

**Active Bystander Behavior: Extended Analysis from the Sexual  
Conduct: Culture and Respect Survey**

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### Active Bystander Behavior: Extended Analysis from the Sexual Conduct: Culture and Respect Survey

The *Sexual Conduct: Culture & Respect Survey* was administered in the springs of 2013 and 2015 to students at Grinnell College. This survey focused on five core areas of misconduct: intimate partner abuse, stalking, unwanted sexual communication, unwanted sexual touching and sexual assault. Additionally, the survey assessed attitudes toward consent, endorsement of rape myth attitudes, perceptions of the sexual misconduct conduct process at Grinnell College, and several variables related to engagement in active bystander behavior. A report of the findings was submitted to the College community on November 8, 2015. This addendum was created to report the results of additional analyses of the active bystander variables. Specifically, this subsequent report focuses on perceived barriers to engaging in active bystander behaviors, the perceived relation between the philosophy of self-governance and actual engagement in active bystander behaviors, and personal intentions to engage in active bystander behaviors.

### BARRIERS TO ACTIVE BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR

On the 2013 iteration of the *Sexual Conduct: Culture and Respect Survey*, participants were asked to list factors that would interfere with them intervening in a situation that could potentially lead to sexual misconduct. The question was presented using an open-ended format, and responses were analyzed qualitatively by identifying common themes that occurred across participant responses. The percentage of participants who provided a response consistent with each barrier theme was calculated, and the top ten barriers are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Top ten barriers listed by participants as reasons they would not intervene in a situation that could potentially lead to sexual misconduct*

Domain	Percent
Fear of misreading the situation	31.9
Fear for my physical safety	24.3
I do not know the people involved	19.6
Fear of negative repercussions	11.0
I am under the influence	10.8
Depends on familiarity with the people involved	7.2
If the party involved asked me not to intervene	6.5
Thought the situation was none of my business	5.5
Thought that I was inadequate to intervene	4.2
I thought the people were in relationship	3.8

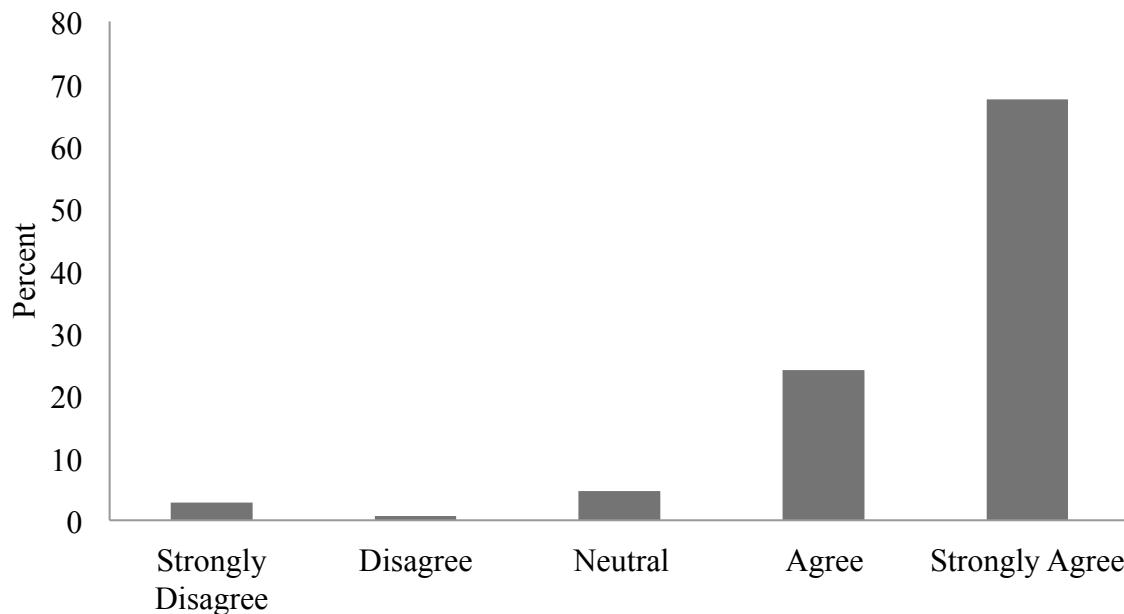
*Note.* Percentages do not add up to 100 because participants could advance answers that were categorized into multiple barrier themes.

Nearly one third of participants stated that they would not intervene due to a fear of misreading the situations, and approximately 20 percent of participants indicated that they would not intervene if they did not know the people. Together, these responses indicate a primary barrier for engaging in active bystander behaviors is related to uncertainty of the situation, including the

people involved. Additionally, approximately one quarter of participants indicated that a fear for their own physical safety was a primary barrier, while about one in ten reported they would not intervene because of fears related to experiencing negative repercussions for intervening. Proportionally fewer participants advanced concerns related to beliefs that they would not intervene because it was none of their business or because they thought they did not possess the requisite skills to intervene.

### **BELIEFS ABOUT THE RELATION OF SELF-GOVERNANCE TO PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITY TO ENGAGE IN ACTIVE BYSTANDER BEHAVIORS**

Participants who took the 2015 survey were asked to respond to what degree they believed that, as a member of a self-governing community, they were responsible for being an active bystander. In general, participants' responses indicated a high level of agreement that they have a personal responsibility to be an active bystander as a member of Grinnell College's self-governing community (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Level of agreement with the statement "As a member of a self governing community, it is my responsibility to be an active bystander".

A factorial analysis of variance was applied to explore the possibility of different group-level agreement across participants of different gender identities (trans-inclusive binary), sexual orientations (non-heterosexual vs. heterosexual), academic years, and racial or ethnic backgrounds (domestic students of color, international students, and domestic white or Caucasian). In addition, variables representing previous active bystander training and prior experience of having been the victim of sexual misconduct were added as factors in that analysis. Because of the negative skew observed in responses to that question (i.e., the majority of participants agreed or strongly disagreed), the normality assumption underlying analysis of variance was violated. To correct for that violation, the variable was transformed by taking the square root of the response values.

No significant main effects were observed for any of the previously mentioned variables. This finding signifies that participants' agreement about personal responsibility to engage in active bystander behaviors did not differ on the basis group membership. However, a significant interaction emerged between academic year and active bystander training ( $F(3, 771) = 3.18, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .013$ ). First- through third-year participants reported approximately the same level of agreement regardless with that statement regardless of active bystander training, while fourth-year participants who had received active bystander education reported greater levels of agreement than those who had not. This may indicate that either the current active bystander training program is more effective for older students, or possibly, fourth-year participants who have had active bystander training may have received such training more than once and, therefore, experienced an enhanced effect of that training.

Spearman's rho correlations were calculated to explore the relation between feeling responsible to be an active bystander as a member of self-governing community and actual engaged in active bystander behavior. Significant, yet small correlations were observed between perceived responsibility and all four subcategories of active bystander behaviors engaged in by participants (Table 2; definitions of the four active bystander factors can be found in the *Summary of the Grinnell College Sexual Conduct: Culture and Respect Survey Report*). This finding indicates that although being a member of a self-governing community is accounting for some of the variance related to being an active bystander, other factors are still undetermined.

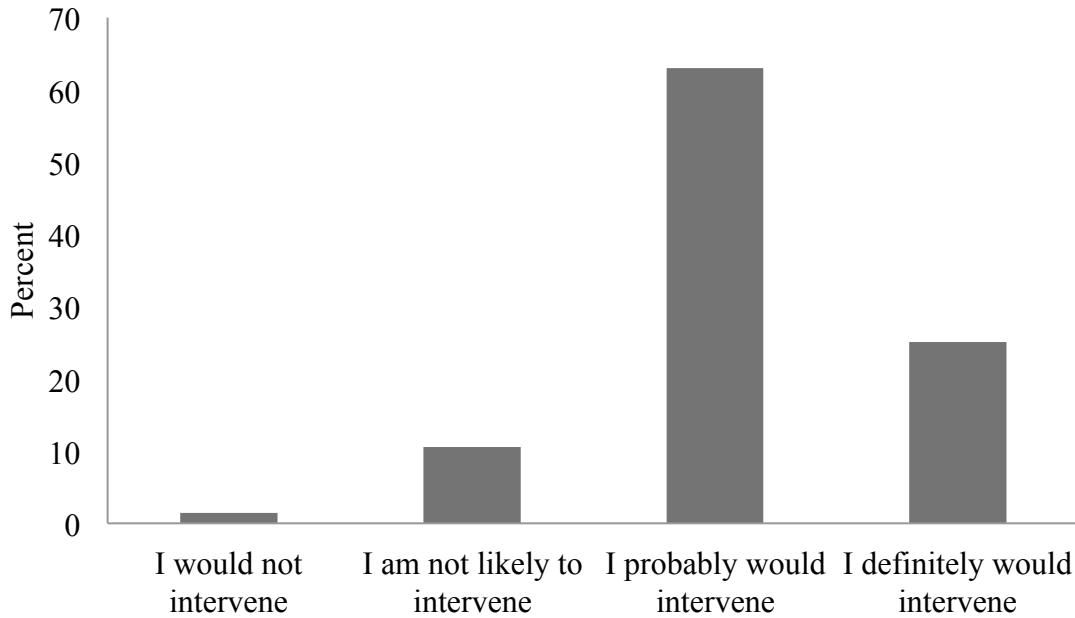
Table 2

*Spearman's Rho correlations between responsibility to be an active bystander as a member of a self-governing community and actual reported engagement in active bystander behavior.*

	$s_r$	$p$
Dealing with specific incidents	0.21	< .05
Party safety	0.08	< .05
Helping friends in distress	0.12	< .05
Confronting language	0.21	< .05

## INTENTION TO ENGAGE IN ACTIVE BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR

In both 2013 and 2015, participants were asked to rate the likelihood that they would intervene in a situation that could potentially lead to sexual misconduct. The distribution of participants intentions collapsed across survey year is presented in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Participants' self-reported intention to intervene in a situation that could potentially lead to sexual misconduct.

A factorial analysis of variance was applied to explore the possibility of group-level differences in intentions to intervene as an active bystander. Variables entered into the analysis included variables representing gender identities, sexual orientations, academic years, and racial or ethnic backgrounds. Variables representing previous active bystander training and prior experience of having been the victim of sexual misconduct were added as factors in that analysis as well. Because of the negative skew observed in responses to the intentions variable, the normality assumption underlying analysis of variance was violated. To correct for that violation, the variable was transformed by taking the square root of the response values.

A significant main effect emerged for active bystander training ( $F(1, 771) = 4.07, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .006$ ). Those who had received active bystander training at any time before the survey reported a higher levels of intention to intervene than those who had not received active bystander training. No main effects were observed for academic year, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or experience of sexual misconduct. However, a significant interaction between academic year and the experience of sexual misconduct emerged ( $F(3, 771) = 3.25, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .013$ ). Individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct reported higher intentions of intervening in their second and third years relative to those who had no prior experience of sexual misconduct. Conversely, those who experienced sexual misconduct reported lower intentions in their fourth year than their peers who had not experienced sexual misconduct. The self-reported intention to intervene was equal for first-year participants, regardless of whether or not a participant had experienced sexual misconduct.

Spearman's rho correlations were calculated to explore the relation between the intention to intervene and actual engaged active bystander behaviors. Significant, yet small correlations were observed between intention and all four subcategories of active bystander behaviors engaged in by participants (Table 3). Because of the smaller rho values, intentions to intervene explained

only a small amount of the variance in actually engaged bystander behavior, leaving a large amount of the variance unexplained.

Table 3

*Spearman's Rho correlations between intention to intervene and actual reported engagement in active bystander behavior.*

	$s_r$	$p$
Dealing with specific incidents	0.23	< .05
Party safety	0.18	< .05
Helping friends in distress	0.22	< .05
Confronting language	0.14	< .05

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In summary, the most common reasons that individuals were not stepping in to be an active bystander included a general level of uncertainty regarding the situation or people involved. Additionally, feeling responsibility to be an active bystander as a member of a self-governing community and having intention to intervene in a situation requiring an active bystander accounted for a small but significant portion of the variance in actually engaged bystander behaviors. In general, group-level differences were not observed for the belief that engaging in active bystander behaviors were a responsibility of engaging in a self-governing community and intentions to engage in such behaviors. Where effects emerged, training in active bystander behavior had a small effect on both beliefs of responsibility and intentions to intervene. This effect seemed enhanced for fourth-year participants on their beliefs of responsibility to intervene.