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Sexual Violence and Relationship Abuse among College Students: The Bystander Intervention Process

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Abstract

This project investigated how college students describe bystander intervention in the context of

sexual violence and relationship abuse compared to intervention in a general helping situation.

The participants were 53 undergraduate students at a New England University. Prior to

graduation, all of the participants were asked questions via audio controlled, face-to-face

qualitative interviews that related to their helping behaviors during their time in college. The

participant responses revealed that general helping is often a simple, one-time event if time

permits it. However, helping in the context of sexual violence or relationship abuse revealed

many serious barriers for the bystander due to the complex nature of the situations. An updated

model of intervention that takes this type of help into consideration is suggested in order to

provide a schema for those who step in and help in a situation involving sexual violence or

relationship abuse.

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Introduction

Every year, millions of people willingly donate their time and money to help one another

(Brown, 2006, p. 444). These actions can take the form of holding a door, giving directions,

donating to charity, picking up dropped items, and thousands more. These common and short-

lived actions are known as *everyday acts of kindness*, or in other words, prosocial behaviors

(Brown, 2006, p. 444; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). However, in less common

and higher-cost instances, *extraordinary acts of bravery or heroism* can occur (Brown, 2006, p.

444). These actions can include stopping a theft or running into a burning building to save a

trapped resident, among others. These active witnesses to crimes, emergencies, or other high-

risk situations, who are not directly involved as perpetrators or victims of the situation are known

as bystanders (Banyard & Moynihan, 2011).

Although there are countless situations where people have helped without thinking twice

about their own safety, being a bystander does not necessarily mean someone will intervene.

Instead, their presence provides a bystander with an opportunity. This could mean stepping in,

worsening the situation by supporting the perpetrator, or choosing not to intervene (Banyard &

Moynihan, 2011). Numerous examples in the media have portrayed the latter in the context of

sexual violence and relationship abuse situations. For example, on March 13, 1964, not one of

the 38 documented bystanders that heard and saw the struggle decided to help when 28-year-old

Kitty Genovese was sexually assaulted and violently stabbed over the course of 30 minutes in

Queens, New York (Brown, 2006, p. 458; Latane & Darley, 1969). Similarly: decades later,

three men gang raped a college student at a residence hall at a New England University where

dozens of fellow college students passed by the ongoing act (Keegan, 1988). Even more

recently, at a high school party in Steubenville, Ohio, instead of calling the police, dozens of

bystanders took out their phones to take and post photos of their 16 year old peer who had just

been raped and kidnapped, all while too drunk to resist (Macur & Schweber, 2012).

In the above situations, the term *bystander* can be recognized as those who were present

in the situation of escalating risk for sexual or relationship abuse, or those who were in a position

to support the survivor of the assault after the incident had occurred (Banyard, Moynihan, Cares,

& Warner, 2013). Although many were in a position to help or support, unfortunately none of

them did. This is a serious problem, especially since bystanders are a potentially powerful tool

in the prevention of sexual violence and relationship abuse. This is because they are often

present during the pre-assault phase, where signs that an assault is about to occur are visible

(Burns, 2009). Not only that, but bystanders are also present in approximately 1/3 of all reported

sexual assaults (Planty, 2002). In addition, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men have revealed that a

friend has disclosed sexual assault victimization to them (Banyard, Moynihan, Walsh, Cohn, &

Ward, 2010). With this much of an opportunity to intervene, what is it that halts the process?

Previous research on bystander intervention describes a number of reasons why people

may not step in. Latane and Darley's (1970) assertion that often times bystanders are uncertain

of how to react or what role they should take on could be an explanation as to why this is often

the case. We know that helping in a complex situation is more difficult than helping in a general

situation, and sexual violence or relationship abuse are very complex situations (Burns, 2009).

Focusing research efforts on better understanding the perceptions that people have on helping in

sexually violent situations could result in a better prepared generation of bystanders. Ultimately,

a prevention of these incidents from occurring in the first place would be the greatest achievement.

Sexual Violence Prevalence

It is first important to understand how prevalent sexual violence and relationship abuse occurrences are. The age range of the population that experiences the highest incidence of unwanted sexual experiences is between 16 and 24 years old (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). This range is also that of the average college student population, making the incidence of sexual violence dangerously high on many campuses (Banyard, Wards, Cohn, Plante, Moorhead, & Walsh, 2007; Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2006; Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010; Koss et al., 1987). One national study in the United States revealed that approximately one in five college aged females are survivors of rape or attempted rape (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Another study that examined 370 male and female undergraduates revealed that in the past year alone, 34% of females and 31% of males had experienced unwanted sexual contact, 6% of females and 13% of males reported engaging in sexually coercive behavior, and 4% of females and 9% of males reported having experienced both unwanted sexual contact and engagement in sexually coercive behavior (Palmer, McMahon, Rounsaville, & Ball, 2010).

Although past literature has focused on only males as the perpetrators, recent literature has begun to focus on the victimization of males as well (Larimer, Lydum, Anderson & Turner, 1999; Palmer et al., Russell & Oswald, 2002). In fact, Larimer and colleagues (1999) revealed that males are just as likely to report sexual coercion as females. In addition, a recent study that surveyed 651 males and females on a New England college campus revealed that unwanted sexual contact was not only a significant problem for females, but for males as well (Banyard et al., 2007).

Relationship Abuse Prevalence

The prevalence rate of relationship abuse among college students is similar to that of sexual violence. In fact, studies involving dating violence in North America alone have revealed extremely high prevalence rates of physical assault on dating partners among college student couples (Straus, 2004). In addition to this, across 16 countries, college dating violence was found to be more common than marriage violence (Straus, 2004). Data from several studies regarding relationship abuse among college students have overall revealed that between 13% to 42% of students have experienced and/or perpetrated physical violence in a dating relationship at least one time over the course of their college career (Beyers, Leonard, Mays, & Rosen, 2000; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Perry & Fromuth, 2005; Shook, Gerrity, Jurich, & Segrist, 2000).

One recent study involving 1,530 undergraduates implemented the Dating Relationship Profile (DRP) and the Conflict Tactics Scale 2 (CTS2) to measure relationship violence (Miller, 1999; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1995). The results revealed that one in four participants were involved in a physically abusive relationship at the time of taking the study (Miller, 2011). A separate examination of males and females also revealed that the rates of abuse were nearly equal (Miller, 2011).

The vast amount of evidence supporting the notion that relationship abuse is a prevalent problem among college students is another reason why this population should be a focus in bystander intervention research. This is especially important, since it has been found that up to one-third of intimate partner violence (IPV) accounts involve witnesses; people who can be considered bystanders (Cismaru, Jensen, & Lavack, 2010).

The Choice to Intervene

After the previously mentioned Kitty Genovese incident occurred, Darley & Latane (1968) sought to find out why it was that bystanders did not intervene. They discovered that the norms favoring bystander intervention can be weakened in a number of ways, causing bystanders to opt out of helping. In response to this finding, the two proposed a formal five-stage situational model of emergency intervention in order to provide a schema for helping in future situations (Brown, 2006, p. 459; Latane & Darley, 1970). This model expands upon the notion that bystanders must make several decisions before stepping in to help:

- *Stage 1) Noticing the incident*

- *Stage 2) Interpreting the incident as an emergency*

- *Stage 3) Accepting the responsibility to help*

- *Stage 4) Deciding how to help*

- *Stage 5) Acting to intervene*

One limitation to the above model is that to date, the steps of this process have mainly been studied in terms of more obvious situations such as a medical emergency or someone who needs help with his or her car. We can raise questions about whether this makes the seemingly simple and linear model lose practicality when implemented in more complex situations, such as sexual violence or relationship abuse. On account of this, it is beneficial to understand the reasons people do not intervene in an emergency situation. The current research then goes a step further to examine the unique circumstances of sexual violence and relationship abuse. The choice to not step in is most often made in response to barriers. These situational obstacles can be presented at any of the above steps and subsequently halt the process of helping (Burn, 2009; Latane & Darley, 1968, 1970; Latane & Nida, 1981).

Common barriers are anything that distract or divert the bystander's attention away from the situation (Brown, 2006, p. 459). For example, being too busy to notice the emergency, noises, and crowds are just some of the many types of these distractions. These can occur often in general helping situations, where the need for help may not be as vital.

A fear of looking incompetent in front of others is another common barrier that has been supported in previous bystander research (Brown, 2006, p. 463; Karakashian, Walter, Christopher, & Lucas, 2006). On account of this, individuals may feel self-conscious in social situations and respond with high self-monitoring tendencies (Karakashian et al., 2006). With a fear of negative evaluation, many opt towards indirect helping instead. This, for example, would be calling the police.

A more complex barrier is when people use the reaction of others to help decide what decision to make next (Brown, 2006, p. 459). It has been found that if other people are not responding as if it is an emergency, then fear reduction from togetherness can occur. This type of barrier is known as the *bystander effect*; a term coined by Latane & Darley (1969) in response to the previously noted Kitty Genovese story. The bystander effect coincides with the severity of the emergency (Fischer, Greitemeyer, Pollozek, & Frey, 2006). Fischer and colleagues (2006) sought to research this by creating a study that included a low danger and high danger emergency with 86 participants. The results revealed that in the low danger category, the bystander effect was supported since participants were less likely to help if someone else was present. However, in the high danger emergency, whether or not someone else was present barely had an effect on helping (Fischer et al., 2006). They hypothesized that this might be because the costs of not helping were great in the more severe situation or because the need for helping in that situation was more obvious.

Are these the same barriers that prevent helping in a much more complex situation such as sexual violence and relationship abuse? To date, it is difficult to tell since there is a lack of empirical data in response to this question (Bennett, Banyard, & Garnhart, 2013). However, the results of one recent study suggest that the barriers between general helping instances and helping in the context of sexual violence might differ. This research found that a failure to intervene due to a skill deficit and a failure to take intervention responsibility were each major barriers for sexual violence intervention among 231 college students (Bennett et al., 2013).

A failure to intervene on account of a skill deficit could include the bystander being worried about the his or her safety, a lack of confidence, or an inability to step in due to his or her personality characteristics, to name a few. Failure to take intervention responsibility could involve the bystander effect, a belief that it was none of the bystander's business, or victim blaming, among others. In addition to these cited barriers, Bennett and colleagues (2013) found that failures to identify the situation as high-risk and intervening due to audience inhibition were also listed.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This project investigates the notion that being an active bystander in a complex situation, such as one that involves sexual violence or relationship abuse, may look different compared to providing help in a more straightforward situation (e.g. giving someone directions.) On account of this, the research addresses the questions:

- *How do college students describe helping on their campus?*

- *What specific examples do they give of how helping in general happens?*

- *What barriers are associated with helping friends in general?*

- *How do college students describe bystander intervention in the context of sexual violence and relationship abuse?*

- *What unique barriers are associated with helping friends in situations of sexual and relationship abuse?*

- *How do the descriptions of general helping look similar to or different from helping in instances of sexual or relationship violence?*

Limitations

For a number of reasons, there is an enormous gap in the literature surrounding bystander interventions in the context of sexual violence and relationship abuse on college campuses (Banyard et al., 2013). This is in part due to the difficulty that comes with studying this topic, for it is unethical to replicate experimental situations, yet challenging to examine it outside of a laboratory (Banyard et al., 2013). On account of this limitation, researchers have developed self-report assessments instead (Banyard et al., 2013).

Another limitation in bystander literature is that sexual violence most often occurs with people we know (Burn, 2009). This is supported in Bennett et al.'s (2013) finding where helping friends was reported more often than strangers in this context. However, the vast majority of bystander literature on general helping has mainly focused on situations with people we do not know (Banyard et al., 2013). This can affect a person's schema, or representation of a plan, for helping which could result in him or her being less likely to help.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, the literature focuses around a linear model of helping (Latane & Darley, 1970). However, in reality helping someone you know that is going through a situation involving sexual violence or relationship abuse is a complex situation that may take more than one attempt at an intervention.

Significance

Understanding how college students perceive bystander interventions in sexual violence and relationship abuse situations could aid in better teaching people how to prevent these situations from occurring in the first place. With healthier bystander behaviors among college students, not only could assault be prevented, but social norms that condone the use of sexual or physical force in relationships could be challenged so that survivors of incidents could be better understood and supported (Banyard & Moynihan, 2011). This could help contribute toward a safer and healthier future for generations to come.

Method

Participants

53 undergraduate students at a New England University were interviewed for this study. Of these participants, 46 were seniors and 7 were juniors. These subjects were comprised of 24 males (10 control, 14 experimental) and 29 females (17 control, 12 experimental).

The experimental group was recruited by asking those that had participated in the Bringing in the Bystander Program, and follow-up surveys their freshman year of college to be part of a follow-up interview now that they were at the end of their undergraduate career. The control group was made up of students that had taken the online surveys that the experimental group took, but did not participate in the program. All participants received a $20.00 incentive for participation.

Materials

Program. The Bringing in the Bystander program teaches bystanders in their first-year of college how to safely and effectively intervene before, during, and after sexually violent

situations by implementing a community of responsibility model (Banyard, Moynihan, & Grossman, 2009).

Interview. The audio controlled semi-structured face-to-face interviews were made up of three sections. Section one involved general helping on the college campus. An example question from this section is: *Tell me a story about a time when you helped a stranger at [school name]. What generally happened?* Section two of the interview involved questions related to helping in sexual violence or relationship abuse situations. An example question from this section is: *Tell me about a time where you saw a situation involving risk for an unwanted sexual experience or relationship abuse where you decided not to step in. What generally happened?* Section three involves a reflection of the program and/or surveys the participant took part in. An example question from this section is: *How has your participation in the survey taking and the class affected your behavior?*

Data Collection

Participants that took the online surveys their freshman year of college were contacted for a follow up interview as they approached graduation. Those that agreed were provided informed consent and received a $20.00 incentive for participation. From 4/9/2012 to 4/23/2013, 53 audio controlled, face-to-face qualitative interviews were conducted. The interviews took place in a private space with only the interviewer and participant in the room to ensure confidentiality. During the interview, participants were provided with two reference cards that included the definitions of *sexual violence* and *relationship abuse* to eliminate ambiguity of the terms. After the interview, participants were provided a debriefing form with a list of support services on account of the sensitive topics involved.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed then coded and checked for consistency by three research assistants. The transcriptions were analyzed for two major themes: general helping and helping in the context of sexual violence or intimate partner violence. Within these major themes, general helping actions, specific incidences of helping or choosing not to help, the range of people who chose to help, barriers, facilitators, and the time investment for helping were examined.

A *one time* investment represented a situation where the participant described a helping action that went as planned the first time he or she helped. A *one time with consequences* action was the same as *one time*, except the result of the helping action negatively affected the participant in some way (e.g. fought with friend, lost a night's sleep, had to go to court, etc.). A *persistent* time investment described a helping action that did not go as planned the first time the participant stepped in to help. With this type of time investment, he or she had to step back and try a different way to help instead. Lastly, with a *persistent with consequences* time investment the participant attempted multiple ways to help and was negatively affected by the action.

Results

General Helping

Agreed. When the 53 participants were asked the question: *tell me about your view of [university name], is it a campus where people help one another?* 64% indicated that they agreed with this statement. One participant responded with:

"Definitely. I would say, yeah. I mean even though it's on the bigger side I still think people are close knit in a way and there's a lot of good groups on campus and I mean like everybody definitely works together."

Another participant noted that:

"Everyone here seems to have a natural response to help."

The majority of these participants mentioned that almost everyone is friendly and willing to step in if the circumstance called for it. However, several people mentioned that even though they perceive the university as overall helpful, the willingness to step in might change depending on the situation. This is described in the following participant's quote:

"I'd say people are for the most part pretty generally helpful. Relatively pretty nice, relatively friendly. Um obviously things are skewed and different on the weekends just because there's alcohol involved but for the most part I'd say it's a relatively friendly campus"

Disagreed. 11% of the participants revealed that they do not believe the university is a generally helpful place. Many noted that the campus is too big to allow a sense of community, that many people choose to keep to themselves, and that if any helping does occur it only happens between friends. One participant that felt this way responded to the question with:

"For the number of people that go here, there's probably more people that wouldn't step in and help compared to the handful of people that would help."

Another participant said:

"I actually don't think that UNH is a campus where people help one another. I think it's too big of a campus to have that sense of community."

Indifference. Lastly, 11% of the respondents showed signs of indifference in their responses. These participants noted that although the university is sometimes helpful, it is "definitely not all the time." One person said:

"I think overall it's probably kind of neutral. People are generally friendly but I don't know if I would describe it as going out of someone's way to help one another."

Several of the participants described their indifference in that people will often help within friend groups, but not outside of that. A description of this view is as follows:

"Umm, generally I would say sometimes. Uhh definitely not all the time. Umm, I mean I guess kind of in my friend circle people tend to be pretty friendly, but I kind of feel that outside of that, I wouldn't necessarily expect people to go out of their way"

Other participants believed helping only occurs in certain contexts, such as "party scenes," and others noted that problems would be ignored if they were not directly related to the person in the position to help. The remaining 14% of participants provided no response to the question.

Helping Actions. 81% of the participants reported a wide range of general helping actions when asked *what kinds of helping most frequently happen here.* One participant revealed:

> "I've seen around, people help people carry things in, like even in my building in the [building name], you know, people carrying groceries, people stop and say "Hey can I help you?" Things like that, you know, general courtesy, door holding."

The remaining 19% could not come up with an answer to the question. The most commonly cited actions were: holding the door, picking up dropped items, providing academic help, providing directional help, and looking out for one another when drinking on the weekends.

Helping Friends. When asked to recall a specific time the participant helped a friend, 86% of the 53 participants were able to do so. Several common examples emerged from the data. One of these was providing academic help which is described in the following quote:

> "I helped a friend in one of my classes. We were studying for [class name] and he didn't understand a lot of it so I would stop and help him with whatever I knew."

Walking an inebriated friend safely back to his or her dorm was another commonly cited example. The following is one participant's description of this:

> "I walked a friend home from a party. And they were just a little drunk so they needed some help and we got-got home safely."

Other commonly cited specific helping examples were providing transportation to a friend without a car, and providing emotional support to a friend going through a difficult time.

Helping Strangers. The participants had a more difficult time providing times they helped a stranger in a general situation than they did with times that they helped a friend. 40 out of the 53 participants, 75%, reported at least one instance when they did. These ranged from very simple

actions such as picking up dropped items or providing directional help to more serious ones, such

as walking home an inebriated stranger. A commonly cited helping action is as follows:

> "Ok umm I've helped people get to part A-from point A to point B. They're generally pretty
> pleased that I help them to get there and I went on my way and they went on their way and
> everything was good..."

A few helping instances were on the more serious side of the spectrum. One of these

situations is described in the following excerpt:

> "Um well I guess one time there was this girl that I was like, I was walking around back from
> like the library and this girl was like super lost and she was super drunk and I like walked her
> back to her dorm."

Barriers to Helping. In response to being asked *what do you think makes it hard for*

[university name] students to help? 92% of the participants were able to come up with at least

one barrier. 55% listed two or more, and 21% listed three or more. One participant described

many of the barriers the majority of participants revealed in the following quote:

> "What are people going to think about me? Um, you know, what if the people involved
> know my friends so they're going to talk about me? So, definitely self-image, what other people
> think about you, um, I think just fear is a big thing and just not wanting to get involved. Not
> wanting to get into a mess. Not having to deal with that. I think those are the biggest things?"

This quote touches upon the commonly cited barrier of feeling judged by friends. Another

participant described this pressure in the following excerpt:

> "Some of my friends in the dorm were like 'why would you-why would you even get involved
> like it's none of your business like it's better for you to just stay uninvolved.' And like I think
> that's like just weird because that's just not the type of person I am."

Other common barriers that were mentioned were not knowing what to say in the

situation, not having time to help, not knowing the person that needed help, not being prepared,

not knowing how to help, and not having the confidence to help, and that the university is too big

to have a sense of connectedness when it comes to intervening. 4 of the participants, 8%, did not

provide an answer to this question.

Sexual Violence and Relationship Abuse Helping

   Stepping In. 72% of the participants were able to provide one or more intervention

examples when asked the question, *tell me about the first time you witnessed something like what*

we talked about above. Tell me how things unfolded, what you remember thinking, what you

tried to do, how people involved or around you acted, how it turned out. Of this percentage, 31

of the situations were times that the participant witnessed and then decided to intervene. One of

these helping actions is described as followed:

   "Umm well they were fighting umm it was late at night and umm he-he got very physical with
   her and at that point just kind of like 'hey..you know..are you alright?' And um I was walking
   towards them anyways to go past and um yeah I stepped in between them and um then they
   started turning on me..so I just kinda I-I walked away and called the UNH cops and they came
   and took care of it.."

   18 of the interventions were situations where a friend disclosed an event that happened to

him or her and the participant provided emotional support. The following is an excerpt from a

disclosure intervention:

   "A friend confided in me about a time where she had made arrangements to stay at
   someone's apartment and she was under the influence-like she thought he understood it was not
   a date or anything and he was, you know, aggressive I believe verbally and then he was very
   insistent but I know she gave in."

The following is a sample of the actions a participant took after his or her friend confided in

them:

   "My friend was raped at [University name] and I did not know how to go about it. Umm I tried
   to I took her to SHARPP [Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program] and um my friends
   and I talked to her about it, but I wasn't really there for her enough."

   Time Investments. The helping interventions were divided into four time

investments: *One time, one time with consequences, persistent, and persistent with*

consequences. As previously mentioned, a *one time* investment represented a situation where the

participant described a helping action that went as planned the first time he or she helped. A *one time with consequences* action was the same as *one time*, except the result of the helping action negatively affected the participant in some way (e.g. fought with friend, lost a night's sleep, had to go to court, etc.). A *persistent* time investment described a helping action that did not go as planned the first time the participant stepped in to help. With this type of time investment, he or she had to step back and try a different way to help instead. Lastly, with a *persistent with consequences* time investment the participant attempted multiple ways to help and was negatively affected by the action. The following table demonstrates how many of the interventions fell into each category.

One Time	25
One Time with Consequences	7
Persistent	13
Persistent with Consequences	4

Not Stepping In. 42% of the participants provided one or more specific examples in response to the question *tell me about a time when you saw a situation involving risk for an unwanted sexual experience or relationship abuse where you decided not to step in.* The most commonly cited situation was witnessing unwanted touching at a bar or party. One participant said:

"I think out at a party, and I think a girl danced with a guy and it looked like she was like trying to walk away but he seemed to be like holding her pretty tightly and staying and dancing. I guess I didn't really step in cause it seemed like, alright they're dancing, not like, uh, I don't know, I didn't know where my, like I also didn't know her intentions, if she was trying to get away or if she was like, stumbling or whatever it was, so I didn't really step in at that point."

Another commonly cited situation where participants did not intervene was witnessing an

argument between couples. Participants noted not getting involved on account of the ambiguity

of the situation. One participant that witnessed this type of situation revealed:

"Umm..there was a time when there was a couple fighting in a parking lot next to a party I
remember. And they were like screaming at each other and we-we did like kind of thought about
asking the girl if she was okay but we didn't intervene, we didn't know if we should have..get
involved. I remember we didn't..didn't do anything about that."

The following is a participant's description as to why he or she did not step in:

"It doesn't look like it's physical or anything so like you just kind of like wish they could have
done that in like a private spot so you didn't have to feel uncomfortable."

28% of the participants could not think of a time where they either stepped in to help or

saw a situation involving risk for an unwanted experience and chose not to help. However, 13%

of the participants were able to provide one or more examples for each of the previous questions

related to stepping in and not stepping in.

Barriers to Helping. When asked, *did anything make helping difficult?* 71% of those

that had provided an example of a time when he or she chose to step in or not came up with one

or more obstacles for intervening. Many participants responded with "I've never been in a

situation like that before," "I didn't know what to do," or "I wasn't sure how to react," and went

on to describe how they were not sure which actions to take in order to successfully help. One

person said:

"That was my first encounter with it and I felt like a terrible person and I didn't-I don't know-I
just didn't know how to handle the situation besides taking her to SHARPP [Sexual Harassment
and Rape Prevention Program] and letting her talk anonymously with someone."

Many attributed not knowing how to respond because they had never personally experienced

the situation. One person in response to the question stated:

"Not experiencing it myself, not really knowing, should I com-comfort her or should I try to
relate it to myself, should I just listen, um yeah."

Another participant said:

> "I know that as a 21 year old I'm not equipped to deal with these types of problems? So I just tried to sit there and be like the best friend I can possible? And like encourage her to like seek outside help."

In other words, someone simply responded with:

> "I wasn't equipped to handle the situation."

Another common obstacle was fear for the participant's own safety. Many revealed that they had been fearful for their own welfare and because of this were apprehensive to intervene. One participant replied:

> "I was scared to be involved because I didn't know what he was gonna do."

Another participant noted:

> "I almost felt like I might agitate the guy more by jumping in."

Someone else said:

> "Didn't want to confront him to his face because he was very drunk and quite large."

Lastly, in regards to how physically large the perpetrator in the situation was, the participant commented:

> "I was a little worried about what would happen to me."

The last most commonly cited obstacle was feeling "awkward" and that it was none of the participant's "business" on account of the ambiguity of the situation. One participant said:

> "You don't want to be the person that steps in and says something when it's really not that big of a deal."

Another person described this feeling by saying:

> "I guess we just didn't really think it was our place."

An additional response was:

"Why is it any of my business to get involved in that?"

Lastly, another participant said:

"I wanted to step in and try to talk, but I didn't know what was going on or what was being discussed so I just didn't, because I didn't know my place in the situation."

Discussion

The results revealed that the majority of participants report not knowing what intervention steps to take in the context of sexual violence and relationship abuse situations. When barriers were listed for general helping situations, it was found that it is not that the participants did not know what to do, but instead that they did not have time or felt that their friends might judge them. On account of these findings, less helping examples were reported in the context of sexual violence and relationship abuse compared to the general helping conditions.

The common barriers that many of the participants listed in regards to helping in general coincided with Brown's (2006) list of barriers (e.g. being too busy). The finding that the majority of the participants reported not knowing how to respond or what to do when it came to intervening in sexual violence and relationship abuse situations was also consistent with Bennett et al.'s (2013) previous research. Failure to intervene due to a skill deficit was the most commonly cited barrier in both our research and Bennett et al.'s (2013). Failure to take intervention responsibility and identify the situation as high-risk also compared to Bennett et al.'s (2013) study. However, interestingly enough, failure to intervene due to audience inhibition was only cited in the context of general helping and not in the condition of sexual violence or relationship abuse in this research study.

These findings support the notion that a lot of the time, bystanders do not intervene in sexual violence or relationship abuse situations because they do not know how to. Not only that,

but many fear for their safety or what consequences might arise if they step in. This is potentially due to the major differences in the types of barriers listed for general helping versus complex helping. For example, a lack of time, feeling self-conscious, and not wanting to get in a strangers business versus feeling like it is not the bystander's place to step in, not feeling equipped to handle the situation, feeling scared, and not knowing how the perpetrator will respond.

Although Latane & Darley's (1970) assertion that many bystander's do not how to respond is supported in the context of general helping, the barriers are more complex in the context of sexual violence and relationship abuse. In addition, the situational model of intervention focuses on one-time helping interventions. However, many of the sexual violence and relationship abuse bystander interventions described in this study were persistent time investments. Latane and Darley's (1970) model does not provide a schema for helping if the intervention does not go as planned.

An updated situational model of intervention that takes into consideration situations where the helping does not go as planned, when the bystander does not know how to help, or if the bystander fears for his or her own safety could aid in providing future bystanders ways to maneuver around these obstacles. First-year exposure to bystander intervention programs that illustrate this new model could also be greatly beneficial for prevention efforts. This is because many of the participants that experienced the Bringing in the Bystander Program revealed that they felt an increased overall awareness and confidence for handling these kinds of situations compared to those that did not endure the program. Taking these actions could aid in preventing unfortunate cases such as Kitty Genovese's or the Steubenville, Ohio occurrence from ever happening again.

Limitations. These findings reflect those of a predominantly Caucasian participant pool. On account of this, the results do not are not evidence for an ethnically or racially diverse group of people. In addition, our study was relatively small with 53 participants. Increasing this sample size in future studies could help to reliably reflect the college student population mean. Lastly, on account of the sensitivity of this subject matter, some participants may have felt apprehensive to fully disclose times when they may or may not have helped in conditions involving sexual violence or relationship abuse. Although the researchers ensured that all responses would remain confidential, many may not have wanted to relive the experience. This is all the more reason to provide a schema for helping in these complex contexts for future bystanders.

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