

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: WHEN GUARDIANS BECOME CAPABLE:  
AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL BIAS AND  
SITUATIONAL CONTEXT IN BYSTANDER  
INTERVENTION

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Data from the National Crime Victimization Survey in the 1990s indicate that bystanders were present in two-thirds of violent victimizations; however, a bystander who is present may not necessarily intervene. The present study posits that there are two major types of factors that may influence the likelihood of intervention across incidents: factors related to the severity of the crime, and factors that reveal social bias related to race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and crime type. Using NCVS data from 2012-2018, the present study finds statistically significant associations between presence of a firearm, a victim being female, the crime being sexual assault or rape, and the crime being intimate partner violence, and the outcome of bystander intervention. Results add to the social psychology and sociology literature on helping behavior and inform policy and practice regarding the need for programs that target bystander intervention in violent victimization.

WHEN GUARDIANS BECOME CAPABLE: AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL BIAS  
AND SITUATIONAL CONTEXT IN BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

by

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Shock reverberated amongst the public and social researchers alike when it was reported in 1964 that bystanders did nothing as Kitty Genovese cried for help outside an apartment building in Queens (Lurigio, 2015). Details about the rape and murder case, such as the number of bystanders present, were exaggerated in the media (Dunlap, 2016), but the immense outrage from the incident prompted researchers to examine why cries for help could be ignored by multiple witnesses. As scathing criticisms of the bystanders increased, researchers began to investigate helping behavior and why a person who could help may choose not to intervene in a critical situation. While incidents such as these may be particularly extreme and likely do not characterize bystander inaction in most situations, the outcry surrounding this incident turned attention towards evaluating the phenomenon of bystander presence and intervention.

Since then, the body of literature surrounding third-party behavior in violent crime has grown, manifesting in established phenomena such as the bystander apathy effect, discussion of legislation that would make it criminal to be a passive bystander in a Genovese-like situation, and testing and implementation of social programs intended to help third-parties be more likely to intervene (Lurigio, 2015, Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1968; Latane & Nida, 1981; Kruttschnitt, McLaughlin, and Petrie, 2004). Bystanders were present in about two-thirds of violent victimizations in the 1990s, and the present study's data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) spanning from 2012-2018 indicates that bystanders were present in at least 37 percent of violent crimes (Hart & Mieth,

2008). Even if a bystander is present, that bystander may stand by and choose not to act; data indicate that each year, intervention only occurs about half the time. This movement to encourage bystanders to intervene puts a major amount of responsibility for criminal outcomes on third parties who witness violent crime to act; however, some bystanders understandably may not know what to do in the moment or fear adverse reactions if they step in. While it likely cannot be expected of all bystanders to have the capacity within the bounds of a situation to step in to help, bystanders do have the potential to make a difference in the outcome of violent victimization. If many violent crimes have reported witnesses, it is of interest to understand what factors may move a bystander to action. Witnesses may have to risk their own safety to help, but if they are able to do so, they may be able to minimize the negative consequences experienced by a victim of violent crime, and act as capable guardians in society (Hart & Miethe, 2008; Cohen & Felson, 1979).

However, the research on bystander behavior still bears gaps in fully understanding the factors that may be the difference between action and inaction. Much of the research into bystander intervention is contained within social psychology literature, such as work examining the bystander effect, or bystander apathy effect. This phenomenon is characterized by the lessened responsibility a bystander feels to intervene as the number of witnesses there are to a crime increases (Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1968; Latane & Nida, 1981). Other related research may fall under the domain of community psychology, sociology, or environmental criminology; researchers may evaluate helping behavior using the sociological concepts related to social disorganization, such as how bystanders to

crime may be more likely to intervene if there is strong informal social control and collective efficacy in an area (see Banyard, 2015).

In much of the literature that examines bystander intervention, the research has utilized hypothetical incidents to analyze intervention intention rather than an observed intervention decision. In contrast to this research tradition, one previous study has examined multiple situational factors and the nature of bystander intervention using incidents from the NCVS (Hart and Miethe, 2008). By utilizing the NCVS data, Hart and Miethe (2008) analyzed bystander intervention using reported incident information rather than posing hypothetical scenarios to participants. They found that certain factors related to the context of the crime, such as crime type, time of day, crime severity and victim-offender relationship affected the likelihood of bystander intervention being helpful or hurtful.

Hart and Miethe's (2008) work significantly expanded the analysis of bystander intervention to observed incident data, but they have not addressed factors that may be tied to social biases present in society today. Since other domains of criminological research (such as police, courts, and corrections) have evaluated the impact of social inequality in their outcomes and have found evidence of social bias (see Miller, 2010; Hagan, 1995; Johnson, 2003), the literature examining bystander behavior in violent crime may benefit from also evaluating whether social bias plays a role in this domain and using observed incident data to do so.

The present research would like to extend Hart & Miethe's analysis and seeks to understand how both the situational context regarding severity of the crime as well as how biases tied to race/ethnicity, sex, class, and crime type affect the likelihood of

bystander intervention in violent criminal incidents. To delve into this research question, the present study will utilize NCVS from the years 2012-2018 to analyze the effect of severity of crime as well as social bias on the likelihood of bystander intervention in violent incidents. The results of the research may help inform policy in evaluating whether there is a need for bystander intervention programs and will add to the empirical literature examining the potential effect that social bias plays in present society.

## Chapter 2: Conceptual Arguments

To understand bystander intervention in violent crime, one might first consider situational factors that can be present during an incident of violent victimization. Routine Activities Theory is a theoretical framework that may be useful in understanding these elements of a criminal event. This theory posits that crime occurs when a motivated offender, suitable target and a lack of a capable guardian converge in time and space (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The present study wishes to focus on this concept of a capable guardian, as even when bystanders are present, they may not act as capable guardians and intervene when they see violent victimization. It is plausible that bystanders undergo a rational choice process when they decide whether to intervene, bounded within the constraints of the situation (Cornish & Clarke, 1987; Latane & Darley, 1968). In this rational process, bystanders are likely affected by factors related to the severity of the crime at hand (Hart & Miethe, 2008). Further, the present study proposes that in addition to the factors related to crime severity, bystanders may also be impacted by social biases present today, based on psychological and sociological concepts such as social stratification (Lenski, 1966), Black's Theory of Mobilization of Law (1973), and hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

### Routine Activities Theory: Are all guardians capable?

Theoretically, the presence of a bystander has the potential to be a major obstacle to the completion of a violent crime. Routine Activities Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) posits that the opportunity for crime arises when three factors converge in space and time. These three factors include a motivated offender, a suitable target,

and the absence of a capable guardian. According to Routine Activities Theory, the lack of one of these elements leads to lower likelihood of criminal opportunity and success.

Criminological research in general (not limited to tests of Routine Activities Theory) has tended to focus either on what motivates offenders (see Akers, 1990; Braithwaite, 1989; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Cornish & Clarke, 1986), or what characteristics of a victim makes them more likely to be targeted (see Gottfredson & Grande-Bretagne, 1984; Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garogalo, 1978). The current project focuses on Routine Activity's third component of a capable guardian, or the lack thereof. If there is a capable guardian present in a violent victimization, that guardian may be able to prevent crime, thwart crimes in progress and lessen the negative repercussions of victimization. Thus, it is critical to understand what makes a bystander a capable guardian.

Broadly, the presence of capable guardianship has been found to decrease levels of crime (Hollis-Peel, Reynald, Van Bavel, Elffers, & Welsh, 2011; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2003; Tseloni, Wittebrood, Farrell, & Pease, 2004; Reynald, 2009). Some bystanders may not have to intervene to affect criminal motivation, as some offenders may be deterred merely by a third-party presence. Findings indicate that offenders are less likely to complete rape in the presence of bystanders (Ullman & Knight, 1991), and the likelihood of revictimization in intimate partner violence was reduced by 60 percent if abuse or threats took place in the presence of bystanders (friends and family; Hayes, 2016). One study which utilized data from the NCVS

found that in incidents of rapes and attempted rapes from 1992-1998, rape was 44 percent less likely to be completed if a bystander was present (Clay-Warner, 2002).

Data from the NCVS suggest that roughly 6.4 million violent crimes each year have reported witnesses. Estimates indicate that bystanders are present in about 70 percent of assaults, 52 percent of robberies, and 29 percent of sexual assaults (Hart & Miethe, 2008). Sometimes, the mere presence of a third party is enough to keep a criminal from pursuing their criminal intent. However, as exemplified in the Genovese case, there are crimes that are completed with the presence of witnesses who stand by and fail to act; thus, some incidents require bystanders to act to change the criminal outcome. Data from prior research as well as the current study indicate that year, intervention only occurs about half the time in violent victimizations with a bystander present (Hart & Miethe, 2008). Bystanders, if reasonably able to do so, have the potential to change the outcome of a crime event and lessen the consequences and injuries related to criminal victimization; thus, research should endeavor to investigate the factors that may increase or decrease the likelihood of intervention.

#### Rational Choice Theory and the Bystander Intervention Model

While in an emergency, bystanders may not be as rational as when they are not faced with danger; however, it is plausible that to a degree, they rationally calculate the benefits and risks of different responses to the incident. Rational Choice Theory (Cornish & Clarke, 1987) traditionally explains how offenders weigh costs and benefits of committing crime using available information. As Rational Choice Theory has assumed rationality in offenders when those perpetrators are deciding to

commit a crime and how to carry it out, it is plausible bystanders also go through a rational choice process in deciding whether to intervene and how they are going to do so. When bystanders are reacting to an incident in front of them, it is likely too unrealistic to assume rationality means perfect clear-headedness; a third-party to a violent incident may experience stress responses (such as the commonly described “fight or flight” response; see Cannon, 1929) and that may debilitate action and cause that bystander to not weigh costs and benefits in the same sense as an offender planning a crime hours or days before committing it. However, it is plausible to assume that a bystander’s reaction will be related to their perception of the danger of the incident. Rational Choice Theory outlines the weighting of costs and benefits, but that rationality is within the bounds of the given situation. When severity of crime plays a role in the response, it is worth considering a rational choice model in bystander intervention even if the sense of rationality is bounded.

Latane & Darley (1968) created a bystander intervention model which outlines the steps a bystander takes to act—they must notice the event, interpret the event as an emergency needing assistance, accept responsibility for intervening, decide what steps to take, and finally, intervene. When a bystander makes the decision to intervene, they may be putting themselves at risk of injury. A study by Liebst et al. (2018) analyzed bystander behavior using video surveillance footage from Copenhagen and suggested one in six interventions resulted in the victimization of the intervener. While the literature lacks similar empirical information on these bystander risks in the United States, it is plausible there is always a moderate to high degree of risk when involving oneself in a violent altercation. Thus, bystanders likely

need to weigh the costs and benefits before deciding to involve themselves in a violent crime, which the present study posits may explain differential results in whether a specific bystander chooses to act.

One phenomenon explored in the psychology literature is the “bystander effect,” a potential explanation for events such as the Kitty Genovese incident. The bystander effect predicts bystanders are more likely to intervene if they are the only one around to help (Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1968; Latane & Nida, 1981). This concept also falls in line with the bystander intervention model and rational mental process (Fischer et al., 2011). When a bystander is considering whether personal responsibility falls on them to act, it is plausible they are going through a rational process of deciding whether the event needs assistance, and whether they accept responsibility to intervene.

#### The Effect of the Severity of Crime vs. Social Bias

Bystanders, if going through a rational mental process when witnessing violent victimization, may be deterred from intervention based on the perceived costs and benefits of lending help to a victim in need. A bystander may weigh the costs and potential harm of intervening as more important than the benefits of stepping in, and thus choose not to act; in the reverse, other bystanders may view the immediate threat of harm to the victim as outweighing concerns for their own personal safety in intervening. In this rational choice process, it is likely that there are two major types of factors that affect the intervention decision. The first type of factor includes components of the crime that clearly connect to either the responsibility a bystander feels to take action, or the potential risk the bystander takes if they choose to

intervene—for example, a gun being present may deter an unarmed bystander from personally inserting themselves into a criminal situation and risking injury themselves, or the presence of multiple offenders may encourage a bystander to feel they need to step in and help the cornered and outnumbered victim. A meta-analysis evaluating the bystander effect in social psychology indicates that the influence of the bystander effect (increased likelihood of intervention if a given bystander is the only one around to help) was attenuated when the severity of crime or perceived danger of the crime was considered (Fischer et al., 2011). Thus, the severity of an incident plausibly affects bystander intervention.

One study examining bystander intervention using NCVS data by Hart and Miethe (2008) found that among incidents in which a bystander intervened, helping behavior in violent victimization was most likely in situations such as stranger crimes, robberies, crimes in public places, and crimes that take place during daytime hours. Hart and Miethe's (2008) study chose to examine factors such as time of day when the crime occurred, whether the crime took place in a private or public setting, the type of crime (such as armed robbery versus simple assault), presence of a dangerous weapon, and victim-offender relationship. These factors regarding the severity and context of the crime are easily rationalizable by an outsider. Given that bystanders likely go through a rational choice process in deciding when to intervene (Latane & Darley, 1968), this study emphasizes the assumption that the severity of the crime will play into the nature of bystander intervention. While Hart and Miethe did not investigate situational contexts' effect on the outcome of intervention at all, but rather whether intervention taken was helpful or hurtful, the present study seeks to

investigate how these factors, including but not limited to the situational factors Hart and Miethe evaluated, affect the likelihood of a victim noting intervention at all.

While it is expected that the severity of the crime influences bystander intervention in some way, there may be some factors related to severity that decrease the likelihood of intervention compared to other factors that increase the likelihood of intervention. For example, a crime perceived as more dangerous (such as crimes where a gun is present) may be perceived as too high in risk to a bystander, deterring them from physically involving themselves and intervening. Hart and Miethe (2008) found that helping (as opposed to intervening and hurting) was more likely when a dangerous weapon was not present. While Hart and Miethe did not state or evaluate whether the presence of a weapon increased the likelihood of intervention at all, the present study predicts it could influence intervention likelihoods. Generally, the present study predicts that the severity of the crime will increase the likelihood of intervention given the urgency and sense of responsibility bystanders may feel as they witness a severe violent incident.

The current study seeks to empirically understand how different factors related to severity may individually affect bystander intervention. Hart and Miethe (2008) investigated which situations were most likely to have a bystander present, and presented ratios to explain what situations, including situational factors related to the severity of the crime, an intervention was more likely to be reported as helpful versus hurtful. The present study would like to similarly evaluate situational factors surrounding bystander intervention; however, the present study will evaluate what factors may lead to intervention at all or intervention that makes a noticeable

difference to the victim by the bystander. It is undoubtedly optimal for intervention to be helpful compared to hurtful, and analyses may continue to endeavor to understand the factors that are associated with helpful intervention; however, the present study, in response to cases such as Kitty Genovese's where bystanders neither helped nor hurt, would specifically like to investigate the factors that push a bystander to take action that affects the victim's experience at all.

Currently, other than Hart & Miethe's (2008) study, there has not been empirical analysis of the effect of severity of crime on bystander intervention using incident data rather than hypothetical, researcher-crafted scenarios posed to smaller samples of participants. The present study seeks to expand upon Hart & Miethe's work to include more years of data for analysis and the inclusion of additional control variables and distinguishes itself in that it analyzes the likelihood of intervention at all rather than whether intervention that occurs helps or hurts.

In addition to evaluating severity of the crime as independent variables that may affect bystander intervention in the present study, this research will include another category of independent variables in its analysis. While factors regarding the severity of the crime are likely critical to the likelihood of bystander intervention, there may be other factors that are not so immediately obvious that contribute to differential intervention decisions by witnesses of a crime. With the knowledge that other criminological research that acknowledges bias amongst sectors of the criminal justice system (see Miller, 2010; Hagan, 1995; Johnson, 2003), there may be a second type of factors that affects bystander intervention. Ideally, characteristics such as the race of victim and offender, gender of victim and offender, socioeconomic status of

the victim, and whether a crime is sexual assault or intimate partner violence should not differentially affect the likelihood of bystander intervention. However, given the research above which uncovers bias amongst other actors in the criminal justice system, it is plausible that bias affects whether a bystander intervenes, whether consciously or subconsciously. To explain how social bias may affect individual bystanders, the present research must acknowledge the sociological nature of studying biases related to race, gender, highly gendered crime types and socioeconomic status.

### The Psychological and Sociological Lenses of Studying Helping Behavior

Before outlining the potential types of social biases that may play a role in a bystander's intervention decision, it is important to acknowledge the sociological history and literature surrounding informal social control and helping behavior. While a sociological lens may look more broadly at groups of individuals and specific communities rather than individual incidents in a nationwide dataset, establishing how social norms can affect everyone in society is important to the present analysis. It is worth noting that there is a divide between studying intervention or helping behavior through a sociological lens versus a psychological one (Emery, Jordan & Chui, 2020). In labeling the phenomenon of intervening against violence, the literature may identify the major component of study as either bystander intervention, helping behavior, or informal social control (Emery and Wu, 2019; Taylor et al., 2016). Under bystander intervention, researchers have investigated concepts such as those mentioned before, including the diffusion of responsibility and bystander apathy effect that bystanders may employ to justify not stepping in. Further,

psychological research has examined other concepts such as the effect of benevolent sexism on the likelihood of bystander intervention for female victims over male victims. However, under the study of informal social control (Sampson et al., 1997), which very much overlaps conceptually with the study of bystander intervention, researchers may investigate neighborhood collective efficacy and social disorganization. This body of literature is much more sociological and turns the focus from bystander intervention as a dependent variable to informal social control as an independent variable (see Emery et al., 2015; Emery et al., 2017; Banyard, 2015). The present study tends towards the psychological lens with bystander intervention as a dependent variable but will investigate how social bias may influence bystander behavior. The issue of intervention in violent victimization is likely not a purely psychological or purely sociological one; rather, inclusion of both lenses in research can establish a fuller picture of the issue today.

#### Biases related to Race and Ethnicity

One of the prominent social issues in the United States that may impact bystander behavior is the issue of racial and ethnic relations in the United States. W.E.B. Du Bois asserted in 1903 that the “problem of the twentieth-century is the problem of the color line,” referring to the longstanding divide between blacks and whites in the United States, emphasized by the history of slavery, discrimination, and disadvantage (Du Bois, 1903/2008; pp. 1-2). These problems, while having progressed in the sense that much discrimination is outlawed and policies are aimed at lessening the divide, are still evident in society today. The color line problem today manifests in phenomena such as persisting sentencing disparities in the court system

(Johnson, 2003), inequalities in those stopped by police (Smith & Petrocelli, 2001), or the disproportionate representation of minorities in the criminal justice system (Petersilia, 1983).

In addition to the divide between Black individuals and White individuals, there is evidence for ethnic disparities between Hispanics and non-Hispanics in the criminal justice system (see Mustard, 2001; Shlesinger, 2005). While some of the recorded disparities regarding race and ethnic background are less pronounced for Latinos than Blacks, there is evidence to support discrimination against Latinos in the criminal justice system ranging from treatment in the juvenile justice system to sentencing outcomes (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997). Given that Latino-status impacts sentencing, a phenomenon where the different factors of a case are considered by an outsider, perhaps a bystander witnessing a violent victimization involving a Latino actor (whether offender or victim) may take ethnic status into account. While a divide between Hispanic individuals and Whites may sometimes be less obvious to or sensationalized by the public than the divide between Black individuals and White individuals, the evidence of ethnic disparity and social stigma reveals that the public may, like the view of Blacks, classify ethnic minorities such as Latinos as being of lower social status.

Similarly, it is plausible that a bystander affected by racial or ethnic bias could similarly treat other minority victims and/or offenders, such as Asians/Pacific Islanders and American Indians, in violent crime differently. With the discovery of the causative agent of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China (Aylward and Liang, 2020) and the subsequent pandemic and nationwide lockdowns across the globe, reports

emerged of harmful behaviors towards both foreign-born and U.S. born Asians living in the U.S (Borja et al., 2020) as some groups in the public blamed Asian Americans as the source of the pandemic (Tavernise & Oppel, 2020). This stigmatization was shared and spread in societal groups which then blamed Asians for the increased health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic recession that occurred because of nationwide lockdowns; the negative biases towards Asians were even more compounded with general disapproval or animosity towards the Chinese government by these groups (Ellerbeck, 2020; Rogin, 2020). While the pandemic brought these biases to the forefront of the conversation in 2020 and 2021, Asians have been stigmatized and linked to outbreaks of disease in the past—during the bubonic plague outbreak in the early 1900s and the 2003 outbreak of SARS in Toronto, Asians were similarly experiencing evidence of stigma from other individuals and from their social institutions (Hung, 2004). It is plausible to believe that even when pandemics or outbreaks are not at their peaks, the social biases regarding Asians that exist during those times of emergency, though perhaps less pronounced, remain and have the potential to result in societal inequalities. Given the xenophobic nature of these social biases, it is plausible to believe people who hold these social biases may view Asians as lower social status.

There is similarly a history of discrimination against Native Americans in the United States, including genocide stemming from the colonization of America and perpetuated stereotypes and harmful portrayals of Native Americans in the media (Eason, Brady, & Fryberg, 2018). When considering violent victimization captured by the NCVS from 1993 to 1998, American Indians were victims of “overall

violence, aggravated assault, simple assault, and serious violent crimes at rates higher than those for whites, blacks and Asians” (Rennison, 2001). This status of being the racial category with the highest rate of violent victimization is maintained in NCVS data from 1992-2001 (Perry, 2004). These disproportionate rates of victimization may reflect perception by some that American Indians are lower in social status to others.

#### How Racial and Ethnic Biases May Influence Bystander Intervention

Research can utilize Black’s Theory of Mobilization of Law in understanding why bystanders might intervene given the racial and ethnic context of a violent victimization. In his work, Donald Black (1973) posited that individuals make their decisions to contact police or involve the law in certain situations based on the accessibility of that law. For higher class citizens, the law may be seen as more “accessible,” or readily available for their use and benefit. Because the law is less accessible to lower-class citizens, they are less likely to exhibit reporting behaviors. Black asserts this within his “stratification hypothesis,” and further defines some of these reporting differences using the terms “downward law” (a more prominent victim involving the law against a lower-class offender) and “upward law” (an individual of lower class involving the law against an offender with a higher social status).

Black (1973) theorized that downward law takes place much more often than upward law. While Black’s theory specifies that reporting and invoking the law takes place through the victim seeking help, perhaps bystanders perceive the social inequalities of a situation they witness and are more likely to help the victim if the situation is more congruent with downward law. Black verbalizes his Theory of

Mobilization of Law and stratification hypothesis in the terms of social inequality and wealth inequality, but one might operationalize Black's theory by using the race/ethnicity of offender and race/ethnicity of victim as a proxy for unequal social statuses. In that sense, Black's theory may be able to explain how the race of offender and race of victim may play a role in the likelihood of bystander intervention. If viewing minorities as lower social status and Whites as higher social status, Black's theory may provide insight into the likelihood of bystander intervention compared between White offenders and minority offenders, and between White victims and minority victims.

Generally, the research testing Black's theory has been mixed in application, with early testing attempts finding contradictory results than what would be predicted by mobilization of law (Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Braithwaite and Biles, 1980; Myers, 1980). However, while there have been results conflicting with Black's theory, there is some support for the concepts of the behavior of law. One study used Black's theory as a lens to analyze the interaction effects of officer and driver race in traffic stops, and that research found searches were more likely when Black drivers were stopped compared to White drivers controlling for other characteristics (Rojek, Rosenfeld, and Decker, 2012). The present study similarly seeks to understand the potential impact of racial and ethnic context on a bystander's perception of an incident.

Further, other research has suggested that mobilization of law may not always be operationalized in a way that truly reflects the concept. One study by Avakame, Fyfe, & McCoy (1999) analyzed Black's theory through evaluating differential

likelihoods of victims reporting to the police. Using NCVS data, those researchers found that people of lower social status rely on the police more than middle-class people do. They explain their findings by suggesting existing measures of mobilization (crimes reported to the police) may not reflect the actual mobilization of law (people of higher status may invoke the law in different ways than reporting criminal activity). The present study will attempt to use bystander intervention as a measure of mobilization, distinct from crimes reported to the police.

Another study utilizing NCVS metropolitan area data by Xie and Lauritsen (2012) analyzed Black's stratification hypothesis in the context of how likely a victim is to report their own experiences, given the race of the victim and race of offender. The researchers used race of victim and race of offender as proxies for status as given in the Black's stratification hypothesis. In their study, Xie and Lauritsen (2012) worked under the assumption that because blacks have historically been at a disadvantage to whites, both socially and in the context of wealth, the race of offender and race of victim would likely well represent social status given that their target locations were areas in which social inequality was still prevalent. Through a logistic regression model, the researchers found that there were higher rates of reporting for black-on-black assaults, contrary to the hypothesized hierarchy in which black on white assaults would have the highest reporting rate. The authors suggested these contradictory findings may reflect that the reason victim reporting was high in black-on-black assaults was a greater need for police services where those types of assaults are more likely to occur. They explained that they found a slightly higher tendency for black victims of black violence to call for help than white victims, and this

potentially greater need for police services by black victims of black violence should be explored in future research (Xie & Lauritsen, 2012).

Following the studies on victim reporting rates in the context of race of victim and race of offender, I suggest that Black's Theory of Mobilization of Law and the stratification hypothesis might also be useful in analyzing how race/ethnicity of victim and race/ethnicity of offender may affect helping behavior. Given the effect of racial-ethnic dynamics on the likelihood of victim reporting, the present study posits there may also be an effect of the race/ethnicity of offenders and victims on bystander intervention in violent victimizations.

#### Biases Related to Socioeconomic Status and Class

Further, also in line with Black's Theory of Mobilization of Law (1973), and concepts of downward and upward law, it is plausible that the socioeconomic status of persons involved in a crime may affect bystander intervention. Using the Theory of Mobilization of Law where downward law is more common than upward law, the present study posits that bystanders will be more likely to help a victim of higher socioeconomic status than a victim of lower socioeconomic status. Research has previously examined the effect of an effect of socioeconomic status on decision-making within court contexts, as well as the effect of socioeconomic status on bystander action when an individual needs CPR (see Thornberry, 1973; Chiang et al., 2014); however, there is a gap of the literature needing to be filled with studies examining the effect of socioeconomic status of victim on observed intervention decisions in violent victimization incidents. Thus, the present study seeks to fill this

gap, in order to provide information for research and policy on potential effects of social bias, and empirically evaluate this issue using the NCVS.

### Bias Related to Sexism

Applying Black's (1973) Theory of Mobilization of Law, one might posit that bystander intervention is more likely when a female is victimizing a male because of the role of gender in social stratification. According to Lenski's (1966) Theory of Social Stratification, males are of higher social status and receive certain privileges, powers, and rewards females do not receive. However, the issue of gender in violent victimization is likely more nuanced and cannot be fully explained by the theory of mobilization of law. For the identification of the effect of gender on bystander intervention, it is of use to look at the social psychology literature on bystander behavior. Within the social psychology literature, research outlines the phenomenon of benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This phenomenon may have important implications for hypotheses surrounding the effect of gender of offender and gender of victim on bystander intervention.

When examining the effect of gender in bystander intervention, and whether females or males are more likely to receive help in a critical situation, it is of use to define the types of sexism that may affect bystander intervention. Generally, research within psychology and gender studies outlines two major belief systems that contribute to the unequal state of gender today: hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism may be more apparent in that those with this belief system view men as more competent and deserving of power and status than women and connect women with unfavorable stereotypes. If perceiving the issue of sex and

bystander intervention through the Mobilization of Law lens, the hypothesized effect is dependent on the assumption of rampant hostile sexism.

However, it is likely that this relationship between sex of victim and helping behavior is affected by the second belief system related to sexism, which is benevolent sexism. This type of sexism is characterized by “chivalry,” and beholds women as something to be cherished and protected. While this belief system values women in a more flattering way, benevolent sexism has a patronizing effect and can undermine women’s well-being (Becker & Wright, 2011). One study with a nationally representative survey panel of New Zealand adults found that the prevalence of hostile and benevolent sexism over time found that the endorsement of hostile sexism tended to decline amongst age cohorts and did not increase over time in any cohort; however, men’s benevolent sexism increased across age and remained stable over time, indicating that while hostile sexism may be decreasing with time, benevolent sexism is more persistent (Hammond, Milojev, Huan, & Sibley, 2018). Thus, through this lens, and assuming the attitudes surrounding feminism are similar across modern societies, one might expect women to be helped more than men in violent victimization data. In this sense, even though some men may be perceiving women as weaker and of “lower status,” the prevalence of benevolent sexism conversely would dictate bystanders help female victims more than male victims.

Research generally supports the consistency of this effect of gender on helping behavior, with a meta-analysis indicating in emergency situations men help more than women, and women receive more help than men (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). Based on benevolent sexism and this observed gender effect on helping behavior in

emergency situations, it is plausible to hypothesize that bystanders will be more likely to intervene in violent crime if the victim is female and less likely to intervene if the offender is a female (as female offenders would be less of a threat than male offenders).

### Bias Related to Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault

While bystanders may be more likely to help women under the societal attitude of benevolent sexism, there may be certain situations of violent victimization in which bystanders may be less likely to help a woman. These situations may be sexual assault or rape, and intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence, which includes violent crimes committed by a spouse, former spouse, current partner, or former partner of a victim, may be viewed by both victims and the public as a private matter they should not meddle in (Caringella-MacDonald, 1988; Sable et al., 2006). This type of violence is prevalent in society especially with women as the victims, with data indicating one in three women reports victimization by an intimate partner at some stage in their life (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). Intimate partner violence and sexual assault are distinct phenomena, but they overlap. Some instances of sexual assault are also classified as intimate partner violence, but not all sexual assaults are necessarily intimate partner violence. Likewise, some instances of intimate partner violence are classified as sexual assault, but not all intimate partner violence incidents are sexual assaults. However, the literature often combines them together as similar phenomena within violent crime.

Emphasizing the gendered nature of intimate partner violence, one study indicated women were 22.5 times more likely to report being raped, 2.9 times more

likely to report physical assault, and 8.2 times more likely to report stalking by a current or formal partner at some time in their lives compared to men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Even though intimate partner violence and sexual assault may be perceived to occur behind closed doors, bystanders are present in a number of these incidents. Using the data from the present study, bystanders were recorded as present in 27 percent of sexual assaults, and present in 28 percent of instances of intimate partner violence. Thus, while these types of crime may be considered household affairs, data indicates that bystanders are present about a quarter of the time. It is important to understand why bystanders may or may not intervene in these specific types of crime. While awareness for intimate partner violence as well as the number of policies and resources aimed at combating the prevalence of this crime type have increased in the past several decades (see Dugan, 2003; Kruttschnitt, McLaughlin, and Petrie, 2004; Murray & Graybeal, 2007; Capaldi & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012), widespread, harmful perceptions surrounding these intimate crimes may influence the likelihood of bystander intervention in those contexts.

While the previous discussion of benevolent sexism suggests females are more likely to be helped than males, research on intimate partner violence may indicate that the chivalry extended to women may not be offered when the incident is perpetrated by a current or former partner. If a bystander views a violent incident as falling under the category of intimate partner violence, the bystander may be affected by the pervasive social notion that these crimes are private and thus, may not intervene to stay out of something they may view as a relationship issue. While the public may not be viewing victims of intimate partner violence as lower in status or

undeserving of help or sympathy, the perception that these crimes should not be meddled in may harmfully inhibit bystanders' decisions to help.

Prior literature suggests there may be a significant negative association between these highly gendered crimes and helping behavior. One study analyzed bystander behavior, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence by evaluating how variables such as level of awareness or denial of the prevalence of sexual assault and intimate partner violence, attitudes regarding rape, sense of responsibility in helping the issue, reported pros and cons of intervention, and reported willingness to help may correspond with self-reported bystander behavior within the last two months (Banyard & Moynihan, 2011). Using a recruited college sample, the research indicates that the level of awareness or denial was significantly related to whether the bystander helped in situations that were incidents of sexual violence or intimate partner violence. While this study was limited in that its sample was recruited from one university and self-reported helping behaviors were limited to a period of two months, the data produced by this research suggests that attitudes regarding sexual assault and intimate partner violence may significantly affect the likelihood of bystander intervention in those types of incidents.

The present study hypothesizes bystander intervention is significantly less likely when crimes are categorized as sexual assault, rape, or intimate partner violence, and the study will test that hypothesis by utilizing a bigger sample than prior literature. This study expands on prior research in that it will use reported observed incidents over multiple years rather than relying on self-report data in a more constrained reporting period. Finally, where prior studies may have combined

the phenomena, the current study will use independent variables to separately assess the impact of an incident being an instance of intimate partner violence, and the impact of an incident being classified as sexual assault or rape.

#### A Note about the Data's Inability to Measure the Characteristics of Bystanders

After establishing that social bias may play a role in the likelihood of bystander intervention, the present study must further acknowledge that there may be variables related to the bystanders' characteristics that are important to the understanding of bystander intervention but are made difficult or impossible using the present data source. It is important to note that the present study utilizes the NCVS, which has its limitations in its ability to provide information about the bystanders. The survey allows us to note whether the victim recalled a bystander present in a violent victimization, but the information on the bystander, particularly the race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender of the bystander, is lacking. It is plausible that these characteristics of the bystander may uniquely affect the likelihood of bystander intervention, meaning that the present analysis lacks in its ability to measure these other factors that potentially influence the dependent variable. However, the present study posits that bystanders, on average, are likely to be affected by overarching societal norms and beliefs despite their individual differences.

Even if bystanders may have intrinsic characteristics that may differentially motivate them to intervene, it is likely that most if not all of them are influenced to some degree by the driving societal forces of social stratification, the racial/ethnic divide, sexism and other potentially harmful perceptions surrounding highly gendered

crimes. Tests of normative social behavior, for example, indicate that social norms do have the potential to predict certain behaviors (see Nolan, Schultz, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2008; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). One study that tested normative social behavior in terms of bystander outcomes found that the implementation of communication programs targeted to prevent sexual assault and challenge social norms indicated that those programs could influence subjects' intentions to intervene if they witness sexual assault in the future (Mabry & Turner, 2016). While the present study is unable to evaluate individual characteristics of the bystander that may influence intervention, the study is able to evaluate the pervasiveness of social bias in society and its effect on bystanders as a population.

There may be some characteristics of the bystander that could be estimated using variables contained within the NCVS. The present study will include a variable which notes the specific location of the incident. If the incident took place in a residential area/private location, it is more likely that the third party noted as present in the incident is somehow related or known to the victim. Further, if the incident took place near a private residential area, the bystander may be of similar social status to the victim. Thus, including more specific location details as variables can provide proxies for some characteristics of the bystander, which are useful in providing the fullest analysis of bystander intervention with the data available.

## Chapter 3: The Present Study

Evaluating bystander intervention and the factors that may stand between inaction and action may help inform policy which works to minimize the experiences of and repercussions from violent victimization. Violent victimization has the potential to be incredibly damaging both physically and psychologically for a crime victim. With the high prevalence of bystander presence, it would be of most use and benefit for society to understand how bystanders can be more active interveners in violent victimizations when they are able to do so.

Most bystanders likely take the severity of the crime into account when deciding whether the benefits of intervening outweigh the costs; however, it is important to understand if underlying factors related to social bias also affect intervention. The present study fills a gap in the literature in examining the effect of both the severity of crime and social bias on the likelihood of bystander intervention, specifically using violent victimization incidents rather than posing hypothetical incidents to evaluate only self-reported intervention intention. If research can identify specific factors, whether related to the offender, victim, or situational context, that make bystander intervention more or less likely, perhaps policy and education can specifically target potential situations and work towards making bystander intervention more likely than not.

### Hypotheses

The current study will examine the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1:** Bystanders are more likely to intervene when the incident is more severe and perceived as more harmful to the victim (whether a firearm is

present, whether a weapon other than a gun is present, the number of offenders, the victim-offender relationship, and whether the crime took place in public or private.

**Hypothesis 2:** Bystanders are less likely to intervene on behalf of a minority victim (Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, or other race) than a non-Hispanic White victim.

**Hypothesis 3:** Bystanders are more likely to intervene if an offender is a minority (Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, or other race) than if an offender is non-Hispanic White.

**Hypothesis 4:** Bystanders are more likely to intervene on behalf of an individual with higher socioeconomic status (higher household income, higher educational status) compared to those with lower socioeconomic status.

**Hypothesis 5:** Bystanders are more likely to intervene on behalf of a female victim than a male victim.

**Hypothesis 6:** Bystanders are less likely to intervene if the offender is a female than if the offender is a male.

**Hypothesis 7:** Bystanders are less likely to intervene if the crime is recorded as an instance of intimate partner violence (offender is a spouse, former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, or former boyfriend or girlfriend) or an instance of rape or sexual assault.

## Chapter 4: Data and Methods

The data analyzed come from the NCVS files for 2012-2018. The NCVS, released annually, interviews individuals from households across the United States in a stratified, multistage cluster sample. The NCVS is intended to be nationally representative through its methods. The survey consists of interviewing individuals from households over a period of three years to document and investigate the individual's experiences with criminal victimization (Rennison & Rand, 2007).

The NCVS was the preferable data source to use for the present study because of its large sample size and comprehensive incident variables. The data includes responses to questionnaire items that ask people to report whether bystanders were present, and variables related to the types of interventions bystanders engage in. While the information is not obtained directly from the bystanders, the NCVS allows analysis of the behavior of the population of interest. The NCVS provides sufficient information on victim characteristics, as well as information on the offender, to analyze the independent variables related to potential social bias.

This study includes data from 2012 to 2018, because 2012 is the first year in which ethnicity of offender is available. This study sought to investigate the effect of racial and ethnic context on bystander intervention, and the 2010s are an interesting period. This period saw the United States elect its first black president and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. This period includes years both pre- and post-Ferguson (the Ferguson incident occurring in 2014), and within a period where American society became largely concerned about police brutality and racial inequalities. For example, the year 2017 was reportedly incredibly low in terms of

race relations. According to a Gallup poll, 42 percent of Americans in 2017 said they worried about race relations, compared to 17 percent in 2014 (Swift, 2017).

Further, this period also saw the rise of President Donald Trump, which marked an increase in the number of hate crimes against minority communities, and that increase continued to rise even after the election ended (Levin & Reitzel, 2018). Finally, in relation to issues tied to gender and social bias regarding highly gendered crimes, the “Me Too” movement prominent in 2017 and 2018 encouraged survivors of sexual assault, abuse, or harassment (also including instances of intimate partner violence) to share their experiences or indicate surviving these types of experiences on social media to combat harmful perceptions surrounding these crimes (Hosterman, Johnson, Stouffer, and Herring, 2018). Analyzing violent victimizations within the years 2012-2018, as well as including control variables for the specific year an incident took place, allows the present study to investigate the effect of social biases on bystander intervention with a sample likely to be affected by prevalent conversations related to social bias in the United States.

### Study Sample

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1 displays the percentage of bystanders present in different incident types, indicating that in all incidents of violent victimization in the NCVS for 2012-2018, bystanders are more likely to be present in aggravated and simple assault compared to other crime types, and present in instances in public locations. Bystanders are less likely to be present in instances of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and rape. While this table acknowledges all incidents of violent crime,

the present study utilized only 4943 violent crime incidents with a bystander present that took place during the years 2012-2018. The funneling to this specific sample was necessary to analyze the research question of bystander intervention in the contexts of nonfatal violent victimization.

### Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is a dichotomous variable indicating bystander intervention. It is worth noting that the NCVS does not have a specific question that directly asks the victim whether the bystander intervened. The present study utilized variables that likely serve as a proxy for bystander intervention, which asked the victim whether a bystander was present, and when yes, whether the bystander was helpful or hurtful (see Hart & Miethe, 2008). The present study sought to analyze bystanders' decision to intervene, regardless of the outcome (helpful or hurtful). Thus, an incident with a bystander present that marks any response to the helpful or hurtful as Y=1 for bystander intervention, whereas incidents with a bystander present but no helpful or hurtful response, or "Don't know" for both helpful and hurtful responses, will be coded as Y=0. The present study assumes that it is unlikely that a bystander was known to have intervened, but the victim does not identify those actions as being helpful nor hurtful. In the present study's data, only 3 percent of cases had victims indicate a third party was present and respond "Don't know" for both variables of whether the third party or parties present helped, and whether the third party or parties present hurt the situation. It is likely that most victims are aware of bystanders who intervene and will respond accordingly to the questions about helpfulness versus hurtfulness if noticeable intervention took place;

in this way, the dependent variable measures intervention that had a reported effect on the experience of the violent victimization.

### Independent Variables

The independent variables assessed in this study are factors related to the severity of the crime (whether there were multiple offenders, whether offender was a stranger, whether a gun/firearm was used, whether a weapon of any other kind was used, whether the crime was completed, and whether the crime took place in public), and also factors related to social bias (the race/ethnicity of the victim and race/ethnicity of the offender, the gender of victim and gender of offender, the income of victim, the educational status of victim, whether the crime was recorded as a sexual assault or rape compared to other types of violent crimes, and whether the crime was recorded as an instance of intimate partner violence).

To code the independent variables related to the severity of the crime, the present study defined each variable in ways that align with prior research utilizing the NCVS (see Hart & Miethe, 2008; Bachman, 1998). The variable for multiple offenders is coded as a binary variable for any incident where there was more than one offender identified by the victim. Stranger offenders were defined as either a single offender who was not marked as a relative, friend, or casual acquaintance of the victim or recognized by the victim by sight; for cases with multiple offenders, stranger offenders were defined as such only if the victim reported all offenders were reported to be strangers. The variable for whether a gun was used includes whether a handgun (such as a pistol or revolver) or other type of gun (such as a rifle or a shotgun) was used or brought by the offender in the incident. The “other weapon

used” variable includes incidents where the offender had any kind of weapon other than a gun (including but not limited to knives, other sharp objects, and blunt objects). Crimes were marked as completed if they were not classified as “attempts” or “threats.” A crime was marked as taking place in a public location if the incident was not in or near someone’s private property or residence.

Like Xie and Lauritsen (2012), the present study analyzes race of victim and race of offender (and the present study includes ethnicity). The main independent variables related to race and ethnicity of victim included in the analysis are whether the victim is non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic American Indian, non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or other race. The independent variables for race and ethnicity of offender include whether a single offender or all offenders are White, whether any offender is Black, whether any offender is Hispanic, whether any offender is American Indian, and whether any offender is Asian or Pacific Islander. Similarly, the variable indicating gender of offender was coded in a way to accommodate incidents with multiple offenders—the variable for a female offender is indicative of any of the offenders being identified as female compared to crimes with only male offenders.

The factors related to socioeconomic bias were operationalized into a variable related to household income and two variables related to educational attainment, aligning with prior research examining socioeconomic status. One of these variables in the present study was a dummy variable indicating if a victim is from a low-income household. “Low-income” was determined by calculating if the victim’s reported household income corresponded with an NCVS response range with a

midpoint less than 1.5 times the federal poverty line (corresponding with number of household members); this measurement was drawn from research in epidemiology which examines socioeconomic status considering the federal poverty line, but adjusts to how socioeconomic status is measured in the NCVS (see McLaughlin, Costello, Leblanc, Sampson, & Kessler, 2012). Missingness in some years, specifically missingness in the household income variable in years 2012-2014 in the primary NCVS data files, is addressed with the imputation of income data from BJS files intended to remedy this specific issue.

The other variables related to socioeconomic status are related to the highest level of education attained by the victim. These variables included a binary variable indicating whether a victim has attained a bachelor's degree or higher and a binary variable indicating whether a victim's highest level of education is a high school degree. While education itself is likely not evident to a bystander, education can be used as a proxy for socioeconomic status given the privileges and opportunities that are more readily available to people with higher levels of education. The specific thresholds of education were chosen because these levels of education likely make the most difference in perception of socioeconomic status—those who have attained at least a bachelor's degree likely have increased access to higher-paying jobs, and those who have attained a high school degree are more likely than those without to be able to obtain and maintain employment, though generally at lower levels (in prestige and pay) than those with college degrees. These socioeconomic proxies are also drawn from similar measurement of educational attainment in research utilizing the NCVS (see Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010).

## Control Variables

In this study's analysis, there were several control variables utilized in the regression, similar to other control variables utilized when analyzing incidents reported by victims in the NCVS (Xie, Pogarsky, Lunch & McDowall, 2006). These control variables include whether the crime was a robbery, simple assault, or aggravated assault, victim age, marital status of the victim (a variable separate from whether the perpetrator of violent crime was an intimate partner), victim homeownership, victim employment status (at the time of the incident), whether any of the offenders were under age 18, time of day of the crime (nighttime starting at 6 p.m. and ending at 6 a.m.), whether the incident was a series crime, and the year of the incident. Apart from sexual assault, which is specifically predicted in the hypotheses as likely being related to social bias and associated with lower likelihood of bystander intervention, the different types of violent crime are not predicted to have a specific direction or magnitude of impact on bystander intervention though it is plausible the type of crime could play a role in a bystander's perception of the situation. Victim age could plausibly play a role in bystander intervention (if the victim is a child, bystanders may feel more responsibility to intervene than if the victim were an adult); however, this is likely less tied to social bias than the main independent variables.

Similarly, if any of the offenders were under 18, bystanders may have changed their behavior since the incident involved children. Further, variables likely the marital status of the victim, whether the victim owns a home, and whether the victim is employed could play into bystander intervention (a person bearing these

qualities may be perceived to need less help than others), but it is difficult to determine whether these qualities would be plainly visible to a bystander to violent crime, as well as whether these factors are closely tied to the present study's focus on variables related to crime severity or social bias. These control variables are similarly included in other empirical tests using the NCVS (see Xie and Lauritsen, 2012).

The temporal variables (time of day of crime and year of incident) could influence bystander intervention, but it is difficult to predict the effects of these control variables or connect them to either severity of the crime or social bias. Finally, when dealing with victimization data, it is important to note series crimes. The current study does not hypothesize a direction for an effect of whether an incident is a series crime on bystander intervention (it is unclear whether it is apparent whether a crime is a series crime to a bystander), but in a data set that contains series crimes, the variable has been included in case there is a statistically significant effect. Thus, it is plausible to believe bystander intervention may be affected by these control variables, especially as they are included in other research using the NCVS (see Hart & Miethe, 2008) but they are not necessarily as closely tied to severity of the crime or social bias than the independent variables.

### Analytical Strategy

To analyze the effect of severity of crime and social bias on the binary outcome of bystander intervention, while also holding control variables constant, this research will employ a logistic regression analysis. Further, to account for the stratified multistage cluster design of the NCVS, the analysis includes setting the data

to account for design variables and survey weights to reflect the unique clustering and stratification of the data. This logistic regression analysis was performed in Stata 16.

When evaluating the descriptive statistics of the data, there exists a notable percentage of missing data in terms of the offender race and ethnicity. Further, there are other variables with missingness, resulting in only 76 percent of violent incidents with a bystander present being included in the logistic regression. Given that this is a substantial number of cases excluded from the analysis, the present study evaluated whether a form of imputation for this missing data was warranted. For imputation to address any bias that may exist because of missing data, there needs to be a clear understanding of the mechanism that causes the missing data (Jakobsen, Gluud, Wetterslev & Winkel, 2017).

In the case of the present study, the independent/control variables with a noteworthy percentage of missing data include race and ethnicity of offender (8.84 percent), whether the incident took place at night (1.43 percent), whether the offender was a stranger (2.21 percent), whether there were multiple offenders (1.13 percent), and whether any offender was under 18 (4.97 percent). The mechanism behind the missingness of these independent and control variables is not clear with information provided by the NCVS. The race/ethnicity data could be missing because the reporting victim does not remember, or that the offenders obscured their faces, or that the victim could not confidently tell what race/ethnicity the offender was. Similar doubt exists for the other independent variables, as well as the missingness in the dependent variable, whether the bystander intervened (5.70 percent missing). The missingness could exist at random or depend on factors such as the severity of the

crime (a severely injured or significantly shocked victim may be too distressed to remember details), or that the specific detail about the crime was generally hard to distinguish (e.g., not all people's ages are obvious to the perceiver). Thus, because the mechanism(s) behind the missing data are not clear and cannot be specified, the present study has elected to continue with the logistic regression without imputation, noting the potential bias caused by the missingness in the results.

### Diagnostics

Because the present study's model of logistic regression included a fairly large number of independent variables and control variables, it was important to assess whether any of the independent variables shared high levels of correlation and use tests to diagnose whether the model may be subject to issues related to collinearity. When running correlation coefficients for all of the independent and control variables included in the regression, the highest correlation coefficients were those between the variable indicating that the victim owns their own home and the variable for income (.37), the correlation between the variable indicating a Hispanic victim and the variable indicating a Hispanic offender (.35), the correlation between the variable indicating victim age and the variable indicating that the victim is married (.34), and the correlation between the variable indicating victim age and the variable indicating if any offender was under 18 (-.32). All other correlation coefficients between independent and control variables were below .30.

Collinearity diagnostics were also run for the independent and control variables included in the logistic regression. The highest variance inflation factor was no greater than 1.90, and the condition number produced by the diagnostic test was

equivalent to 19.09. Combining the results of the correlation tests and the collinearity diagnostics, no statistics produced by these diagnostic tests raised concern; bias related to collinearity is likely not a prominent issue present in the model.

## Chapter 5: Results

### Descriptive Statistics

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 displays descriptive statistics for the sample of violent victimizations with bystander presence, and Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for the percent of cases where bystanders intervened for the variables of interest.

Most of the violent crimes in this sample were instances of simple assault (66 percent), followed by aggravated assault (21 percent), robbery (9 percent) and sexual assault or rape (3 percent). Most incidents took place in a public location (61 percent), and most incidents took place in the daytime (59 percent). Male victims make up 52 percent of the sample, and male offenders make up 73 percent of the sample. In terms of the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic demographics, the victims in the present study's violent incidents were mostly White at 62 percent, and offenders were also mostly White at 51 percent.

Most crimes were committed by a male offender against a male victim (43.7 percent), followed by crimes committed by a male offender against a female victim (30.3 percent), crimes committed by a female offender against a female victim (19.4 percent), and crimes committed by a female offender against a male victim (6.9 percent). Of the crimes committed, 59.4 percent were interracial or inter-ethnic.

[Table 3 about here]

In general, bystanders intervened about half of the time (.54) in the sample of violent incidents where bystanders were reported to be present. In looking at the descriptive statistics for variables related to the severity of the crime, the proportion

of cases where bystanders intervened was highest for crimes with weapons other than a gun (.57) and multiple offenders (.56), and bystander intervention was lowest for crimes where a gun was used (.50).

When looking at the variables related to race and ethnicity of victim and offender, the proportion of offenders who intervened was highest for incidents where the victim was American Indian (.69), and bystander intervention was lowest for incidents where the offender was American Indian (.47) and incidents where the victim was Asian or Pacific Islander (.47). The variables for socioeconomic status (describing whether a victim had no high school degree versus a high school degree, or if the victim had a college degree or higher) had the same proportion of intervention (.54). The last portion of independent variables related to social bias focuses on gender and highly gendered crimes. The proportion of intervention was higher for female victims (.56) than male victims (.51). Incidents where males were the perpetrators had a proportion of intervention of .54, and incidents with female offenders had a proportion of .55. The proportion of bystander intervention was lower for crimes identified as sexual assault or rape (.44) and intimate partner violence (.51) compared to other crime types (simple assault is .54, aggravated assault is .55, and robbery is .54).

As for control variables, incidents that were classified as series incidents had a higher proportion of bystander intervention (.60) compared to incidents not designated as series crime (.54). Intervention was more likely to have been identified if the incident took place at nighttime (.57) compared to daytime (.51). Finally,

incidents where the victim was employed had a higher proportion of intervention (.55) than if the victim was not employed (.52).

### Logistic Regression

[Table 4 about here]

The logistic regression analysis [F(37, 129)=1.94, p=.004] utilized 4943 incidents (unweighted) and resulted in a weighted population size of 13,063,102 using statistical methods for logistic regression specific to surveys, and setting the data analysis to account for the structural and methodological elements of the NCVS that influence sampling and representativeness. Holding all else constant, the logistic regression indicated some significant effects and some null findings based on the hypotheses previously stated.

Hypothesis 1 states that bystanders are more likely to intervene with the presence of factors related to the severity of the crime. The logistic regression indicated that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that presence of a weapon other than a gun was significantly associated with the likelihood of bystander intervention.

The present study's logistic regression also tested the potential effect of the presence of multiple offenders on the likelihood of bystander intervention in relation to Hypothesis 1. The results indicated that there was not enough evidence to identify a significant association between the presence of multiple offenders and likelihood of bystander intervention. Prior research has not tested the relationship between multiple offenders and likelihood of bystander intervention in violent victimization.

Also, in relation to Hypothesis 1, the logistic regression evaluated whether the offender being a stranger, whether the crime took place in a private location, and whether the crime was completed had a significant effect on bystander intervention. The logistic regression indicated null results in the tests for the relationships between bystander intervention and each of the three last mentioned variables related to severity.

However, the presence of a gun, one of the factors linked to severity in Hypothesis 1, was associated with a statistically significant decrease in the likelihood of bystander intervention ( $\beta = -.41$ ,  $SD = .20$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). This result differs from the general hypothesized relationship where the present study predicted factors related to the severity of the crime would correspond with an increase in bystander intervention. Previously, Hart & Mieth (2008) included gun presence within a more general variable indicating whether any weapon is present; the present study differs in separating guns from other weapons and finds statistical significance for an association between gun presence and bystander intervention but not for other weapons and bystander intervention.

Hypothesis 2 states that bystanders are more likely to intervene on behalf of a non-Hispanic White victim than a minority victim (Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Other Race), and Hypothesis 3 states bystanders are more likely to intervene if an offender is a minority (Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian/Pacific Islander) than if an offender is non-Hispanic White. The results indicated that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that any of the variables for racial or ethnic minority status for victims or offenders were

significantly associated with the likelihood of bystander intervention. Thus, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 were not supported by the present study.

Hypothesis 4 states that bystanders are more likely to intervene on behalf of an individual with higher socioeconomic status than those with a lower socioeconomic status. To test this hypothesis, the present study used the independent variables of household income and two variables related to educational status. The results of the logistic regression indicated that there was insufficient evidence to identify a significant association between household income and the likelihood of bystander intervention, and insufficient evidence to support a significant association between both educational status variables, and the likelihood of bystander intervention. The current study's data analysis thus does not find evidence in support of Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5 states that bystanders are more likely to intervene on behalf of a female victim than a male victim. The present study's results indicated a significant effect where the variable indicating whether a victim was female was significantly and positively associated with the outcome of bystander intervention ( $\beta=.35$ ,  $SD=.08$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 5 is supported by the data analysis. This aligns with prior psychological research which emphasized increased likelihood of intervention on behalf of female victims and expands upon the literature by demonstrating this effect in recorded violent victimization incidents.

Hypothesis 6 states that bystanders are more likely to intervene if the offender is a male than if the offender is a female. The present study did not find enough evidence to conclude a significant relationship between female offender(s) and the

outcome of bystander intervention. Thus, Hypothesis 6 was not supported by the present data analysis.

Hypothesis 7 states that bystanders are less likely to intervene if the crime is recorded as an instance of intimate partner violence or sexual assault/rape. The results of the logistic regression indicate that on average, incidents in this data set classified as intimate partner violence were significantly and negatively associated with the likelihood of bystander intervention ( $\beta=-.35$ ,  $SD=.12$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). Results from the logistic regression also indicated that on average, an incident being classified as an instance of sexual assault or rape was significantly and negatively associated with the outcome of bystander intervention ( $\beta=-.60$ ,  $SD=.19$ ,  $p=.002$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 7 was supported by the data in the current study.

As for the control variables, on average, with an incident occurring at night, that classification was significantly associated with an increase in bystander intervention ( $\beta=.25$ ,  $SD=.07$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). Additionally, on average, a one unit increase in age was significantly associated with a decrease in bystander intervention ( $\beta=-.00$ ,  $SD=.00$ ,  $p=0.04$ ). The tests on the control variables of victim homeownership, victim employment, offenders being under the age of 18, the incident being a series crime, and the year in which the incident took place were nonsignificant in the logistic regression.

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

The present study sought to understand what factors may influence a bystander's likelihood to intervene in violent victimization. The framework of this study broke major potential factors into two main groups: factors related to the severity of the crime and factors that could likely be related to social bias. After analyzing the NCVS data on violent victimization from 2012-2018, some hypotheses regarding these factors were supported, and other hypotheses were not supported.

[Table 5 about here]

This study reveals that gender and highly gendered crimes may be some of the most important factors influencing the likelihood of bystander intervention. The present study found that incidents in the sample with female victims were more likely to be associated with an increase in the likelihood of bystander intervention. As explored in prior literature, people may generally view women as more needing or deserving of help than male victims and thus intervene more on behalf of females (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). However, that chivalry towards women may not be as readily extended when the incident is an instance of intimate partner violence or an instance of sexual assault or rape. This finding supports prior research that found a potential relationship between bias regarding these crimes and willingness to help victims of sexual assault/rape and intimate partner violence (Banyard & Moynihan, 2011). The present study extends prior knowledge by finding a significant relationship between gender of victim and bystander intervention, as well as a significant relationship between gendered crimes and bystander intervention, specifically using incident data from a nationally representative sample.

## Discussion of Results Regarding Gender and Highly Gendered Crimes

The present study suggests that bystander intervention is more likely when victims are female, which aligns with prior research in psychology and expands that knowledge by finding this effect in a sample of violent victimizations. However, the results of the present study also suggest, holding other variables constant, including the variable indicating whether victims are female, bystander intervention is less likely if the incident at hand is recorded as sexual assault or rape or an instance of intimate partner violence. The combination of these results reveals the possibility that social biases surrounding intimate crimes affect bystanders to violent crime and perhaps more broadly, American society at large.

Females have been found to experience differential likelihood of exposure to victimization compared to males; while for some crimes the gender gap has appeared to start to close, females still bear especially increased risk for intimate partner violence and sexual assault/rape (Lauritsen & Heimer, 2008). Further, females of a minority racial or ethnic background may experience even greater risks to becoming a victim of violent crime, or greater likelihood to be victimized in certain situational contexts (Dugan & Apel, 2003). The present study did investigate whether there were potential interaction effects between race/ethnicity of victim and gender of the victim; however, the results for the interaction effects on the outcome of bystander intervention were nonsignificant with the current data and analytic model. This research suggests that while females experience increased risk to becoming victims of violent crime and may be specifically targeted by certain offenders, bystanders to violent crime are more likely to step in for these female victims compared to male

victims. While the increased likelihood of bystander intervention on behalf of females may deter offenders from crime completion and perhaps also minimize or lessen some of the detrimental effects of violent crime on those females, the onus should not only fall on third parties to combat the effects of violent crime while it is taking place; female victimization trends are a phenomenon that should be continued to be tracked, evaluated, and addressed by scholars and policymakers to reduce the victimization rates and minimize the repercussions of violent crime.

The present study indicates a significantly decreased likelihood of bystander intervention if the instances are recorded as sexual assault or rape, or intimate partner violence. To increase the possibility of intervention of bystanders in these contexts, as well as potentially lessen the prevalence of these crimes, efforts should be made to combat harmful perspectives surrounding sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Perhaps a large part of the culture which perpetuates the social biases surrounding these crimes is the way these cases are handled by the justice system.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a rape reform movement which was intended to advocate for justice for victims of sexual assault and increase the likelihood that offenders would be prosecuted and convicted (Spohn & Horney, 1992). However, problems regarding the treatment of sexual assault cases and rape continue in the justice system today. A recent push for re-evaluation of the processing of sexual assault or rape cases in the justice system came in 2016 when Brock Turner, often dubbed “the Stanford Rapist,” was convicted of 3 felony counts tied to his sexual assault of an intoxicated woman; although he was convicted of these counts, the judge presiding over the case sentenced Turner to six month in county jail and

three years of probation, which were sentence lengths below the usual two to three years in prison that accompany each of the felony counts against him (Sweeny, 2020). While this arguably has been the most publicized recent case where judicial discretion allowed a sexual offender to avoid harsh consequences from the justice system, it is indicative of a system where cases like this are not abnormal.

The current justice system allows for a low arrest rate for offenders committing sexual assault or rape, and even lower rates of prosecution and conviction for these crimes (Spohn & Tellis, 2014). A study using data on sexual assaults reported to the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in 2008 indicated that a significant proportion of cases where arrests could have been made did not result in the arrest of the suspect, even if the police had probable cause; the study also indicated that a large number of these cases were rejected for prosecution by the district attorney before the suspect was even arrested (Spohn & Tellis, 2019). If victims feel they cannot bring their experiences to the police or the courts with tangible outcomes, the treatment of these cases by the justice system contributes to the social stigma surrounding sexual assault and rape.

While some research indicates that prosecution and conviction rates for intimate partner violence have risen in the United States, historically domestic violence has not been treated the same as other types of assault, with lower likelihood of arrests, and lower likelihood of prosecution and conviction for offenders of intimate partner violence (Garner & Maxwell, 2009). Some attempts in past decades were made to address law enforcement and justice system handling of domestic violence, such as mandatory arrests when probable cause is present (Hirschel et al.,

1992), or no-drop policies where the court will proceed with prosecution of a case based on evidence, crime severity and the defendant's prior record without consideration of what the victim says they want (Mills, 1998). With these reformative policies, the number of domestic violence cases entering the criminal justice system for processing has increased, but the system may not be equipped to handle them. Thus, many cases get dropped or rejected before they can be prosecuted (Davis et al., 2003). When the justice system does not consistently treat offenders of intimate partner violence with the same gravity as other violent criminals, the social stigma regarding domestic violence is perpetuated in public perception.

While fighting widespread social perceptions is an immense task not to be easily or quickly achieved, actions towards this goal are not necessarily fruitless efforts. Societies worldwide recently experienced a wave of awareness and victim empowerment with the Me Too (#metoo) movement seen on social media primarily in 2017 and 2018 (Hosterman, Johnson, Stouffer, and Herring, 2018). In this highly publicized movement, individuals were encouraged to post "me too" if they had been a victim of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or violence, and many chose to share their stories of assault. While the effects of a recent movement like this may not be fully realized and lack rigorous empirical evaluation, the number of people who shared their experiences on social media, many of whom likely had not talked about their abusive experiences in such a public manner prior to the movement, reveals that those people overcame the shame often perceived to be associated with being labeled a survivor.

Even if new and continuing efforts to fight the stigma of sexual assault and intimate partner violence are not as pervasive or popular as the Me Too trend, they have the potential to affect both individuals who experience or have experienced intimate partner violence and sexual violence, as well as individuals who may witness them in the future. These efforts could come in the forms of awareness and prevention programs in schools, organizations, and workplaces, as well as training intended to teach individuals how to intervene if they witness one of these crimes. Further, the bias towards helping females over males, which may prevent some males from receiving help in a violent situation, may be helped by education programs that target not only hostile sexism but benevolent sexism. As more of these programs addressing sexual assault/rape, intimate partner violence, or sexism are built up and grown, research should continue to empirically determine the effectiveness of these programs to then make clear to policymakers the best programs to implement in their communities.

#### Implications of Results Regarding Presence of a Gun

The current study also found that controlling for covariates, bystander intervention was less likely if a gun was present in the incident. While this contradicts the present study's hypothesis that factors related to severity of the crime would increase the likelihood of bystander intervention, this statistically significant negative association may be explainable because a gun presents unique risks to the bystander compared to other factors related to severity. When a firearm is used in an incident, a bystander may feel especially heightened risk since firearms are weapons with range, and also particularly dangerous (one shot can be fatal) compared to an offender

without a weapon, or an offender with a weapon such as a knife which must be used at close range. While gun presence is associated with lower likelihoods of intervention as it is measured in this study, it is plausible that even if a bystander does not take intervention noted as helpful or hurtful by the victim (which is likely intervention where the bystander personally steps into the situation at hand), bystanders to crimes involving guns may engage in other types of intervention, such as calling the police or leaving the scene to get help. When examining the descriptive statistics for the present data set, there may be some preliminary evidence of this. Of crimes involving a firearm where the victim stated the police were notified, 12.5 percent of victims in 495 incidents said that the police were notified by a third party, compared to 7.3 percent for 5,458 crimes not involving a firearm. The present study chose not to include police notification in its broad analysis; in general, it is unclear whether a third party who calls the police is necessarily a bystander at the scene (e.g., a victim tells a friend or family member after the crime occurs and that person calls the police). However, for crimes involving a gun, calls to police would likely be immediate and made while the incident is still taking place, and a third party who notifies the police would thus likely be a bystander at the scene.

A clear solution to the issue of gun violence is not fully identified nor would be easily enacted across all jurisdictions. An evaluation by RAND, which included studies on gun policy meeting certain methodological criteria, concluded that the body of research mostly had little evidence to support effects of most policies (Morral, 2019). The report indicated there was supportive evidence for a relationship between policies such as child-access prevention laws and the outcome of decreased

unintentional injuries and deaths, as well as the outcome of suicide; however, there was only moderate evidence to suggest relationships with some policies (background checks, prohibitions associated with domestic violence, and waiting periods) and the outcome of violent crime, which is the outcome the present study is most interested in addressing. Future research can endeavor to further test existing policies, and perhaps scholars and policymakers can work together to innovate other potential solutions to then be empirically evaluated by researchers.

#### Nonsignificant Hypothesized Relationships

The current study predicted that the variables related to severity of the crime (whether a weapon other than a gun is present, the number of offenders, the victim-offender relationship, and whether the crime took place in public or private) would correspond with increased likelihood to intervene; however, the data in this study do not support that prediction. If bystanders are affected by severity of crime, the present study suggested it would be because the individual would weigh the benefits of helping against the potential costs and harms of helping. The null significance for these variables in this model is not necessarily indicative of a lack of relationship between the concepts of crime severity and bystander intervention, and merely reflects a lack of conclusive evidence to confidently reject the notion that there is no relationship.

However, if future research similarly does not find a significant relationship between these variables and bystander intervention, speculatively, it may be plausible that bystander intervention is not as much of a well-calculated process as that of rational choice theory (Cornish & Clarke, 1987), or the bystander intervention model

(Latane & Darley, 1968). It is ideal to imagine a bystander would rationally weigh the need for them to help and their own concerns for safety, but it is possible that a bystander is stunned in the moment of emergency. Some individuals may be able to process the situation and analyze whether they want to help and how the situation needs to be addressed; however, other individuals may be shocked into a flight-freeze-fawn response as described in social psychology when studying bystander apathy (Graziano & Habashi, 2010). Because individuals each have a different instantaneous response to emergency situations, perhaps some components of a situation related to the severity of the crime do not have a consistent effect when looking at many individuals. While the current study did not find enough evidence for a confident conclusion regarding most of the severity variables, this potential relationship could be further investigated in future research.

The present study did not find a significant relationship in the sample where victims of racial or ethnic minority were less likely to receive bystander intervention, or where bystanders were more likely to intervene if the offender was a racial or ethnic minority. This does not refute the presence of social bias prevalent across the United States but merely suggests that racial and ethnic bias may not play as a significant role in a bystander's decision to intervene as hypothesized. It is important to also note that 9 percent of the data on offender race/ethnicity was missing in the current sample; an ideal dataset for analysis of this issue would be more complete. Future research could also perhaps further evaluate the racial/ethnic dynamics of violent victimization and intervention by introducing a spatial element (to account for different demographics in neighborhoods and cities) to analysis.

The present study additionally hypothesized a significant relationship between victim socioeconomic status and the likelihood of bystander intervention but found null significance. As with other variables, the lack of statistical significance in this model does not necessarily negate the existence of a relationship between this type of social bias and bystander intervention; perhaps the structure of the variables used for socioeconomic status did not capture the nature of socioeconomic status (such as how the income variable as given in the NCVS is ordinal rather than continuous). However, it could speculatively be that this type of social bias does not have a noticeable or consistent influence across most bystanders; while socioeconomic disparities are evident in society, those socioeconomic differences may not matter as much when a bystander is perceiving a violent victimization.

#### Control Variable Significance

The present study found a significant relationship indicating on average, crimes taking place at nighttime were associated with increased likelihood of bystander intervention. The present study did not have established theoretical rationale predicting a significant relationship for control variable of time of day of the incident. A speculative explanation for this significant result may be that witnesses to crime in the daytime may be less likely to stop because they have a schedule of events and responsibilities needed to be attended to during the day; witnesses of violent crime at night may be less likely to be on-duty for their jobs or on a timed schedule. Thus, perhaps when people witness crime in their free, personal time, they are more inclined to help than if they have matters to attend to during the daytime.

Another control variable found to have a statistically significant relationship with bystander intervention was age. On average, a one-year increase in the age of the victim resulted in a .5 percent decrease in the likelihood of bystander intervention. The present analysis did test a model which included a dummy variable for whether the victim was a senior citizen (over the age of 65); however, this variable was not statistically significant. The present study did not hypothesize a specific direction for a relationship between age and bystander intervention; if this relationship is further supported by empirical evidence and substantively significant in understanding bystander behavior, perhaps as victims become older, bystanders may view them as more competent or less in need of being helped. However, future research would need to investigate age more thoroughly to determine if the relationship between age and intervention is substantively significant or linked to social bias.

#### Limitations and How They May Be Improved

By construction, the current study focused on factors of the crime that are related to severity of the crime and social bias, and these evaluated factors are also generally constant while the incident is taking place: victim and offender characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, and victim-offender relationship do not change between the beginning of an incident and the end of an incident. Further, incident characteristics such as the crime taking place in the night and the location of the incident likely stay constant while a bystander is making the decision to intervene. While the present study chose to investigate these factors specifically to evaluate whether bystander intervention may be more or less likely because of crime severity, social bias or other plausible, fixed characteristics of the incident, these

characteristics are likely not the only factors that a bystander considers when deciding whether to intervene. For example, prior literature has examined the role of victim self-protective behavior (such as fighting back, yelling for help, or otherwise trying to attract attention) in crime avoidance and prevention (Ullman, 1997). Further, a major piece of advice given to potential victims is to attract attention or yell (National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2006); thus, it is plausible that factors such as these affect bystander intervention in that it can be perceived as a direct call to action, or an appeal to responsibility, by the bystander.

While some people may have more of a tendency to yell for help when they find themselves in trouble and may behave similarly if they were to find themselves victims across different types of violent incidents, it is possible that the victim's instantaneous decision or reflex to yell for help or attract attention may be linked to certain features of the crime and how the victim perceives those features. For example, it is plausible a victim may be more compelled to yell that they need help if they are being attacked by multiple offenders and feel overpowered, or perhaps they feel more compelled to yell if they are in a public space and have increased chance of others hearing them. Because of this potential causal relationship between victims yelling for help and factors related to the severity of the crime, the current analysis opted not to include yelling for help as an independent variable in the analysis. Future research may endeavor to explore the role of victim self-protective behaviors in encouraging bystander intervention; however, given that victims of violent crime understandably may be incredibly shocked or distressed by the incidents and unable to act with clarity in the moment, policy implications in response to this type of

research should be especially sensitive to the amount of responsibility placed on victims and potential victims of violent crime.

This analysis captures bystander intervention which was noticeable to a victim; this potentially omits other forms of intervention taken by third-party witnesses to violent victimization such as calling the police while the incident is taking place or leaving the scene to get help. Third-party police calls are captured in the NCVS but were not included in the analysis because including this variable would complicate analysis given temporal order may vary (a third-party may call the police on behalf of the victim after the incident has taken place when that third-party did not necessarily witness the crime). The present analysis is limited in that it cannot capture these other forms of intervention, but this study is able to capture intervention that had a noticeable effect on the experience for the victim.

While the NCVS provides important context to a violent victimization, including critical information such as race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and situational contexts of incidents for the present analyses, as mentioned before there is a notable lack of information for characteristics of the bystander themselves. The data set is limited in that the indication of the presence of a bystander is limited to a victim's recollection. There may have been, and probably were, bystanders in situations where the victim was unaware any third party was present. While this research was able to analyze incidents in which bystanders were indicated as being present, the limitation of a victim survey is that the analysis likely excludes incidents where there was in fact a bystander but not one detected by the victim. To remedy this limitation, data sources would need to be developed to obtain this information

from bystanders of violent crime; however, when constrained to current data sources the NCVS is still the best data source to empirically evaluate how social biases related to victim and offender may affect the likelihood of bystander intervention with a sufficient sample size.

It is also plausible that the gender of the bystander, as well as the racial and ethnic background of the bystander may have a significant effect on their likelihood of intervening in a given situation. For instance, women may perceive more potential risk of being hurt when they are intervening against a male offender, compared to a male bystander intervening in the same context. Further, while the present study did not find a significant effect of race/ethnicity of victims and offenders on the likelihood of bystander intervention, research would benefit from an analysis that provided context of the race/ethnicity of the bystander. The present study hypothesized that minority victims are less likely to be helped, but the hypotheses could become more nuanced if bystanders are distinguished to be of same or different background as the victim and offender. The NCVS, while the optimal data source for evaluating bystander intervention with comprehensive incident data, is limited in providing information on the bystander, and thus, the present analysis had to shift focus from internal characteristics that may affect a bystander's process, and instead shift focus to society and overarching biases.

A shift from the bystander to society means that the analysis assumes that bystanders, on average, are similarly affected by social norms and stereotypes emphasized by American society. This analysis assumed it plausible that all bystanders who witness crime in America are in some form affected by the persistent

and prevalent biases that blanket society. Regardless of a bystander's race or ethnicity, they will probably be influenced by the overall culture of social stratification. Thus, the present study made a plausible assumption surrounding the overarching effect of social stratification on bystanders as a population, but future analyses may endeavor to investigate whether this assumption is supported when evaluating data that allows analysis of bystander characteristics.

Even though this study is constrained by this limitation of information on the bystanders, some variables such as where the incident took place and victim-offender relationship can provide us some clues to information about the bystander. Specifically, if an incident is marked to have taken place in a private location and the offender is not a stranger, the bystander is likely either a family member or well-known acquaintance of a victim. These variables were included as controls in the present study; although non-significant in the present model, they can serve as proxies for likely characteristics of the bystander. Future analyses evaluating the outcome of bystander intervention can similarly consider these incident variables as proxies for likely characteristics of the bystander.

While the NCVS can provide information on the race and ethnicity of offender, once again the data is subject to a victim's recollection. While most of this racial and ethnic information is likely accurate, it is possible that a victim could misremember, or simply not perceive the correct classification for the offender (e.g., perhaps victims cannot distinguish between Hispanic and non-Hispanic offenders, especially in a high-intensity situation that moves too quickly for them to fully observe the situation). Thus, this analysis may provide a sense of the nature of racial

and ethnic effects on bystander intervention, but future research may endeavor to collect information more comprehensively and objectively on bystanders and offenders.

Another limitation of this research is that this study was constrained to the years of 2012-2018. Future research should look beyond these years to both account for changes in the trends, as well as use new NCVS variables for further analysis. It is of interest to continue to investigate whether race/ethnicity of victim and offender plays a role in bystander intervention in violent crime past the end-year of the present study. With the rise of anti-Asian sentiments and hateful actions during the COVID-19 pandemic, future analyses may evaluate whether this rise in bias against Asians is reflected in the outcome of bystander intervention.

Additionally, a variable of interest that could not be included in this analysis because of the years included was whether the victim identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. The NCVS did not add this as a question on the survey until 2017; thus, the present study excluded this from analysis. These populations do face significant social bias and increased risk for violent victimization; the current study would have been strengthened if an independent variable regarding the gender identity and sexual orientation of the victim could have been included for all years. The current study provides important findings regarding reported gender of victim and findings regarding highly gendered crimes such as sexual assault or rape and intimate partner violence, but future research can be even more thorough with the inclusion of LGBT identity in the analysis.

While the present study had its limitations, it is an important analysis in using nationally representative incident data to examine the effects of factors related to severity of the crime, as well as factors related to potential social bias, on the outcome of bystander intervention. Future research may be able to utilize new data sets or revised NCVS questionnaires to remedy some of these limitations, but the present study provides a unique, innovative analysis with the data currently available.

### Conclusion

Going forward, research should continue to investigate social bias in relation to violent victimization and the likelihood of bystander intervention. The present study provides a starting point for future research on bystander intervention to expand upon and refine. If the literature can identify the factors that lead to noticeable bystander action, or factors that discourage bystander action, especially those related to social biases, perhaps researchers, policymakers and leaders can work together to create educational programs and policies that encourage intervention and minimize the harm victims of violent crime face. As previously mentioned, the responsibility for addressing violent crime does not independently fall upon the bystander. In addition to addressing the phenomenon of bystander intervention, criminological research and research of related disciplines should continue to identify and track victimization trends and evaluate potential solutions to minimize the prevalence of violent victimization.

The Kitty Genovese incident took place in the 1960s and resulted in publicized outrage; still today, crimes where bystanders fail to act are sensationalized and draw criticism from the public. In March 2021, surveillance footage captured the

physical and verbal attack of a 65-year-old Asian American woman in Manhattan outside of an apartment building. In the footage, there are security guards who do not step in to intervene and even close the door to the building they are guarding while the woman is being attacked (Treisman, 2021). While the fault for violent crime falls on the offender who initiates it, social media users were shocked to see security guards, who could have helped the woman, fail to act.

It does not fall on the bystander to independently solve the issue of violent crime, and bystanders have myriad reasons why they may not intervene in a situation. These publicized cases are likely extreme compared to most violent victimizations with reported witnesses. However, the public does assign responsibility to bystanders who are fully capable of stepping in for someone in need but choose to stand by. If analyses continue to investigate the phenomena of bystander intervention or lack thereof, the literature can contribute to the present knowledge of human nature and help society understand why bystanders behave the way they do. The research evaluating this issue, and policies based on the findings of this research, may be able to provide direction as to how society can move closer towards equality in the empathy extended to victims of violent crime. If the research continues to find evidence of an effect of social bias on bystander intervention, perhaps policymakers can advocate for programs and legislation intended to reduce these biases and social stigma that exist around them.

By working to minimize social bias and stigma, the efforts not only work to minimize the effect of biases on bystander intervention, but ideally would also work to minimize the effect of the biases on broader criminological issues such as the

disproportionate likelihood of certain demographics of being targets for violent crime, or disparate outcomes for minorities in the criminal justice system. In the coming years, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders should work together to understand the situational contexts of violent crime and bystander behavior and identify ways to remedy the issues that may result in increased violent victimization rates for certain demographics, and issues that may also result in decreased likelihood of bystander intervention. The endeavor of exploring the phenomena of bystander intervention should not be to blame bystanders who may be stunned or wary of the harm that may come to them if they intervene, but instead to empower third parties to, when they can, help fellow human beings in need.

Table 1. When is a bystander present?

Incident Characteristics (Violent incidents)	Cases where a bystander was present	Percent where bystander was present
Sexual Assault/Rape	234	26.7
Robbery	606	45.7
Aggravated Assault	1348	59.2
Simple Assault	4506	57.2
Nighttime	2699	52.8
Daytime	3907	56.4
Series Crime	284	57.8
Intimate Partner Violence	455	29.2
Public Location	4014	61.8
In Victim's Home	2052	44.5
Private Location	2688	45.7
<b>Violent Incidents</b>	<b>6474</b>	<b>37.0</b>

**Table 2. Sample Characteristics**

Variables	Mean	SE	Variables	Mean	SE
<b>Dependent Variable</b>			<b>Type of Crime</b>		
Bystander Intervened	.54	.01	Simple Assault	.66	.01
<b>Severity of the Crime</b>			Robbery	.09	.00
Gun Used	.09	.00	Aggravated Assault	.21	.01
Other Weapon Used	.17	.01	Sexual Assault/Rape	.03	.00
Multiple Offenders	.18	.01	Intimate Partner Violence	.07	.00
Stranger Offender	.52	.01	<b>Gender</b>		
Crime Completed	.53	.01	Female Victim	.48	.01
Private Location	.39	.01	Female Offender	.27	.01
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>		
White Victim	.62	.01	College Graduate	.20	.01
Black Victim	.13	.01	High School Graduate	.21	.01
A. Indian Victim	.01	.00	Low Income	.42	.01
Asian/PI Victim	.03	.00	<b>Other Incident Variables</b>		
Hispanic Victim	.17	.01	Nighttime	.41	.01
Other Race Victim	.04	.00	Victim Age	33.50	.27
White Offender(s)	.51	.01	Victim Homeowner	.45	.01
Any Offender Black	.30	.01	Victim Employed	.56	.01
Any Offender A. Indian	.02	.00	Victim Married	.26	.01
Any Offender Asian/PI	.02	.00	Private Location	.39	.01
Any Offender Hispanic	.17	.01	Series Incident	.04	.00
			Any Offender <18	.23	.01
<b>Total Incidents</b>			<b>4943</b>		

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Bystander Intervention

Variables	Intervened	SE	Variables	Intervened	SE
<b>Severity of Crime</b>			<b>Social Bias</b>		
Stranger Offender	.54	.01	Low Income	.52	.01
Known Offender	.52	.01	Average-Higher Income	.52	.01
Crime Completed	.54	.01	Male Victim	.51	.01
Crime Attempted	.52	.01	Female Victim	.56	.01
Private Location	.53	.01	Male Offender	.54	.01
Public Location	.54	.01	Female Offender	.55	.02
Multiple Offenders	.56	.02	Sexual Assault/Rape	.44	.07
Single Offender	.53	.01	Intimate Partner	.51	.03
Gun Used	.50	.03	<b>Control Variables</b>		
Other Weapon Used	.57	.02	Victim Married	.55	.01
No Weapon Used	.54	.01	Victim Not Married	.54	.01
<b>Social Bias</b>			Victim Owns Home	.52	.01
White Victim	.54	.01	Victim Not Homeowner	.55	.01
Black Victim	.54	.03	Victim Employed	.55	.01
A. Indian Victim	.69	.08	Victim Not Employed	.52	.01
Asian/PI Victim	.47	.07	Any Offender Under 18	.52	.02
Hispanic Victim	.54	.02	No Offender Under 18	.55	.01
Other Race Victim	.53	.05	Series Incident	.60	.04
White Offender(s)	.54	.01	Not a Series Incident	.54	.01
Any Offender Black	.55	.02	Nighttime	.57	.01
Any Offender A. Indian	.47	.05	Daytime	.51	.01
Any Offender Asian/PI	.51	.09	Simple Assault	.54	.01
Any Offender Hispanic	.57	.02	Aggravated Assault	.55	.02
High School Graduate	.54	.02	Robbery	.54	.03
College Graduate	.54	.02	<b>All Incidents</b>		
No High School Degree	.51	.01		.54	.01

Table 4. Logistic Regression

Intervened	Coef.(Lin. SE)	Intervened	Coef. (Lin. SE)
<b>Severity of the Crime</b>		<b>Gender</b>	
Other Weapon Used	-.03 (.18)	Female Victim	.35 (.08) ***
Gun Used	-.41 (.20) *	Female Offender	-.12 (.09)
Multiple Offenders	.19 (.11)	<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>	
Stranger Offender	.00 (.09)	Low Income	-.00 (.08)
Public Location	.05 (.08)	High School Graduate	.06 (.08)
Completed	.09 (.07)	College Graduate	.09 (.09)
<b>Type of Crime</b>		<b>Control Variables</b>	
Robbery	.20 (.19)	Victim Age	-.00 (.00)*
Aggravated Assault	.20 (.19)	Victim Married	.06 (.08)
Sexual Assault/Rape	-.60 (.19) **	Victim Homeowner	-.09 (.07)
Intimate Partner	-.35 (.12) **	Victim Employed	.10 (.08)
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		Any Offender <18	-.10 (.11)
Black Victim	-.03 (.13)	Series Incident	.05 (.18)
Hispanic Victim	-.05 (.10)	Nighttime	.25 (.07) **
A. Indian Victim	.44 (.37)	<b>Year of Incident</b>	
Asian/PI Victim	-.33 (.22)	Year 2013	-.02 (.13)
Other Race Victim	.01 (.18)	Year 2014	.14 (.15)
Any Off. Black	.08 (.08)	Year 2015	-.10 (.14)
Any Off. Hispanic	.04 (.10)	Year 2016	.12 (.10)
Any Off. A. Indian	-.25 (.25)	Year 2017	-.05 (.12)
Any Off. Asian/PI	-.05 (.28)	Year 2018	.06 (.14)
		Constant	-.10 (.19)
<b>No. Incidents</b>	<b>4943</b>	<b>Weighted Population</b>	<b>13,063,102</b>

\* p≤.05

\*\*p≤.01

\*\*\*p≤.001

**Table 5. Support for the Hypotheses from the Analysis**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Supported by the Analysis</b>
1: Increased likelihood of intervention based on severity of the crime.	Not supported
2: Decreased likelihood of intervention for a minority victim than a White Victim.	Not supported
3: Increased likelihood of intervention for minority offender than a White offender.	Not supported
4: Increased likelihood of intervention if victim is of higher socioeconomic status.	Not supported
5: Increased likelihood of intervention if victim is female.	<b>Supported</b>
6: Decreased likelihood of intervention if offender is a female.	Not supported
7. Decreased likelihood of intervention if the crime is intimate partner violence or sexual assault/rape.	<b>Supported</b>

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