your family are covered by BSC Insurance.

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Π BSC Π

#### National headlines

Taylor murders: Suspect's identity suppressed

It's a crying shame: Our nations appalling child abuse statistics

NZ dollar rises against the UK pound

Taking flight: Doc programme helps Kiwi numbers soar

Prime minister dismisses naysayers

Helping the homeless: Are the new shelters working?

#### World headlines

Rio Olympics: Plans to develop new stadiums

Pope's latest speech upsets extremist Catholic groups

Hunt for missing hiking troupe continues

Global warming conference: Our last chance to change?

Poaching in Kenya at an all-time high

*"We couldn't believe how easy it was to sell! Our agent handled everything: photos, open homes, interested persons... They really gave us 120%"*

Yet another satisfied customer. Brought to you by Webster's Properties.

## Appendix E: Responses to Vignette B (Haas, 2010)

*For the items below, please indicate how strongly you agree on the following scale:*

*1. Fully Disagree ..... 7. Fully Agree.*

*For items with \* the labels are 1 = not to blame and 7 = completely of blame*

Aversive State:

1. I find it terrible that \*precipitating offender\* was beaten up
2. I pity \*precipitating offender\*
3. When reading this article, I realise that what happened to \*precipitating offender\* can also happen to me
4. I feel for \*precipitating offender\*
5. \*vigilante's\* behaviour is not justifiable in any way
6. \*vigilante's\* behaviour is morally reprehensible
7. I am angry at \*vigilante\*
8. I feel sympathy for \*vigilante\* - **recode**
9. \*vigilante's\* behaviour is understandable - **recode**
10. \*vigilante\* was completely right in beating up \*precipitating offender\* - **recode**
11. \*vigilante\* is the victim of this situation, not the offender - **recode**

Blame:

12. \*precipitating offender\* has herself/himself to thank for the car collision/sex crime
13. \*vigilante\* is ... for the assault\*
14. \*precipitating offender\* is ... for the assault\*

Derogation

15. \*precipitating offender\* is unwise
16. \*precipitating offender\* is irresponsible
17. \*precipitating offender\* is stupid

Desire for punishment

18. \*vigilante\* should be prosecuted for what he did
19. \*vigilante\* should do penance for his behaviour
20. The authorities should ignore the assault - **recode**

### 4. Does Y (the vigilante) deserve punishment for the physical abuse?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

[ → If no: skip questions 5 and 6]

**5. What type of punishment, and how much of it, does Y deserve according to you?**

[Open question; enough room to specify more than one sentence/punishment]

**6. Imagine having to express the punishment that you just gave to Y in punishment points, with a minimum of 0 points and a maximum of 20 points. How many punishment points would you give to Y?**

[Open question + specified area to fill in the points]

*[If 'yes' in reply to question 1, go to question 7. Else, go to question 10]*

**7. Earlier you mentioned that X deserved ... [automatically filled in] punishment points for the traffic aggression. Furthermore you gave him the following punishment: [automatically filled in]. How do you feel about this now that you have read the second newspaper article? Does he now:**

- deserve the same punishment ☐
- deserve less punishment ☐
- deserve more punishment ☐
- deserve no punishment ☐

*[ → If 'same punishment' or 'no punishment', go to end of survey. Else, go to question 8.]*

**8. What type of punishment, and how much of it, does X now deserve according to you?**

[Open question; enough room to specify more than one sentence/punishment]

**9. Imagine having to express the punishment that you just gave to X in punishment points, with a minimum of 0 points and a maximum of 20 points. How many punishment points would you give to X?**

[Open question + specified area to fill in the points]

*[In case of no punishment for X in vignette 1]:*

**10. Earlier you mentioned that X did not deserve to be punished for the car vandalism. According to you, does he now:**

- still not deserve punishment ☐
- deserve punishment ☐

*[ → If 'still not deserve punishment', go to end of survey. Else, go to question 11.]*

**11. What type of punishment, and how much of it, does X now deserve according to you?**

[Open question; enough room to specify more than one sentence/punishment]

**12. Imagine having to express the punishment that you just gave to X in punishment points, with a minimum of 0 points and a maximum of 20 points. How many punishment points would you give to X?**

[Open question + specified area to fill in the points]

## Appendix F: Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale (Altemeyer, 2006)

Write down a -4 if you very strongly disagree with the statement.

Write down a -3 if you strongly disagree with the statement.

Write down a -2 if you moderately disagree with the statement.

Write down a -1 if you slightly disagree with the statement.

Write down a +1 if you slightly agree with the statement.

Write down a +2 if you moderately agree with the statement.

Write down a +3 if you strongly agree with the statement.

Write down a +4 if you very strongly agree with the statement.

If you feel exactly and precisely neutral about an item, write down a "0."

**Important:** You may find that you sometimes have different reactions to different parts of a statement. For example, you might very strongly disagree ("-4") with one idea in a statement, but slightly agree ("+1") with another idea in the same item. When this happens, please combine your reactions, and write down how you feel on balance (a "-3" in this case).

1. The established authorities generally turn out to be right about things, while the radicals and protestors are usually just "loud mouths" showing off their ignorance.
2. Women should have to promise to obey their husbands when they get married.
3. Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.
4. Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else.\*
5. It is always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubt in people's minds
6. Atheists and others who have rebelled against the established religions are no doubt every bit as good and virtuous as those who attend church regularly.\*
7. The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas.
8. There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps.\*
9. Our country needs free thinkers who have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people.\*

10. Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs.
11. Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different from everyone else.\*
12. The “old-fashioned ways” and the “old-fashioned values” still show the best way to live.
13. You have to admire those who challenged the law and the majority’s view by protesting for women’s abortion rights, for animal rights, or to abolish school prayer.\*
14. What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path.
15. Some of the best people in our country are those who are challenging our government, criticizing religion, and ignoring the “normal way things are supposed to be done.”\*
16. God’s laws about abortion, pornography and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late, and those who break them must be strongly punished.
17. There are many radical, immoral people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their own godless purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action.
18. A “woman’s place” should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly in the past.\*
19. Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the “rotten apples” who are ruining everything.
20. There is no “ONE right way” to live life; everybody has to create their own way.\*
21. Homosexuals and feminists should be praised for being brave enough to defy “traditional family values.”\*
22. This country would work a lot better if certain groups of troublemakers would just shut up and accept their group’s traditional place in society.

\* = Reverse Coding required

## Appendix G: Demographic Questions

Please select or provide the response you perceive as most applicable you.

1. What is your sex?

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. What is your age? (Years):

\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Ethnicity (Provide multiple answers if applicable):

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Country of residence:

\_\_\_\_\_.

5. Education:

☐ Secondary School Education

☐ Certificate

☐ Degree/Tertiary Level Education

☐ Post-Graduate Level Education

6. Are you fluent in English?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. In the past 24 months, have you been a victim of criminal activity?

☐ Yes

☐ No

## Appendix H: ATEC Approval



1 April 2015

John Buttle  
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear John

Re Ethics Application:       **15/76 An eye for an eye: Examining public support for vigilante behaviour.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the subcommittee of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (ATEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 1 April 2018.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to ATEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 1 April 2018;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 1 April 2018 or on completion of the project.



It is a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECH approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Louise Stone [lostone@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lostone@aut.ac.nz)

## Appendix I: Ethics Approval Amendments

3 August 2015

John Buttle

Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear John

Re: Ethics Application:       **15/76 An eye for an eye: Examining public support for vigilante behaviour.**

Thank you for your request for approval of an amendment to your ethics application.

I have approved the minor amendment to your ethics application allowing changes to the inclusion criteria.

I remind you that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC):

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 1 April 2018;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 1 April 2018 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Louise Stone [lostone@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lostone@aut.ac.nz)

## **Appendix J: Participant Debriefing**

An Eye for an Eye: Examining Public Support for Vigilante Behaviour

Louise Stone: lostone@aut.ac.nz

John Buttle: jbuttle@aut.ac.nz

Thank you for your participation in the study. Your contribution was greatly appreciated and will help in furthering our understanding of public support for vigilantism.

We previously informed you that the purpose of this study was to examine public support for vigilante behaviour. We wanted to take this opportunity to provide a more detailed explanation. The goal of the current research is to determine whether public support for vigilantism is influenced by actor characteristics. We did not disclose this information at the beginning of the study as we did not want it to influence your answers.

Please do not disclose research procedures and/or questions to anyone who might participate in this study in the future, as it could affect the results of the study.

If you would like to receive a summary of the findings when the study is completed, please feel free to contact us using the details provided.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, its purposes or procedures, or if you want to provide feedback, please feel free to contact the researchers.

Once again, thank you for your participation in this study!

Kindest regards,

Louise Stone

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, its purposes or procedures, or if you want to provide feedback, please write it in the box below

## Appendix K: Recruitment Email/Speech



<Date>

Dear website members/students,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study, *An Eye for an Eye: Examining Public Support for Vigilante Behaviour*. The purpose of this research is to examine public support for vigilante activity. The project is being undertaken by myself and two academic supervisors from the Auckland University of Technology, as a contribution toward a Masters' degree in Social Sciences.

Participation within the study will require you to read a series of passages and answer a short questionnaire. This study will be completed via an online platform and all participants will remain anonymous. It is estimated that the completion of the survey will take between 20 and 30 minutes. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage prior to the end of the session.

In order to participate in this project, you must meet the following criteria:

- Speak fluent English
- Be over 20 years of age

If you would like to receive more information about this research, please follow the link below to review the information sheet outlining the study.

\*insert survey link\*

For any further questions or concerns, please contact me using the email address provided.

Kind regards,

Louise Stone

stone.louise.m@gmail.coms

## Appendix L: Participant Information Sheet



### **Date Information Sheet Produced:**

27/07/2015s

### **Project Title**

An Eye for an Eye: Examining Public Support for Vigilante Behaviour

### **An Invitation**

Greetings!

My name is Louise Stone and through this information sheet, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study: *An Eye for an Eye: Examining Public Support for Vigilante Behaviour*. This project is being undertaken by myself and two academic supervisors from the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), towards the completion of a Masters' Degree in Social Sciences. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you can choose to withdraw at any stage, prior to the end of the session. Furthermore, if you are a student of AUT, you will be neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by participating in this study.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of the current study is to examine public support for vigilante behaviour. The data collected in this study will contribute to the completion of my Masters' Degree at AUT. The research is also likely to produce content for a conference paper, an academic journal article, or other academic publications or presentation.

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You and other individuals have been recruited via social media websites, web listings of online psychology studies, and researcher visits to undergraduate courses at AUT. The information provided to potential participants across these formats was identical, presenting a general introduction to the study. You have been invited to participate as you have expressed interest and have indicated that you are 18 years of age or older and can speak fluent English. Please note that participation in this study will neither advantage nor disadvantage any students being taught by the researchers.

### **What will happen in this research?**

Participation within the study will require you to read a series of brief passages and answer a short questionnaire.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

While there are no physical risks posed by the survey, it is possible that a select number of participants may experience slight emotional discomfort when asked questions regarding crime and vigilantism.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If you experience discomfort regarding a specific question, you should be aware that you are not required to answer every item within the survey.

### **What are the benefits?**

Completion of this survey will benefit me by contributing towards the achievement of my Masters' Degree, as well as the products of this thesis – for example, conference papers and academic journal articles. While there are no monetary or tangible benefits, you may enjoy being a part of the research process or perhaps take interest in the topics discussed.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

You will remain anonymous and no identifying information will be taken as part of the survey.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

It is estimated that completion of the survey will take between 20 and 30 minutes.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

The survey will be available online until sufficient data has been collected. It is estimated that the survey will need to be available for a period of three months in order to gather an adequate sample size.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

Completion of the following questionnaire will be taken as an indication of your consent to participate.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Using the details provided, you are welcome to contact me and ask to receive an electronic summary outlining the results of the completed study.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr John Buttle, [jbuttle@aut.ac.nz](mailto:jbuttle@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext. 8964

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext. 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

***Researcher's Contact Details:***

Louise Stone

Location: Office WT1435, Level 14, WT Tower Building, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland City

Email: [lostone@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lostone@aut.ac.nz)

***Project Supervisor's Contact Details:***

Dr John Buttle



Location: Office WT1409, Level 14, WT Tower Building, Auckland University of  
Technology, Auckland City  
Email: jbuttle@aut.ac.nz

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *01/04/2015*,  
AUTEC Reference number *15/76***

