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When Can I help? A Conceptual Framework for the Prevention of Sexual Violence Through Bystander Intervention

Sarah McMahon¹ and Victoria L. Banyard²

Abstract

The bystander intervention approach is gaining popularity as a means for engaging communities in sexual assault prevention, especially on college campuses. Many bystander programs are teaching community members how to intervene without first assisting them to identify the full range of opportunities when they can intervene. In this article, the authors review the literature on sexual violence bystander intervention and present a conceptual framework that lays out a continuum of bystander opportunities ranging from reactive situations after an assault has occurred, to situations before an assault has occurred (posing high to low risk to victims), as well as proactive situations where no risk to the victim is present. The implications of this typology are discussed in the context of program development, evaluation, and further research.

Keywords

prevention, sexual assault, intervention

It is widely accepted that sexual violence is a major problem on college campuses, with national research indicating that one fifth to one fourth of all women experience a completed or attempted rape during their 4- to 5-year college careers (Karjane, Fisher, & Cullen, 2005). The devastating impact of rape on victims has been well documented, including negative outcomes on physical and mental health, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships (Bachar & Koss, 2001; Campbell, 2008; Koss, Koss, & Woodruff, 1991; Waigandt, Wallace, Phelps, & Miller, 1990). In response, many colleges and universities have implemented educational programs on campus to raise awareness about the issue. However, the focus of these efforts varies widely by campus, with no consensus as to the most effective approach to sexual violence prevention efforts (Anderson & Whitson, 2005; Karjane et al., 2005).

To help shape prevention efforts, Schwartz, DeKeseredy, Tait, and Alvi (2001) apply feminist routine activities theory to explain the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses. In this model, assaults occur in the presence of three key factors: a motivated perpetrator, a potential victim, and the absence of “capable guardians” who as witnesses, may step in to prevent the crime. Prevention, then, can focus on any one of these actors. To date, prevention programs, however, have almost exclusively focused on reducing risk among potential victims or perpetrators (Burn, 2009). More recently, prevention has begun to focus on bystanders—third party witnesses to situations where there is high risk of sexual violence and who

by their presence have the ability to do nothing, to make the situation worse by supporting or ignoring perpetrator behavior, or to make the situation better by intervening in prosocial ways.

The bystander approach shifts the focus of prevention efforts to peers and community members, suggesting that these members can intervene in helpful or prosocial ways as “engaged bystanders” when faced with situations involving sexual violence (Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2004; McMahon, Postmus, & Koenick, 2011; Potter, Moynihan, Stapleton, & Banyard, 2009). It fits with recent calls for more ecological approaches to prevention that move beyond changing individuals to changing peer and community interactions, norms, and behaviors (Casey & Lindhorst, 2009; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007; Moynihan, Potter, Banyard, Stapleton, & Mayhew, 2010). The bystander approach addresses all three levels of prevention, including primary (prior to the assault occurring), secondary (during the actual assault or

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high-risk situation), and tertiary (after the assault occurs). Consistent with the public health approach to primary prevention, bystander programs focus on engaging the entire community, not just those considered at risk. To incorporate secondary and tertiary levels of prevention, bystander programs help individuals overcome barriers to action in high-risk situations and strengthen safety nets for survivors after an incident (e.g., Banyard, Moynihan, Walsh, Cohn, Burn, 2009).

The popularity of bystander education programs nationwide has increased exponentially over the past few years (e.g., Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007; Berkowitz, 2009; Foubert & Perry, 2007; Katz, 1995). The bystander approach has been adopted by many college campuses, organizations including the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and even as a statewide level prevention strategy in a handful of states, including Kentucky, Massachusetts, and New Jersey (New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, 2009). Although bystander intervention strategies have rapidly proliferated as a tool for the prevention of sexual violence, the conceptual framework behind it needs further development. The field is lacking a clearly articulated model for the range of opportunities for bystander action and how they are connected to sexual violence (Banyard, 2011; Berkowitz, 2009; Katz, 1995). Before teaching community members *how* to intervene, it is important to assist them in knowing *when* they can act as bystanders. The purpose of this article is to develop a typology of bystander intervention opportunities in the context of sexual assault, with particular attention to college campuses. We begin by defining the construct of bystander intervention as a form of prevention of sexual violence, and put forth the continuum of sexual violence model to help identify the full range of possible bystander opportunities available.

The Need for a Nomological Network of Bystander Opportunities

In what circumstances can bystanders make a difference? What are the general classes of situations where we may consider there to be high risk of sexual violence? What are situations that perhaps do not meet the definition of “high risk” but where actions and attitudes supporting rape culture are in evidence? To date these questions have not been adequately answered in part because of a lack of clear descriptions of the range of situations that are linked to sexual violence. Yet answers are a key next step for the field. It is likely that some situations are more easily recognized by community members as bystander opportunities. Identification of the situation is the first key step to action (Burn, 2009).

One way to build a conceptual framework of prevention-focused bystander intervention opportunities is through the creation of a nomological network, which is a theoretical framework including the conceptual definition of a construct, the observable manifestations, and their interrelationships (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; Garber, Frankel, & Street, 2009; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). The identification of a nomological network was originally explained by Cronbach & Meehl (1955) as a critical first step for construct validity and

has since been applied to the development of a number of social science constructs such as organizational empowerment (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004); positive youth development (King et al., 2005); and childhood bipolar disorder (Garber et al., 2009). The description of a nomological network has been viewed as a method for identifying the status of a particular field of research at a certain point in time (King et al., 2005). Thus, developing a nomological framework for the continuum of bystander opportunities has a number of important implications for bystander intervention education programs on college campuses. First, there is ongoing criticism of rape prevention programs as lacking sound theoretical support (e.g., Lonsway, 1996), even though there is evidence that theory-based rape prevention efforts are more effective than those that are not (Casey & Lindhorst, 2009; Schewe, 2002). The nomological network can be used as a roadmap to help identify the various types of bystander opportunities and their theoretical connection to one another. This will provide a model upon which bystander intervention programs can be more rigorously developed and theoretically grounded. Second, the nomological network will more clearly define the typology of bystander opportunities, leading in turn to measurement tools that are designed more carefully to assess attitudes and actual behaviors. These tools can be utilized to gain important information about the baseline prevalence of different bystander behaviors in various campus communities, which can help prevention specialists better tailor prevention messages. Improved measurement tools will also allow for stronger evaluation of bystander intervention programs. Further research using a typology will also illuminate whether correlates of bystander behavior vary based on types of bystander situations (Banyard, 2011; Banyard & Moynihan, 2011).

The Need to Define Bystander Intervention in Sexual Assault

The study of bystander behavior is often traced to the field of social psychology and the landmark case involving the murder of Kitty Genovese in New York in 1964. The assault occurred in public and there were numerous witnesses who did not intervene, and thus began the often-cited work of social psychologists Latane and Darley (1970) who studied how bystanders react to emergency situations and why they do not intervene. “Bystanders” in this context were defined as individuals who witness a crisis event or emergency situation. Latane and Darley studied the “bystander effect” including what barriers and processes occur to impact an individual’s decision to intervene in an emergency situation. Through their work, Latane and Darley developed a five-step model to explain the process by which individuals become a bystander who intervenes in a crisis, including the following: (a) Notice the event; (b) Interpret the situation as intervention-appropriate; (c) Take responsibility; (d) Decide how to help; and (e) Act to intervene (Burn, 2009; Latane & Darley, 1970). Applied to emergency situations, this model is fairly straightforward. Bystanders are usually present in these contexts and have the opportunity to

intervene in a number of ways during the actual crisis event such as calling for help. As such, the social psychology and medical bystander literature are replete with analyses of bystander reactions to situations that often occur in public or around a group of witnesses. For example, numerous studies have examined the role of bystanders in medical emergencies such as cardiac arrest and trauma, with recommendations that bystanders need to be considered as integral to improving survival rates of patients through training and removing barriers to providing Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid (e.g., Eisenberg & Psaty, 2010; Ertl & Christ, 2007; Lynch & Einspruch, 2010; Riegel et al., 2006). Bystander intervention is also utilized frequently as a strategy for bullying prevention (Frey et al., 2005). Studies have documented that the reaction of bystanders present during a bullying event has a direct effect on whether the perpetrator continues or ceases the bullying behavior (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001).

However, in the case of sexual assault, the application of Latane and Darley's model becomes more complex. Sexual assault has distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from other crises that typically attract bystander intervention such as medical emergencies or bullying. These characteristics may make it more difficult for potential bystanders to identify situations for prevention. Three main issues within the bystander literature present challenges to clearly defining the behaviors that are included as related to the prevention of sexual violence.

First, there is a tendency to group sexual assault and dating violence bystander behaviors together, without differentiating. For example, bystander programs such as Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP; Katz, 1995) include examples of bystander situations presented to students that include sexual violence as well as dating violence, such as "At a party, a teammate pushes then slaps his girlfriend" from the MVP "Playbook." While sexual assault and dating violence are linked as forms of gender-based violence rooted in power and control, the risk markers leading up to the crises are qualitatively very different. By its definition, dating violence is a pattern of behavior that occurs within a relationship, so bystanders may have the opportunity to observe repeated instances where abusive behavior is occurring. Bystander opportunities for intervening in dating violence may be more readily apparent, with multiple forms of controlling tactics often used by the perpetrator such as verbal, physical, and economic abuse (Stark, 2007). Sexual assault, on the other hand, is typically a onetime occurrence and is also likely to occur, at least on college campuses, in the context of social situations where cues about sexual assault are camouflaged by the campus culture. Burn (2009) identified the failure to notice sexual assault cues in group or party situations as one of the strongest barriers to active bystander intervention among her sample of college students. She found that students may fail to notice a sexual assault occurring during a party because they are distracted by their own social interactions and may also be inhibited by intoxication. Additionally, the cues for sexual assault may be ambiguous in college social settings, where dressing and acting in highly sexualized manners are common (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006).

Acceptance of rape myths, or prejudicial beliefs about rape and victims, is also common among college students and has been identified as a barrier to bystander intervention, as potential bystanders attribute less worthiness to the victim and thereby feel less responsible to intervene (Banyard, 2008; Burn, 2009; McMahon, 2010; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010).

A second gap in the literature is that evaluations of bystander intervention programs often measure individuals' willingness to engage in a range of behaviors that typically cover multiple levels of prevention, including primary prevention (before an assault occurs) as well as secondary (responding in high-risk situations) and tertiary (responding after an event) prevention. While all of these types of prevention are important, the literature has yet to distinguish between different types of intervention and to further explore whether there are particular challenges when teaching students to engage in primary prevention. For example, evaluation of Foubert's "Men's Program" includes assessing changes in a number of behaviors ranging from men's willingness to confront rape jokes (primary prevention) to willingness to support rape survivors (tertiary; Foubert & Perry, 2007). Thus far, there has not been differentiation in the research that indicates whether students are more likely to engage in primary versus secondary or tertiary prevention.

A third gap in the sexual violence prevention literature is that the discussion of bystander intervention includes a range of possible opportunities, from intervening in emergencies or situations posing high risk to victims to situations posing no immediate harm to victims but which may indirectly support sexism or violence. The high-risk situations are often more highly recognized in our society as bystander opportunities than the low-risk situations. This range of opportunities is often presented without differentiation, yet these situations may indeed represent different constructs. Additionally, these bystander situations include both reactive and proactive opportunities, which have not yet been clearly distinguished. For example, the measures used in studies by Banyard et al. (2007) and McMahon et al. (2011) include a range of items such as "Say something to a friend taking a very intoxicated person upstairs" (high risk to victim), "Indicate my displeasure when I hear a sexist comment" (low risk to victim), and "Educate myself about sexual violence and what I can do about it" (no risk to victim).

In sum, three major gaps in the current literature on bystander intervention and sexual violence point to the need for the development of a clearer conceptual framework of bystander opportunities. First, sexual assault and dating violence are often blended in the literature, without noting important distinctions. Second, there is a lack of attention to the different levels of prevention (primary, secondary, and tertiary) and the potential implications for bystander intervention. Third, discussions of bystander behavior often cover a wide range of situations that vary in the potential risk posed to the victim. These three challenges suggest that potential bystanders may fail to take action not because of lack of willingness but due to lack of information that would be more accessible with a more clearly articulated framework as proposed in the current article. A nomological

network that identifies and clearly defines the various forms of bystander opportunities included along a continuum will provide greater clarity as to the individual constructs and their relationships.

The Continuum of Sexual Violence

To understand the range of ways in which individuals can intervene as bystanders to prevent sexual assault, and the ways in which these are connected, the continuum of sexual violence model developed by Kelly (1987) and Stout and McPhail (1998) provided a foundational framework. The notion of a continuum is based on a feminist perspective that conceptualizes various forms of sexual violence against women not as separate, discrete acts but rather as connected and all based in patriarchal power and control. The concept of a continuum of violence purports that there exist a range of behaviors that escalate in severity and violence and that are linked to one another (Kelly, 1987, 1989; Leidig, 1992; Osborne, 1995; Stout, 1991). At one end of the continuum are those behaviors that are generally considered “aberrant” and sexually violent in our society including rape, sexual assault, and criminal sexual contact (Stout & McPhail, 1998). These acts are recognized as crimes in our culture with legal ramifications and punishment, are more overt, and are judged more harshly (Stout, 1991). We may label them as “high-risk” and “high-visibility” factors in relation to the documented harm they cause victims and the great community consensus that they are problematic. At the other end of the continuum are behaviors that contribute to the existence of sexual violence that are more commonly accepted, including the use of sexually degrading language, sexually violent media images, pornography, and harassment. The behaviors at this end of the continuum are often normalized as a part of our culture and therefore their connection to sexual violence is not widely recognized nor judged as harmful (Stout, 1991). They may be labeled as “low risk” in terms of the potential of any one instance to cause great harm to victims.

There is a growing body of sociocultural theoretical literature based on the feminist contention that the enactment of behaviors on the less severe side of the continuum are important because they contribute to a culture of violence that supports and tolerates the more severe forms of violence against women (Brownmiller, 1975; Sanday, 2007; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). Theorists from this standpoint contend that we are living in a “rape supportive culture” that sustains gender stereotypes and sexism, and thus normalizes certain behaviors acts of violence against women (Buchwald, 1993; Sanday, 1981). A number of studies have demonstrated that those communities in which there are higher levels of sexist beliefs and norms, there are also higher rates of violence against women (see Casey & Lindhorst, 2009 for a review). These sexist beliefs and norms may manifest through a number of ways. For example, research has indicated that individuals with a higher belief in rape myths have a greater

proclivity to commit acts of sexual violence (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010) as well as less likeliness to intervene as a pro-social bystander (McMahon, 2010). Support for negative attitudes about and behaviors toward women and sexual violence by peers have been identified as potential risk factors for perpetration of sexual violence (Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005). Additionally, the support of sexual aggression by peers has been found to greatly influence beliefs and behaviors against sexual violence (Brown & Messman-Moore, 2010). Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997) found that differences between campuses on measures of peer norms that are supportive of the use of coercion in relationships predict differences in incidence rates of sexual violence by campus.

Other behaviors that can be regarded as every day, normalized acts have been linked to sexual violence as well. For example, the use of pornography has been identified as a potential factor in the perpetration of sexual violence by college-aged men, including consumption of pornography through magazines, videos, Internet, or by attendance at strip clubs (Carr & VanDeusen, 2004). Peer support of sexist or degrading language about women has also been found to contribute to aggression toward a partner (Capaldi, Dishion, Stoolmiller, & Yoerger, 2001).

Based on this research, a growing number of authors have concluded that effective rape prevention efforts must therefore address the underlying assumptions about gender and sexual violence, and change rape supportive ideologies and social norms that will ultimately decrease sexual violence perpetration (Berkowitz, 2001; Davis & Liddell, 2002; Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003; Lonsway, 1996; Potter, Moynihan & Stapleton, 2011; Stein, 2007). Therefore, in order to create true change, rape prevention efforts must address all behaviors along the continuum, including the high-risk behaviors immediately preceding a sexual assault, the low-risk behaviors that support sexual violence, and also the opportunities for proactive actions that are related to the larger, sociocultural factors and community social norms that contribute to a rape supportive culture (Casey & Lindhorst, 2009). This provides a model of a full range of opportunities for students to intervene as bystanders.

The continuum of sexual violence framework provides a foundation developing a nomological network by understanding that there are a range of behaviors that support sexual violence and therefore, there are simultaneously multiple points along the continuum when bystanders can intervene before, during, or after an assault occurs. The continuum includes behaviors that support sexual violence, but which range in their degree of potential harm to the victim from high to low. In addition to reactive high and low-risk situations, the continuum includes opportunities for proactive behaviors that take a positive stand against sexual violence where no risk of harm is perceived to the victim. The continuum of sexual violence model thus helps define these various types of bystander opportunities and also provides theoretical support to conceptualize the interrelationships among them.

Identifying Bystander Intervention Opportunities on College Campuses

There are a number of typologies of bystander behavior described in the social psychology literature (see Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006 for a review). However, these frameworks focus on HOW to intervene rather than on describing WHEN to intervene. Bystanders may choose to act in planned or spontaneous ways, directly in the situation or at a distance, immediately or later, alone or with others, to name a few dimensions discussed in the literature (Berkowitz, 2009; Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary, 2005; Hoefnagels and Zwikker, 2001; Pearce & Amato 1980, cited in Dovidio et al., 2006; and Moynihan, Eckstein, Banyard, & Plante, 2009). A description of the range of situations where one should consider intervening is an important, but missing, first step to understanding bystander intervention to prevent sexual violence and ultimately to mobilizing helping behavior in this context.

The continuum of sexual violence can help address this gap, yet it has been only minimally mentioned in the published literature on bystander intervention programs for students. In their discussion of the "Bringing in the Bystander" program, Banyard, Eckstein, and Moynihan (2010) explain that the curriculum includes discussion of the continuum of sexual violence and the fact that communities need to address the "minor instances of sexual violence" because of their connection with sexual assault (p. 117). Descriptions of the curriculum indicate that participants are encouraged to think about examples of safe intervention strategies for situations across the continuum. Edwards' (2009) training manual for the bystander education program "Green Dot," cites opportunities for individuals to intervene proactively to change social norms, or reactively in high-risk situations.

In terms of research, McMahon et al. (2011) also refer to the continuum of sexual violence, emphasizing the need for bystander education efforts to address the entire continuum. In their study with 951 students, they found respondents more willing to intervene in the more overt forms of sexual violence than the more covert, everyday situations such as confronting a friend using sexist language. Banyard and Moynihan (2011) also discuss the continuum of sexual violence and found different correlates by type of bystander behavior (e.g., what predicted challenging sexist comments was different from the factors that predicted helping friends to be safe at parties). The continuum of sexual violence has also been addressed in important yet unpublished work. In his thesis, Horowitz (2010) found that college fraternity men divided bystander action into immediate, emergency situations and distal, nonemergent situations. He found that generally, men were more willing to intervene in immediate crises than more distal situations.

Based on this research, it is clear that there are different types of bystander intervention opportunities, and these may indeed require different sets of knowledge and skills. To further develop the nomological network that describes this range of situations, we present a typology of bystander intervention opportunities below, including a definition of each of the

constructs (See Figure 1). We begin by defining reactive bystander opportunities, whereby individuals can respond to risky situations before (primary prevention), during (secondary prevention), or after an assault occurs (tertiary prevention). In addition, bystander opportunities include a category of *proactive* situations, where individuals can take a stand against sexual violence prior to the presence of any defined risk. To further develop the nomological network that describes this range of situations, we provide a definition and description of each of these interrelated constructs.

Reacting to Sexual Violence

The full range of opportunities for bystanders to intervene with sexual assault includes both reactive and proactive situations. Reactive opportunities involve responding to situations where either high or low risk is posed to a potential victim, as well as intervention during or after an assault. The reactive situations include primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention opportunities.

Primary Prevention of Situations Involving High Risk to Victim

High-risk bystander opportunities can be defined as situations immediately preceding a sexual assault where the victim is facing an imminent risk of harm. These situations are often well recognized in our society as potentially harmful to the victim. Burn (2009) suggests that in many college settings, bystanders are often present during the "pre-assault phase," where risk markers appear, and if equipped with the correct skills, bystanders can intervene to interrupt these situations. These bystander opportunities address the farther end of the continuum of sexual violence immediately preceding a sexual assault, which may include the confrontation of behaviors that are putting the victim at high risk of harm. The high-risk situations may include illegal activities such as criminal sexual contact or using alcohol to render someone incapacitated in order to have sex with them.

The literature on campus perpetrators can be useful in helping to identify these high-risk situations. For example, David Lisak's work on the "undetected rapist" on college campuses gives insight into some high-risk markers, such as using alcohol to render victims unconscious or vulnerable to attack; physically isolating victims; and premeditating the offenses, which may include sharing their plans with peers (Lisak & Miller, 2002; Lisak & Roth, 1990). Use of alcohol has also been found to be a risk factor for male sexual aggression on college campuses, specifically using alcohol as a means to obtain sex (e.g., getting a woman drunk to have sex with her), becoming sexually aggressive as a result of drinking, and/or specifically seeking out victims who have been drinking (Carr & VanDeusen, 2004; Ullman, Karabatsos, & Koss, 1999). Peer influences such as the approval by peers of plans to intoxicate victims have been associated with actual perpetration (Carr & VanDeusen, 2004).

Reactive Bystander Opportunities	Primary Prevention (before the assault)		Secondary Prevention (during the assault)	Tertiary Prevention (after the assault)
	Low risk	High risk		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends make a sexist joke or use sexist language to describe women and girls • Activities or rituals are held where women's bodies are ranked or rated • Pornographic or sexualizing posters of women and girls are displayed • Friends make rape or abuse jokes • Friends or classmates blame a victim of sexual violence in conversation or class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A friend is bringing an intoxicated woman to his room • A friend says he plans to intoxicate a woman to have sex • A woman is being harassed by a group of men • A woman who is passed out on a couch is being approached or touched by a man 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Witnessing a group rape • Hearing cries for help or distress • Walking in on a situation where an individual appears to be either physically forced or verbally coerced into sex • Directly observing an intoxicated victim being sexually assaulted by a perpetrator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A friend or classmate discloses that she is a survivor • A friend is seeking information for herself or another person on where to go for help for an assault • There is suspicion that a friend or classmate is a perpetrator • Authorities or residence life are looking for information on a possible sexual assault • A police or judicial investigation needs corroboration
Proactive Bystander Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking a course on gender based violence • Joining a peer education group • Participating in Take Back the Night • Volunteering at a local sexual assault organization • Arranging an educational program on sexual assault for a dorm or student organization • Changing student organizational policies to address sexual assault 			

Figure 1. Nomological network of bystander opportunities for the prevention of sexual violence.

Based on this research, bystander education programs need to spend time assisting students with identifying high-risk markers and can utilize the literature developed on campus perpetrators to help identify these opportunities for intervention. Examples of these situations may be a potential perpetrator telling his friends that he is planning to get a “girl drunk” to have sex with her, or a bystander witnessing a potential perpetrator taking advantage of an intoxicated woman in a social situation. Most discernibly, high-risk situations preceding a sexual assault involve alcohol or other overt actions where a perpetrator is either in the act of assaulting the victim or is clearly making his plans visible to others (Lisak & Miller, 2002). Many other times, these risk markers may be absent, yet an assault still occurs. While intervention in these situations is critically important, the actual likelihood of encountering these high-risk situations may be low for the average student. Research is not available on how common it is for perpetrators to have shared their plans ahead of time, yet it can be assumed that the probability of most students finding themselves in this situation is low since evidence suggests that a relatively small proportion of men are responsible for repeated rapes (Lisak & Miller, 2002). Research can help us identify cultures or contexts on campus where these high-risk situations may be more likely to occur, and perhaps bystander education for these groups can be tailored to more heavily address the high-risk situations (McMahon, 2007). Most students, however, are more likely to encounter the low risk, behaviors that occur everyday that

support sexual violence and it is in those frequent situations that individuals may be faced with abundant opportunities for bystander intervention.

Primary Prevention of Low-Risk Situations

Another type of reactive bystander opportunities can be labeled low risk, which can be defined as situations in which negative attitudes toward women and/or sexual violence are expressed, but do not pose immediate or high risk of harm to potential victims of sexual assault. These bystander opportunities address the lower side of the continuum of sexual violence behaviors, such as calling out sexist language, questioning media portrayals that objectify women and girls, challenging the use of pornography, and confronting friends who rank girls’ appearances. Many of the opportunities on this side of the continuum are related to everyday behaviors that are often normalized, seen as subtle, and less easily identified as connected to more overt acts of sexual violence (McMahon et al., 2011). Since these behaviors are less recognized in our society as supporting sexual violence (Stout, 1991), college students may resist efforts to take them seriously perhaps in part because of concerns about peers’ reactions (Stein, 2007).

There is some evidence that college students are more likely to recognize the importance of intervening in situations that appear as high risk to the victim, but less likely to identify bystander opportunities that occur outside the context of the

Table 1. Critical Findings

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- The conceptual framework for utilizing bystander intervention as a strategy for sexual violence prevention is not adequately developed
 - There is a need to assist community members with identifying the full range of opportunities in which they might find themselves as bystanders
 - There is a lack of differentiation in the literature among the types of situations where bystanders may intervene to address sexual violence
 - Opportunities for bystander intervention range from those that pose high risk to the victim to those that pose low or no risk to the victim. These opportunities are linked theoretically by their relationship on the continuum of sexual violence
 - Bystander opportunities can be reactive or proactive and can include primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention.
 - There is evidence that college students in particular may have difficulty identifying the low or no risk situations as intervention appropriate.
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Table 2. Implications for Practice and Research

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- Educators can use the typology of bystander intervention opportunities to clarify students' potential role in sexual violence prevention
 - The continuum of sexual violence can be presented as a model to students to help explain the links between behaviors that are considered high and low risk to potential victims
 - Barriers to identification of bystander opportunities must be clearly addressed in sexual violence prevention programs and should be culturally relevant
 - Measurement tools should be created to reflect the different types of bystander intervention opportunities and can be used to determine whether education programs are effectively addressing the full range
 - Further research should explore the skills needed to intervene in the various types of bystander opportunities and whether they differ based on personal and situational correlates
 - The next step for conceptual work related to bystander intervention can explore the different methods that can be used by students to intervene effectively and safely to prevent sexual violence
-

crisis event and are related to situations involving low risk to the victim, often including more subtle rape supportive behavior and shifting social norms (Horowitz, 2010; McMahon et al., 2011). Working to address this gap is especially important because individuals are more likely to encounter low rather than high-risk behaviors in their everyday interactions because these behaviors are more widely accepted and integrated into our daily lives.

The literature on addressing "everyday racism" can be useful to help conceptualize the salience of low-risk behaviors as "everyday rape supportive" behavior. Scholars examining the role of racism and prejudice in the United States demonstrate that the nature of racism has shifted over the years, moving from more overt forms to covert, subtle manifestations. Rather than through blatant acts of racial hostility, racism is more commonly communicated in everyday interactions. These subtle forms of racism have been identified as some researchers as "microaggressions" (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Wills, 1978; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2007; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009), defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Racial microaggressions are not limited to interpersonal interactions but may also relate to environments that include subtle denigration of people of color; for example, an office with pictures that only include Caucasians (Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions are integrated so deeply into our culture that they are often regarded as innocuous (Sue et al., 2007). However, evidence suggests that racial microaggressions are deeply harmful to people of color, with increased stress, and lowered self esteem (Sue et al.,

2007; Yosso et al., 2009). Additionally, racial microaggressions are linked to larger racist climates and environments (Solorzano et al., 2000).

The concept of racial microaggressions is a useful tool for understanding the definition and potential harm of "low risk," everyday acts that support sexism and violence against women. Applied to field of sexual violence, microaggressions may be defined as subtle, intentional, or unintentional acts that communicate hostile, derogatory, or sexualizing insults toward women generally and rape survivors specifically. Examples of this type of behavior include but are not limited to: using sexist language and jokes, talking about women as sexual objects, displaying pornographic images of women, ranking women's physical appearances, joking about the use of sexual aggression, using degrading language to describe rape survivors or using rape jokes, displaying sexual images of women on social networking sites, and making harassing comments or gestures.

Responding During or After an Assault (Secondary and Tertiary Prevention)

In addition to reactive bystander opportunities prior to an assault occurring, community members may have the opportunity to intervene during or after an assault (Banyard et al., 2007). Planty (2002) found that in over one third of sexual assaults, another party is present. Recent cases such as the group rape of a 15-year-old girl in Richmond, California, at a homecoming event highlight the salience of these bystander opportunities. At least 20 people were either witnessing or taking part in the sexual assault, yet no one assisted the victim or called for help (CNN, 2009). A substantial body of research suggests that there are indeed certain contexts where rape is

more likely to occur in a group situation, with multiple perpetrators either participating in or witnessing the assault (Harkins & Dixon, 2010; Horvath & Kelly, 2009). For example, certain fraternities have been identified as cultures where “gang rapes” are more likely to occur through practices called “pulling trains” where fraternity members take turns having sex with intoxicated women (Sanday, 2007). The media has also reported on a number of alleged group rapes taking place on certain male athlete teams, such as the recent Duke lacrosse case in 2007, members of the Notre Dame football team in 2002, and the Colorado football case in 2001. Thus, there may be certain contexts characterized by male peer support for sexual aggression where bystander intervention is especially relevant (Harkins & Dixon, 2010; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997).

In addition to group rape situations, there are times when a potential bystander may know or suspect that a sexual assault is occurring. Cues can include hearing or seeing cries for help or distress, or walking in on a situation where an individual appears to be either physically forced or verbally coerced into sex. An individual may also directly observe an intoxicated victim being sexually assaulted by a perpetrator, especially on college campuses where alcohol is frequently used as a tactic for sexual assault perpetration (Abbey, Thomson Ross, McDuffie, & McAuslan, 1996; Ullman, Karabatsos, & Koss, 1999). Additionally, there is evidence that some perpetrators disclose to their peers that they are planning to have sex with a particular victim and/or that they plan to use alcohol to overcome a potential victim’s resistance; therefore suspicions may be heightened if it appears that the scenario is being acted out (Lisak & Roth, 2002). These all represent opportunities for bystanders to intervene during an assault.

Bystanders also have an opportunity to respond after a sexual assault occurs. This includes the provision of support to the survivor or confronting the perpetrator. Research demonstrates that sexual assault survivors are most likely to disclose their experience to a friend rather than a professional; studies generally find that about two thirds of students disclose to a friend (see Walsh, Banyard, Moynihan, Ward, & Cohn, 2010). Positive social support has been found to benefit survivors, although negative responses have been found to cause further damage (Ahrens & Campbell, 2000; Ullman, 2010). Friends of survivors are thus in a unique position to provide invaluable support, however, it is important that they are aware of how to respond in a positive way and may need guidance (Ahrens & Campbell, 2000).

In addition to providing support to survivors, bystanders can intervene by confronting a perpetrator. This can include approaching a friend that may have committed an assault to express disapproval for his actions, talking with a residence life staff member about suspicions that sexual violence may have occurred, reporting a friend to authorities, or cooperating with police or judicial investigations. It is argued that if individuals continue to voice their disapproval of sexually abusive behavior, this may in turn shift social norms where sexual violence is regarded as unacceptable (Berkowitz, 2009; Katz, 2006).

Confronting a perpetrator involves many complex issues including regard for a bystander’s safety, so presenting this form of bystander behavior to students needs to be carefully designed.

Proactive Opportunities

Proactive bystander intervention opportunities can be defined as positive actions that students can take to demonstrate a commitment to addressing sexual violence regardless of whether they have witnessed an explicit behavior along the continuum of sexual violence. In these situations, there is no perceived risk of harm to potential victims. In both high- and low-risk bystander opportunities, individuals are able to intervene in specific situations to react and challenge behavior that supports sexual violence. Though not linked to specific instances of behavior, proactive bystander opportunities set a foundation for the broader attitude shifts that may make sexual violence less likely. Proactive situations are opportunities to shift social norms to create a community that does not tolerate any type of violence. In many ways, this form of bystander intervention may be viewed as a form of activism to promote a social movement to end violence against women.

The Spectrum of Prevention is a tool developed by the Prevention Institute and can help outline the various levels where individuals can engage in proactive opportunities to take a stand against sexual violence (Cohen & Swift, 1999). These six levels include: strengthening individual knowledge and skills, promoting community education, educating providers, fostering coalitions and networks, changing organizational practices, and influencing policy and legislation (Cohen & Swift, 1999). These levels of prevention opportunities can be tailored to different communities, including college campuses. For example, to strengthen individual knowledge, students can take a course that covers sexual violence or engage in research on the topic; for community education, they can arrange for a presentation on sexual violence for a class or their residence hall; at the coalition level, they can join or develop a peer education program or anti-violence group. At the organizational level, students can challenge their peers and groups to reject sexist language and rituals; and on the policy/macro level, students can participate in organized activities such as Take Back the Night, and lobby for services and policies that support survivors on campus and in their communities.

Some sexual violence prevention programs include the discussion of engaging in proactive opportunities. For example, the Green Dot curriculum includes encouraging individuals to engage in both proactive and reactive bystander intervention (Edwards, 2009). Proactive bystander behavior to change social norms includes arranging for presentations on sexual violence for student organizations, serving on a local board for sexual violence service providers, or searching the web for prevention information (Edwards, 2009).

Implications for Prevention Education

The nomological network model presented in this article can be used by prevention educators as a first step, in helping students to identify the full range of bystander intervention opportunities that are available along the entire continuum of sexual violence. As educators use this typology to discuss bystander intervention with students, it is important for them to consider barriers that students may experience to recognizing and labeling these various types of bystander intervention.

Pinpointing bystander opportunities, even in situations posing higher risk to the victim, may be challenging for college students. As Burn notes (2009), individuals may fail to recognize a situation as high risk for sexual assault due to a number of factors including: ambiguity regarding consent or danger, pluralistic ignorance (no one else speaks out or appears to see it as a problem), or ignorance of sexual assault risk markers. Research also indicates that college students in particular may have a tendency to minimize the risk markers, view them as ambiguous, or excuse the perpetrator's actions as unintentional or blame the victim and have little empathy for her (McMahon, 2005). These barriers should be addressed when considering how to best assist students in identifying these situations as bystander appropriate.

It is also important to recognize that many more students will encounter low-risk and proactive opportunities for intervention, even though these may be more challenging to discern than high-risk situations. The identification of these low-risk microaggressions and their connection to sexual assault may not be readily evident to students. Students may not be able to perceive the link between using sexist language, for example, with the occurrence of sexual assault. Students have characterized sexist and degrading language about women as innocuous and unrelated to violence (McMahon, 2007; Stout & McPhail, 1998). An explanation of the continuum of violence and the ways in which these behaviors are related is needed to help students understand the potential of their interventions with the low-risk behaviors.

When discussing proactive opportunities for bystanders, it is important for educators to recognize that while some students may enter college with prior involvement in groups with a focus on social justice or familiarity with political activism, many may not. There is the perception, that today's students are apathetic and reluctant to identify as activists, earning them labels such as and "slactivists" (Kerwin, 2010). However, debate exists as to whether students are actually less motivated to participate in activism or whether the nature of activism has changed, transforming to more "virtual" opportunities such as posting views on social networking sites (Dominguez, 2009; Kerwin, 2010; Rhoads, 1998). Therefore, it is critical for educators to assist students in identifying these opportunities to take proactive actions and to explain their link with sexual violence. The use of the current nomological network can ensure that educators are engaging students to consider intervention across a more comprehensive array of opportunities.

The specific opportunities available for intervention should be based on the campus culture and norms, which may vary depending on the college and even within the college setting. Research indicates that rape prevention programs are most effective when they are tailored to the community (McMahon, 2007; Potter, Moynihan, & Stapleton, 2011). Manifestation of the continuum of sexual violence is culturally constructed and influenced and therefore the actual behaviors may vary depending on the community. Identifying the social norms and structures that are rape supportive should be done in conjunction with community members who can speak to the particular norms of their context (Casey & Lindhorst, 2009). Therefore, a framework of bystander intervention may also need to be tailored to identify the specific opportunities for intervention in a particular community. Our purpose in this article has been to outline a broad and general nomological network to assist individual campus communities in identifying and describing their specific range of situations that may be linked to sexual violence and where they want to encourage bystander intervention.

Research Implications

Research needs to further explore each of bystander intervention constructs, including high-risk, low-risk, and proactive situations. Measures of bystander attitudes and behaviors should be crafted to distinguish among these various types of bystander intervention and to capture barriers to each of these. Evaluation of bystander intervention education programs is needed to determine whether they are successful in impacting all types of bystander intervention or whether there are certain areas that need further attention. Further research may indicate that there are indeed certain skills or knowledge that is both common and unique to the various components. Exploring the role of situational factors among these different types of bystander situations is important to pursue. For example, previous bystander literature suggests that there are many factors that impact willingness to intervene include the size of the group and the relationship to the victim and perpetrator (Banyard, 2011; Burn, 2009). Banyard and Moynihan (2011) found some correlates of behavior were similar across types of intervention while others varied. Further studies can explore what specific factors impact bystanders' decisions to intervene in the range of situations from low to high risk. This research needs to be conducted on college campuses as well as in other community contexts as the barriers to helping in such different contexts may also vary (Banyard, 2011).

The nomological network presented in this article can help educators to assist students with the first step of recognizing that there is a large range of opportunities in which they can intervene as bystanders to engage in the primary prevention of sexual violence. The next step is assisting students in knowing *how* to intervene in those situations. The typology of potential bystander responses is complex and involves a number of factors that will warrant further investigation, including actions

that may potentially pose greater and lesser risk to the individual bystander and that differ in the target of intervention (e.g., the potential victim, potential perpetrator, peer groups of either, professional helpers). Taking this next step in organizing and categorizing bystanders' responses to sexual violence will be facilitated through the use of the current nomological network.

In conclusion, this article presents a nomological network of the continuum of bystander opportunities for the primary prevention of sexual violence. The primary prevention of sexual violence is a complex, abstract concept that needs to be translated carefully in education programs for students to understand that every community member has a role to play. Identifying the various opportunities for bystander intervention along a continuum provides a foundation for creating, implementing, and measuring bystander education programs on college campuses.

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Bios

Sarah McMahon, MSW, PhD, is an assistant professor at the School of Social Work and also serves as the associate director for VAWC. Her research focuses on violence against women and children, prevention and social change, and instrument development. She has extensive experience in designing and implementing studies with incoming college students to measure their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to sexual violence. She has multiple articles published in peer-reviewed journals regarding sexual violence prevention, including a focus on bystander intervention. She has authored curriculum guides on violence against women and children and provided numerous lectures to various disciplines.

Victoria L. Banyard is a professor in the Psychology Department at the University of New Hampshire and is also codirector of Prevention Innovations, a group that provides support for the prevention of violence against women on college campuses nationwide. Along with her colleagues, she developed the “Bringing in the Bystander” prevention program. She has numerous publications focused on bystander intervention that address the conceptual model, methodology, and measurement. She and her research team have received multiple federal grants to study bystander intervention, including funding from the CDC, NIJ, and DOJ, as well as smaller, local grants. She has presented at many national and local conferences on bystander intervention nationwide and can be considered the leading expert in the field.