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Recommended Citation

Liu, Kathy Chang, "Factors Associated with Intervention by Bystanders in Sexual Violence Crimes" (2016). *MPA/MPP Capstone Projects*. 256.
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Factors Associated with Intervention by Bystanders in Sexual Violence Crimes

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Capstone paper

April 21, 2016

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Executive Summary

Kitty Genovese's case in 1964 remains the classic example in discussions of bystander intervention. In recent years, people heard similar cases where bystanders act indifferently or are slow to report the crime. This made me ask the research question of this Capstone: What factors are associated with intervention by bystanders?

The data set I used here is the incident data file from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data, which covers the years 1992-2013. I pulled out 11 explanatory variables including victim characteristics, offender characteristics, and external/environmental factors. I used a regression model with robust standard errors to examine the multi-variate relations between the dependent variable and explanatory variables.

The results of my regression model indicate that after controlling the impacts from other explanatory variables, victim household income, incident time and whether the offender had the right to be at the criminal site were significant factors relating to bystander intervention. Victims with a household income larger than \$75,000 were more likely to receive bystander intervention. If the offender had no right to be in the crime site, the victim was more likely to get bystander intervention compared to offenders who had right to be in the crime site. In addition, if the crime happened in daytime, it was likely for victims to receive help.

Women are attacked more often; however, this does not motivate more bystander intervention. There are programs and media campaigns that have paid some attention to this social problem in recent years, but still, more things need to be done by authorities.

INTRODUCTION

Kitty Genovese's murderer died in prison a week ago. In 1964, Kitty Genovese he raped and murdered her outside of her apartment building. Based on the New York Times report after the incident, there were 38 eyewitnesses there but no one called the police. Although the details of this case have been revised as to the awareness of witnesses of the events, and at least two witnesses eventually acted, the death of Kitty Genovese remains the classic case for discussion of bystander response to sexual violence.

Recently, a terrifying video occupied the most popular Chinese social media platform Weibo. The female victim shared her story that she was attacked by a kidnapper when she tried to enter her hotel room. Shown in the surveillance video of the hotel, the male offender dragged her along on the floor and she started to scream and cry for help. Also, captured by the surveillance video, several hotel guests passed by but no one stepped up to stop the violence. A hotel attendant thought they were a quarreling couple and asked them in a low voice to not fight in the hotel. On April 5, the post was trending with a nationwide rage that no one helped the female victim. This case made people ask: "Why do bystanders act indifferently?" This research seeks the answer the question: What factors are more likely to motivate bystanders to intervene in sexual violence crimes? Can we see a positive trend from 1991 to 2013 that more bystander intervention appeared? This research considers factors associated with greater probability that bystanders will assist the targets of sexual violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Bystander Intervention

Latané and Darley (1968) developed the idea of bystander intervention in 1968, four years after the tragedy of Kitty Genovese. They developed the hypothesis that the more bystanders are present during an emergency, the less likely they are going to intervene (Darley and Latané 1968). Latané and Darley (1968) reasoned that, the pressure to intervene will be shared by all those who are present instead of being concentrated on a unique person. The more people are present, the less importance is attached to any one person. As a consequence, no one helps (Latané and Darley 1968). The two scholars further hypothesized that the more serious an emergency, the less likely bystanders will be to intervene because the stress is higher and the threat to anyone assisting is higher.

Fischer et al. (2011) divided the bystander literature into two different eras—before 1981 and after 1981—based on their meta-analysis of bystander effect studies (Fischer et al. 2011). In 1981, Latané and Nida conducted a literature review of bystander's and victims' characteristics. They considered age, sex, and geographic region as three variables. They found that the likelihood of help was greater in nonurban areas than in urban areas (Latané and Nida 1981). As for the characteristics of victims, some of the major variables are sex, number of victims, and race. According to Latané and Nida, the last important variable that has an impact on bystander intervention is the possibility of communication among bystanders. There was little chance of such communication in the Kitty Genovese case, given that the bystanders were in apartments overlooking the attack. Similarly to the argument of Darley & Latané of responsibility diffusion in 1968, Misavage and Richardson pointed out in their study that people who interact with each other performed faster than people in non-interacting groups (Misavage

and Richardson 1974).

After the year of 1981, the bystander intervention literature tended to focus more on experimental research, and started to pay attention to many critical issues. For instance, Fischer et. al. studied bystander intervention in dangerous emergencies and non-dangerous conditions, and found that bystanders' sex and age had no effect on intervention (Fischer et al. 2006); Gaertner's study found that more help was received in the White victim group than the Black victim group (Gaertner 1982); and a final discussion point made in 1985 is about trained and untrained bystander groups (Lance and Heinold 1985). Generally, studies after 1985 find that the bystander effect tends not to occur when it is a dangerous emergency or when the bystander is highly competent (Fischer et al. 2011).

Sexual Violence Bystander Intervention

Why it is meaningful to talk about sexual violence bystander intervention particularly? Based on Banyard and McMahon (2011), the model of Latané and Darley is harder to apply in sexual assault cases compared to school bullying or medical emergencies (McMahon and Banyard 2011). The distinct characteristics of sexual assault make it essentially different from other emergencies. They identified three main differences between sexual violence bystander intervention and other situation bystander intervention. First, sexual assault and dating violence are often considered together in literature such as dating violence, without clarifying the differences. Second, there is an inadequate attention paid to different levels of prevention ("*primary, secondary, and tertiary*"). Third, bystander intervention in the current literature always includes a wide range of emergency levels.

Recently, the public has paid more attention to sexual violence prevention, and increasingly

emphasized the role of bystander intervention (Berkowitz 2002), (Banyard, Plante, and Moynihan 2004). Banyard focused on the development of measures of bystander's attitudes and behavior. She also examined the correlates of bystander behavior (Banyard 2008). She found that lower perceived ineffectiveness and more positive attitudes towards helping were strongly related to higher levels of bystander behavior (Banyard 2008). Previous bystander prevention programs were more focused on treating potential victims or potential perpetrators; whereas the bystander education or training programs were more focusing on addressing potential bystanders, and helping them provide for support to sexual violence survivors (Banyard, Moynihan, and Plante 2007). According to a report from the Department of Justice, normally, women are more likely to be sexual assaulted than men (Patricia Godeke. Tjaden 2000), and men tend to help when the situation may make them "heroic and chivalrous" (Eagly and Crowley 1986). Also, Burn noted in her situational model that prevention programs should inform potential bystanders that intervention is appropriate no matter who the victim is (Burn 2008).

METHOD

Data

The data set here is the incident data file from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data, which covers the years 1992-2013. My units of analysis are the crime incidents that survey respondents have experienced. The survey data were collected by the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. They have been collecting the NCVS (previously called NCS, which stood for National Crime Survey) on personal and household victimization through an ongoing national survey since 1973. The four main objectives of the data described in the data codebook are to: (1) gather detailed information about victims and

consequences of crime; (2) estimate the type and the number of crime incidents that are not reported to police; (3) provide consolidated measures of different types of crimes; and (4) compare over time and between different areas.

The survey enables the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to estimate the likelihood of victimization by rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, theft, household burglary, and motor vehicle theft for the population as a whole as well as for segments of the population such as women, the elderly, members of various racial or ethnic groups, city dwellers, and other groups. There are three methods of data collection: face to face interviews, telephone interviews, and computer-aided telephone interviews. According to the BJS's description of the data, they randomly select households and age eligible (12 and older) individuals based on the residential addresses. The survey participants are interviewed every six months, seven times in total, during a three-year period. All first interviews are face to face, others either in person or by phone.

Sample

The original data (incident file) collected by Bureau of the Census had 232,897 crime cases, and 1,604 variables. My research focus was sexual violence crime, so I only selected crimes related to sexual violence including sexual contact, sexual assault, and rape. In the end, nine crimes are covered in this capstone, and the total number of those crimes was 2,204. Among the 2,204 crimes, I excluded the cases in which there were no other people present besides the respondent and offender. The case number then drops to 646. Among the 646 cases, 36 of them were invalid information cases (the term in the data set is out of universe). The elimination process brought the final sample to 610. Table 1 shows detailed information on types nine sexual violence crimes experienced by a total of 610 respondents.

Table 1. Crime Incidence Details and Proportion

Variable Name	Crime Type	No. of Cases	Percentage
SEXUAL/SEX CONTACT		8	1.3%
	Unwanted sexual contact with force (grabbing, fondling, etc.)	1	12.5%
	Unwanted sexual contact without force	7	87.5%
ATTEMPT/THREAT		289	47.4%
	Verbal threat of rape	100	33.0%
	Verbal threat of sexual assault other than rape	97	32.0%
	Unwanted sexual contact with force (grabbing, fondling, etc.)	55	18.2%
	Unwanted sexual contact without force (grabbing, fondling, etc.)	51	16.8%
ATTACKED		313	51.3%
	Raped	107	33.5%
	Tried to rape	93	29.1%
	Sexual assault other than rape or attempted rape	120	37.5%

Source: NCVS 1992-2013 codebook

Variables

In this study, the dependent variable is occurrence of bystander intervention (Yes/ No). The explanatory variables were chosen based on three categories: victim characteristics, offender characteristics and external/environmental factors. Basic demographic information was included in the victim characteristics, such as sex, age, race, household income and education attainment. Basic information on offenders includes sex and race. Other external/environmental factors such

as location of the incident, time of the incident (day/night), weapon use during the incident, and whether the offender had the right to be where the attack occurred. Also, incident year was counted as a variable to investigate the yearly occurrence of bystander intervention and control for time trends.

Statistical Analysis

I use Stata version 13 in my analysis. Descriptive analysis, Chi-square test and t-test were utilized for descriptive and bi-variate analysis. I used a regression model with robust standard error in this study to estimate the coefficients between explanatory and dependent variables.

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis

As expected, females are more likely to be sexual violence victims (82.3%) rather than males (14.8%). Among 610 cases, 530 cases (83.5%) victims were white. I divided the victim age (12-80) into five groups, and the results showed the first two age groups, which were 12-18 and 19-25 had higher probability to be sexual assaulted. Table 2.1 listed the detailed description of first category (victim characteristics) of explanatory variables.

Table 2.1 Explanatory Variable List (victim characteristics)

Variable List	N	%
Victim Sex		
Male	90	14.8%
Female	520	85.3%
Victim Race		
White	530	82.5%
Black	78	12.8%
American Indian, Aleut, Eskimo	15	2.5%
Asian, Pacific Islander	14	2.3%
Victim Age		
Age12-18	166	27.2%
Age19-25	157	25.7%
Age26-35	123	20.2%
Age36-50	126	20.7%
Age51-80	38	6.2%
Victim Education Attainment		
K8 and below	82	13.4%
K9-K12	266	43.6%
college	247	40.5%
college+	12	2.0%
Missing	3	0.5%
Victim Household Income		
0-\$39,999	348	57.1%
\$40,000-\$74,999	111	18.2%
\$75,000 and over	67	11%
Missing	84	13.8%

Among 610 cases, male offender was described in 467 cases (76.6%), and female offender was described in 31 cases (5.1%). The data are missing for 18.2% of the cases. Also, the results showed that 49.3% of offenders were white, and 21.3% were black. Table 2.2 demonstrated the second category (offender characteristics) of explanatory variables.

Table 2.2 Explanatory Variable List (offender characteristics)

Variable List	N	%
Offender Sex		
Male	467	76.6%
Female	31	5.1%
Don't know	1	0.2%
Missing	111	18.2%
Offender Race		
White	301	49.3%
Black	130	21.3%
Other	55	9.0%
Don't know	10	1.6%
Missing	114	18.7%

As shown in the descriptive results, in most of sexual violence cases, offenders did not have a weapon (79.7%). Moreover, in 10.9% of cases described by victims, offenders had no right to be at the incident location. Responding to this, 25.4% of cases happened in respondent's home or lodging, and 16.9% of cases happened at, in, or near friend's/relative's/neighbor's home. Also, the results showed that 75.3% of cases happened in daytime. Table 2.3 showed the third category (external/environmental factor) of independent variables.

Table 2.3 Explanatory Variable List (external/environmental factors)

Variable List	N	%
Offender Had a Weapon		
Yes	65	10.7%
No	486	79.7%
Missing	59	9.7%
Offender Had Right to be There		
Not no-right	546	89.5%
No right	64	10.5%
Incident What Time		
Daytime	459	75.3%
Not daytime	151	24.8%
Incident Location		
In respondent's home or lodging	155	25.4%
Near own home	40	6.6%
At, in, or near a friend's/relative's/neighbor's home	103	16.9%
Commercial places	85	13.9%
Parking lots/garages	17	2.8%
School	53	8.7%
Open areas, on street or public transportation	85	13.9%
Other	72	11.8%

Bi-variate Analysis

As shown in the results, when the victims were American Indian, Aleut, and Eskimo, they had higher possibility (60%) to be helped comparing to the White (35.4%), Black (39.7%) and Asian, and Pacific Islander (14.3%). Results also showed that richer people were more likely to get help (50.8%) comparing to other two income groups (35.1% and 32.4%). Victims are more likely to receive help (39%) if the incident happen in daytime rather than not daytime (27.2%). Another finding was shown in the results that when the offender had no right to be at the incident location, the victims had higher possibility (48.4%) to get help from bystanders. In addition, from 1993 to 2013, there was no finding to show that after 2000, there was any trend toward more intervention, notwithstanding more prevention programs after that date.

Table 3 Bi-variate Results

Variable	Bystander Intervention				P
	Yes	%	No	%	
Victim Sex					0.194
	Male	27	30.0%	63	70.00%
	Female	193	37.1%	327	62.88%
Victim Race					0.067
	White	178	35.4%	325	64.61%
	Black	31	39.7%	47	60.26%
	American Indian, Aleut, Eskimo	9	60.0%	6	40.00%
	Asian, Pacific Islander	2	14.3%	12	85.71%
Victim Edu Attainment					0.463
	K8 and below	30	36.6%	52	63.51%
	K9-K12	93	34.7%	173	65.04%
	college	93	37.6%	154	62.35%
	college+	2	16.7%	10	83.33%
	Missing	2	66.7%	1	33.33%
Victim Age					0.852
	Age12-18	61	36.8%	105	63.25%
	Age19-25	51	32.5%	106	67.52%
	Age26-35	47	38.2%	76	61.79%
	Age36-50	46	36.5%	80	63.49%
	Age51+	15	39.5%	23	60.53%
Household Income					0.062
	0-\$39,999	122	35.1%	226	64.94%
	\$40,000-\$74,999	36	32.4%	75	67.57%
	\$75,000 and over	34	50.8%	33	49.25%
	Missing	28	33.3%	56	66.67%
Offender Had a Weapon					0.664
	Yes	26	40.0%	39	60.00%
	No	171	35.2%	315	64.81%
Offender Sex					0.3375
	Male	177	37.9%	290	62.10%
	Female	10	32.3%	21	67.74%
	Missing	33	29.7%	78	70.27%
Offender Race					0.1655
	White	106	35.2%	195	64.78%
	Black	53	40.8%	77	59.23%
	Other	25	45.5%	30	54.55%
	Don't know	2	20.0%	8	80.00%
	Missing	34	29.8%	80	70.18%

Incident Time						0.009
	Daytime	179	39.0%	280	61.00%	
	Not daytime	41	27.2%	110	72.85%	
Incident Location						0.604
	In respondent's home or lodging	57	36.8%	98	63.23%	
	Near own home	10	25.0%	30	75.00%	
	At, in, or near a friend's/relative's/neighbor's home	35	34.0%	68	66.02%	
	Commercial places	34	40.0%	51	60.00%	
	Parking lots/garages	9	52.9%	8	47.06%	
	School	17	32.1%	36	67.92%	
	Open areas, on street or public transportation	31	36.5%	54	63.53%	
	Other	27	37.5%	45	62.50%	
Offender Had Right to be There						0.029
	Not no-right	189	34.6%	357	65.38%	
	No right	31	48.4%	33	51.56%	
Incident Year						0.296
	1991	4	57.1%	3	42.9%	
	1992	15	38.5%	24	61.5%	
	1993	28	50.9%	27	49.1%	
	1994	15	33.3%	30	66.7%	
	1995	16	39.0%	25	61.0%	
	1996	12	32.4%	25	67.6%	
	1997	11	37.9%	18	62.1%	
	1998	11	32.4%	23	67.7%	
	1999	9	25.7%	26	74.3%	
	2000	7	23.3%	23	76.7%	
	2001	8	28.6%	20	71.4%	
	2002	9	42.9%	12	57.1%	
	2003	8	32.0%	17	68.0%	
	2004	11	57.9%	8	42.1%	
	2005	7	33.3%	14	66.7%	
	2006	9	36.0%	16	64.0%	
	2007	8	44.4%	10	55.6%	
	2008	3	18.8%	13	81.3%	
	2009	2	14.4%	12	85.6%	
	2010	8	34.8%	15	65.2%	
	2011	5	29.4%	12	70.6%	
	2012	6	35.3%	11	64.7%	
	2013	8	57.1%	6	42.9%	

Regression Analysis

Based on the results of the bi-variate analysis and the study needs, victim sex, race, education attainment, household income, offender's sex, race, whether the offender had a weapon, whether the offender had a right to be in crime site, the time of the incident were included in multi-variate analysis. The results of the regression model with robust standard errors indicated that after controlling for impacts from other explanatory variables, victim household income, incident time and whether the offender had the right to be the criminal site were significant relating to bystander intervention.

Several variables have missing values, as is typical in crime reports. Rather than lose a substantial number of cases, the analysis uses dummy variables for missing values. None of those dummy variables has a statistically significant effect on the result, but this is always a tradeoff between interpretation of the dummy variables and the problems of losing data.

Compare to victim had household income less than \$40,000, victim with household income larger than \$75,000 has 0.18 more probability to receive bystander intervention. If offender had no right to be in the crime site, victim has more 0.20 probability to get bystander intervention compare to offender had right to be in the crime site. In addition, if the crime happened at daytime, there would be 0.14 more possibility for victims to receive help.

All regression results are shown in table 4.

Table 4 Regression Results

Bystander Intervention		Coef.	Robus t Std. Err	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Victim sex		0.07	0.06	-0.04	0.18
Victim race	(White)				
	Black	0.03	0.07	-0.11	0.16
	American Indian, Aleut, Eskimo	0.24	0.14	-0.04	0.52
	Missing	-0.18	0.09	-0.36	-0.01
Victim age		0.00	0.02	-0.04	0.03
Victim education	(K8 and				
below)	K9-K12	-0.03	0.06	-0.15	0.09
	College	0.01	0.07	-0.12	0.15
	College+	-0.26	0.13	-0.52	0.01
	Missing	0.14	0.26	-0.38	0.66
Offender sex		-0.05	0.09	-0.22	0.12
Missing offender sex		0.17	0.30	-0.42	0.76
Offender race	(White)				
	Black	0.04	0.06	-0.08	0.15
	Other	0.10	0.07	-0.05	0.24
	DK	-0.23	0.14	-0.49	0.04
	Missing	-0.26	0.30	-0.86	0.33
Weapon used	(Yes)				
	No	-0.06	0.07	-0.19	0.07
	DK	-0.03	0.09	-0.20	0.14
Daytime incident		0.14*	0.04	0.05	0.22
Incident location		0.00	0.00	-0.01	0.01
Household income	(0-\$39,999)				
	\$40,000-\$74,999	-0.01	0.05	-0.11	0.09
	\$75,000 and over	0.18*	0.07	0.04	0.31
	Missing	-0.01	0.06	-0.12	0.11

Offender had the right to be present	-0.20*	0.08	-0.35	-0.04
Missing value for offender right to be present	0.05	0.06	-0.06	0.16
Constant	0.37	0.12	0.13	0.62

Robust standard errors in parentheses; ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

Limitations

The accuracy of crime report data is always a problem. Many crimes are not reported at all, and memory and avoidance of thinking about such events are problems even when the crime is reported. There might be changes over time in reporting frequency or accuracy. Using a data set eliciting responses about attacks both reported to police and not reported is an improvement, but cannot produce the quality of data associated with more neutral outcomes such as wages or educational attainment.

DISCUSSION&POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As expected before the study, the number of female victims were much higher (70%) than male victims in sexual violence crimes. In 2013, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) published a special report about female victims of sexual violence. This report demonstrated that from 1995 to 2010, only 9% of sexual violence cases involved male victims (BJS 2013). In 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was signed in U.S. federal law. Since 2000, a number of non-profit organizations have started some programs to prevent sexual violence, and the target population started to focus on men, such as Men Can Stop Rape and White Ribbon Campaign. That could increase bystander involvement, but the results here do not support such a conclusion.

Two main age groups in victim age distribution were 12-18 and 18-25. This results indicated that sexual violence victims were young women and men. The first age group was created to cover teenagers and young adults who were in school age, and the second age group was created to cover young college students. The number of high school and college sexual violence prevention programs has grown in the last decade or so. Meanwhile, some research had

been done on middle school students regarding to the issue of dating violence (Noonan and Charles 2009). Future research can show whether these prevention programs in fact prevent violence or encourage bystander involvement.

According to BJS special report 2013, females who lived in lower income households, and who lived in rural areas experienced higher rates of sexual violence. This capstone also supported this finding: 57% of sexual violence crime cases happened in households that had income less than 40,000. Some non-profit groups have paid attention on the relation between poverty and sexual violence. For example, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape published a guide for counselors and advocates in 2007. Looking the facts that low income people were bearing higher probability to be sexually assaulted or raped, the bi-variate analysis that high income people tend to receive more bystander help. This contrast should have attracted more attention from policy makers to protect low income people, especially females.

The results showed in this Capstone that the two large incident location groups were at a respondent's home (25%) or at/near a friend's/relative's, or acquaintance's home (17%). There might be two potential situations, one was the offender had right to be at the incident location; the other was the offender had no right to be there. When we see these two variables (incident location & offender right) as a whole, a conclusion might be drawn that there was a high probability that sexual violence would occur among acquaintances, and even family members or friends. This point is also found in the BJS special report that in 2005-2010, most rape or sexual assault crimes were committed by intimate partner, relative/family member, or friend/acquaintance. Responding to this fact, many global media campaigns and programs have started to pay attention to this issue, and some of them created widespread influence. Bystanders might be more reluctant to intervene when the offender and target are related by

dating, marriage, or family, but that is an important addition to prevention efforts to reduce the incidence of such cases.

Last but not least, the results showed that some people do get involved in the bystander intervention, but it is difficult to predict the pattern. People who appear to have the right to be at the place do not attract much attention even when they are committing a crime. Perhaps the claim is easier than the act of actually intervening, or changeable memory is at work. The programs focused on male bystanders such as White Ribbon Campaign still require a lot of work to encourage more bystanders and people should be encouraged to care about more crime situations even when the victim and offender know each other and are legitimately at the incident location.

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