



Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude

Letter of Intent (LOI) Cover Sheet

Project Title: **The Role of Gratitude in Bystander Intervention**

Principal Investigator Name: **John D. Foubert, Ph.D.**

PI Title & Affiliation: **Associate Professor/Anderson, Farris & Halligan Professor of College Student Development; Oklahoma State University**

Collaborators' Name/Title/Affiliation (if applicable):

Ana J. Bridges, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Arkansas.

Dale R. Fuqua, Ph.D., Regents Professor of Research, Evaluation, Measurement, and Statistics, Oklahoma State University.

Jody L. Newman, Ph.D., Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Oklahoma.

Amount Requested: **\$198,051**

Alternate Sources of Funding _____

Start Date: **July 31, 2012**

End Date: **July 30, 2014**

Check one:

- Gratitude and health
- Gratitude development

X Gratitude in social contexts

- Gratitude in practice

LOI# (For GGSC use only) _____

The Role of Gratitude in Bystander Intervention

Description of The Research: Gratitude is conceptualized in the literature as both a state and a trait (dispositional gratefulness). Research suggests that gratitude can be manipulated experimentally by reflecting upon meaningful blessings (McCullough, Emmons & Tsang, 2002). Gratitude is also a motivator of prosocial behavior (McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen, 2008). One crucial context for prosocial behavior is a situation in which a person needs emergency assistance. Originally studied by Latane and Darley (1970), five barriers to bystander intervention were identified. These include noticing the event, interpreting it as an emergency, taking responsibility for intervening, deciding how to act, and choosing to act.

Encouraging bystander intervention is the prevailing prevention approach used on college campuses for sexual assault education with a wide variety programs demonstrating attitude and behavior changes (Katz, Heisterkamp, & Fleming, 2011; McMahan & Banyard, 2012). Researchers credit adding bystander intervention elements to their programs for resulting reductions in sexual assault a year post-intervention (Foubert, Newberry & Tatum, 2007). Thus far, gratitude has not been measured in research on bystander intervention in sexual assault programs, or in the research on bystander intervention writ large. Given the sophisticated and growing research on the prosocial effects of gratitude, it seems natural to integrate gratitude into the research on bystander intervention, so that its positive effects can be understood and applied to scholarship and practice. The ultimate potential for adding gratitude induction prevention programs, including those that encourage bystander intervention, holds great promise.

The proposed interdisciplinary research seeks to substantially advance knowledge about the effects of gratitude in social contexts. Through two studies, we seek to provide exploratory and confirmatory findings about gratitude in the social relationships that occur when an intimate encounter is sought without the consent of at least one party and a bystander must decide whether or not to intervene in the conflict. This research will also contribute to the research on gratitude in practice in the context of sexual violence, particularly at universities.

- Research Question 1: What is the factor structure of a scale designed to measure 5 barriers of bystander intervention?
- Research Question 2: How is gratitude conceptually related to barriers identified as inhibiting bystander efficacy, intent to intervene, and behavior?
- Research Question 3: Do variables conceptually related to bystander variables moderate the effect of gratitude, barriers to bystander intervention, bystander efficacy, intent to intervene, and bystander behavior?
- Research Question 4: What is the impact of various levels of experimentally manipulated gratitude on barriers to intervention, bystander efficacy, intent to intervene, and bystander behavior? Do variables conceptually related to bystander variables moderate this impact?
- Research Question 5: To what extent does dispositional gratefulness interact with a gratitude intervention to either strengthen or weaken its effect on bystander efficacy, intent to intervene, and bystander behavior?

Study 1 is designed to answer questions 1-3. Study 2 is designed to answer questions 4 and 5.

In study 1, we will explore the relationship between the constructs of gratitude and bystander intervention. Specifically, we will explore the factor structure of a recently published scale (Burn, 2009) measuring barriers to intervening as a bystander in a sexual assault situation. We will then use the resulting subscales as measures of participants' barriers to bystander intervention. We will also use measures with established reliability and validity to assess gratitude (McCullough, et al., 2002), internal and external religiosity (Allport & Ross, 1967), bystander efficacy (Banyard, 2008), intent to intervene as a bystander (Banyard, 2008), and a variety of bystander behaviors (Banyard, 2008). In addition, given research on their relationship to bystander intervention, we will use measures with established reliability and validity to assess rape myth acceptance (Banyard, 2008; Burn, 2009), pornography consumption (Foubert, Brosi & Bannon, 2011), hostility (Vega & Malamuth, 2007), and empathy (Foubert & Newberry, 2006) in order to test in a mediational model.

In study 2, we seek to determine the effect of experimentally manipulating gratitude on the dependent variables of the new scale of situational barriers of bystander intervention identified in study 1, along gratitude's effects on bystander efficacy, intent to intervene, and bystander behavior. Potential moderator variables that will be tested include a state measure of gratitude, internal and external religiosity, rape myth acceptance, pornography consumption, hostility, and empathy. Gratitude will be manipulated using the procedure used by Emmons and McCullough (2003), whereby participants will be asked to ponder what they are grateful for, think about a recent period of time (varying by study group), and record items for which they are grateful of thankful. Participants will be randomly divided into four equal groups. Group 1 will be a control group. Group 2 will be asked to write down items for which they are thankful in a personal journal once per week for four weeks. Group 3 will be asked to write items for which they are thankful using their public social media account (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) once per week for four weeks. Group 4 will be asked to write items for which they are thankful using their public social media account three times per week for four weeks.

Explanation of How the Proposed Project Fits Within This Initiative:

Our research will bring the research and practice of gratitude into an area of scholarship where it has a high potential for impact and has heretofore not been introduced: bystander intervention and sexual violence. The presentations and publications we plan that will result from our research have the potential to impact a health, safety, and social problem that directly effects approximately 25% of college women who report surviving rape or attempted rape in their lifetime (Fisher, Cullen & Turner, 2006). In order to enhance public awareness in nonacademic audiences, we will share practical results of our studies through a variety of listserves populated by practitioners who do prevention work in the area of sexual and relationship violence, who are interested in gender issues, and through a variety of social media outlets.

Decreasing sexual assault through bystander intervention can have direct health benefits. Sexual assault survivors are the largest population in the U.S. with PTSD, leads to thousands of suicides, self-inflicted injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and a host of other health problems. In just one state, Minnesota, sexual assault cost the health care system \$8 billion (Miller, Taylor & Shepherd, 2007). Through an experimental design, we will explore whether gratitude is causally related to bystander intervention.

Project Methodology and Significance:

Data collection for both studies will take place at Oklahoma State University in the research pool of the College of Education and in the introductory psychology research pool at the University of Arkansas. This will provide both institutional diversity, age diversity (the pool at OSU is older, Arkansas is younger) and previous research by two collaborators in this study on measured used herein has successfully gathered 500 participants. We will benefit from these preliminary data for analyses and logistical planning. In the first study, all participants will be administered the battery of tests previously mentioned through a secure online web portal, in accordance with human subjects procedures. In the second study, participants will be randomly divided into the four experimental conditions and will be pre and posttested with the revised measure of barriers to bystander intervention created from the first study and the remaining measures.

The first study will involve the use of two parallel samples. In the first sample, an item analysis will be performed from the barriers to bystander intervention instrument. Then, an exploratory principal axis factor analysis will be performed in order to assess the validity of the proposed subscale structure. The second sample will then be used to perform a confirmatory factor analysis of the structure generated in the first sample. The third phase of the first study will consist of a Structural Equation Model to test an existing model of variables known to relate bystander intervention and to test mediational models of gratitude with other variables known to relate to bystander intervention. The second study, as an experimental study, will utilize factorial multivariate analysis of variance and descriptive discriminant function analysis to test for and explicate treatment and interaction effects.

BUDGET SUMMARY	Year 1	Year 2	Total
1. Salaries	\$35,767	\$36,840	\$72,607
2. Employee Benefits/FICA	\$12,923	\$13,710	\$26,633
3. Travel	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$17,500
5. Publications	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
6. Subcontract: U of Arkansas	\$12,265	\$12,375	\$25,000
University of Oklahoma	\$14,200	\$10,800	\$25,000
	\$83,655	\$85,085	\$168,740
8. F&A Costs	\$35,135	\$35,736	\$70,871
Less Waived F&A	(\$22,587)	(\$22,973)	(\$45,560)
9. Subcontract amount > 25K	\$0	\$4,000	\$4,000
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	\$96,203	\$101,848	\$198,051

Proposed Collaborators:

John D. Foubert, Ph.D. Associate Professor/Anderson, Farris, & Halligan Professor of College Student Development. Oklahoma State University. Principal Investigator.

Ana J. Bridges, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Arkansas. Co-Investigator.

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