M@n@gement

Special Issue

■ Stephen LINSTEAD   2013
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the work go by or aiding and abetting?
M@n@gement, 16(5), 680-696.

Organizational bystanding: whistleblowing, watching the work go by or aiding and abetting?

Stephen LINSTEAD

The York Management School - University of York
stephen.linstead@york.ac.uk

Abstract

The psychology of bystanding has a long history of research, and although some of this has been considered with regard to the role of bystanders in bullying in schools and the health and social sectors, it has not been extended to organizations more generally. There is thus a dearth of theoretical development on what makes organizational bystanding different, and of course there is also a lack in the corresponding research base. This paper integrates work in social and moral philosophy with that in psychology, education and human resource management to develop typologies of responsibility, and of bystanding in general, and presents some core principles for the further development of work on specifically organizational bystanding.

Keywords: bystanding, witnessing, bullying, moral responsibility, ethics, fidelity

INTRODUCTION

The fewer people who know who wrote this report the better. I am worried about the personal safety of myself and my family. Under no circumstances is this report or its contents to be shared with any other regulatory body without my express position (Markopolos 2010: 299)

Harry Markopolos knew there was something wrong as soon as he started to read the figures. Within four hours he had a good idea something was very wrong – the figures he was looking at were a fiction. He was one of a handful of people in the world with the skill and experience to understand and utilise the techniques of financial mathematics required and he knew there was more research to be done. Yet he was convinced from what he had so far uncovered that the figures were masking a major fraud, possibly global, and probably involving funds from organized crime. It could have been the crime of the departing century (it was 1999), or, if unchecked, the next. Markopolos tried to reverse engineer the figures; they told him what he was seeing couldn't have been done legitimately, not even close. He set out in writing a case from his concerns. Eventually, in 2000, he submitted his observations regarding the Fairfield Sentry Limited asset management fund to the Securities and Exchange Commission. Fairfield was owned and operated by Madoff Investment Securities, LLC.

Madoff's empire collapsed in 2008 and is now known to have been the biggest Ponzi fraud in history with some US$64.8 billion of funds under management, held on behalf of little old ladies in Wisconsin, Colombian drug cartels, European royalty, Hollywood stars and Russian oligarchs (Markopolos 2010: xvii)[1]. Suicides ensued, including one of Madoff's sons. Madoff himself received jail sentences totalling 150 years. But between 1999 and 2008 Markopolos had alerted the SEC on five occasions, and at one point had written to the Washington Post, pointing out up to 30 "red flags" that gave cause for concern (Markopolos 2010: 298-332). No action ensued. In 2005 the SEC had desultorily responded and for two years investigated Madoff's legitimate businesses on the 17th and 18th floors of Manhattan's Lipstick Building, finding three minor violations. They completely overlooked the fact that the criminally corrupt Fairfield fund was trading globally from the 16th floor (Markopolos 2010: 7-8).

Markopolos has repeatedly accused the SEC of incompetence, of being "unable to recognize a Ponzi scheme if they were having dinner with Charles Ponzi"… "not capable of finding ice-cream in a Dairy Queen" and of being unable to "find steak in an Outback [barbeque]" (Markopolos 2010: 268; 262; 263). Madoff was a charismatic and persuasive character, a Wall Street legend who wielded immense power and influence, who it was easy both to believe and to fear (Young 20). Perhaps this explains why, although the Madoff scam was "widely known in the industry" (Markopolos 2010: 257) and although the SEC received information to that effect on several occasions before 2008, investigations were not pursued, tips were not followed up, facts were ignored, reports were lost in bureaucracy and some submissions were apparently never even received. Whilst Markopolos was prepared to attribute this to incompetence, inexperience, arrogance and stupidity, other members of his team were convinced that collusion and corruption were involved. Outside the SEC, knowledge, or at least suspicion, of the true nature of the fund was

1. A Ponzi scheme, named after Charles F. Ponzi (1882 – 1949), is an investment scheme that uses the income from recent investors to pay dividends to earlier investors. The apparent object of the investment, which in Ponzi's case was international postal coupons, may not support the magnitude of returns reported by the scheme or no investments may have been made at all. The perpetuation of such schemes is discussed by Will (2012) and Shapiro (2012) and broader aspects of the necessity of bystander support or compliance in financial crime is discussed by other contributors to Will et al (2012).

common. Court-appointed trustee Irving Picard argued that the bank UBS AG "agreed not only to look the other way, but also to pretend that they were truly ensuring the existence of assets when in fact they were not and never did". JP Morgan Chase was also implicated; Bank Medici was accused of "racketeering" and of being Madoff's "criminal soul mate" (Markopolos 2010: xviii). For Markopolos, this was not surprising, as from his first days in the industry he had witnessed "massive violations taking place on an hourly basis" with regulations "broken every day, every hour; and everybody knew about it and nobody seemed to care…. It was an accepted way of doing business, although I couldn't accept it. I would report it regularly…. And they never did a thing about it" (Markopolos 2010:14). Still, however, Markopolos maintains that he never witnessed deliberate dishonesty[2].

In this paper I am not going to focus on collusion and corruption themselves. These complex issues, along with whistleblowing, are being increasingly addressed in organization studies. Madoff not only shows us that extreme behaviour left unchecked can have disastrous consequences, but that such behaviour depends not just on those involved actively cooperating or colluding, but on those not involved not doing or saying anything and not "hearing" or "seeing" anything even when it is brought to their attention. It depends on the opposite of "joined-up thinking", holistic or systemic awareness: it displays an inability or refusal to look down the causal chain and acknowledge its human and social effects. Such behaviour may not be evil, but it is essential for evil to achieve its objectives. It is a phenomenon that in different sets of circumstances has been extensively investigated in the field of psychology as bystanding. Despite its deployment by practitioners, however, it has been largely ignored in scholarly research, specifically in management literature (Van Heugten 2010). What I call organizational bystanding is a related and more sociological concept with significant differences and it is sufficiently widespread that we have all encountered it and may well do so on a daily basis. It presents an important opportunity for future management research and offers an alternative to corruption, collusion or incompetence for explaining the formative contexts of escalating unethical action[3].

But aren't bystanders by definition innocent? And isn't an organization of bystanders a contradiction in terms?

THE RIGHT TO BE LEFT ALONE VS THE DUTY TO RENDER ASSISTANCE

Legal systems based on the particular individualism of English common law tend to underpin the principles of business ethics in Western free-market capitalism. Such systems emphasize the protection of individual liberty, the ability to pursue one's own self-interest and the right not to be interfered with as long as one does not interfere with others, harm them or force them to do something against their will. Individual subjects, in the eyes of the law, become legal agents, defined by a system of rights granted and associated duties imposed to ensure mutual observance and respect for these rights. One common law principle states that we should only be responsible for things that we cause. But the question of causality is complex. In commercial and employment law, for example, it has been established that causes and

2. Markopolos has assembled a useful collection of resources and links relating to the Madoff investigation and its aftermath at www.noonewouldlisten.com

3. This article draws upon and develops ideas first discussed in Linstead (2007) which contains a more extensive discussion of the philosophical issues. The concept of "organizational bystanding" is intended as a complement to the familiar mainstream concept of "organizational behaviour" – it refers to a type of behaviour that occurs within organizations and organized settings although it may have roots, as well as wider resonances and consequences, outside those settings. Although the behaviour of organizations is sometimes included within treatments of organizational behaviour, I do not here consider the bystanding of organizations, of which an example might be the United Nations failure to prevent the escalation of the Rwandan genocide in April-July 1994 (Long and Mills 2008). This issue is beginning to be addressed within the field of corporate social responsibility and, although not disconnected, requires more focused consideration and conceptual development than is possible in this essay.

causal relationships may be of different types and may therefore be weighted differentially. In organizations and business, we may be required to anticipate problems and try to prevent them, as with the products we produce in relation to consumers' rights and in providing a safe and healthy working environment, where the law requires everyone who works in the organization to carry some degree of specific and general responsibility. In addition, responsibility may be relative and not total in that causes may be direct, indirect or contributory. Doing nothing can therefore be doing something. For example, not causing something to happen, if the outcome was desirable and would have been straightforward to achieve, can carry a moral responsibility. There is, then, a difference to be made between acts that we are required and obligated to perform, observing *minimal decency,* and acts that go above and beyond the call of duty, *supererogatory behaviour*. Failure to act with minimal decency commonly attracts social censure and can form the basis for what are called "Good Samaritan" laws.

Articles 223–6 of the French Penal Code, first enacted in 1941, assert:

-          Anyone who, by their own actions, if there is no risk to themselves or another, can prevent a crime or physical harm and refuses to help shall be punished by five years imprisonment and a 500,000 franc fine.

-          Anyone who refuses to come to the aid of a person in danger, if there is no risk to themselves or another, shall be punished by five years imprisonment and a 500,000 franc fine. (Translation in Schick 2000: 185)

Similar laws exist, or have existed, in several countries, notably those not based on English common law with its emphasis on the rights of the individual to act in their own self-interest. These include Portugal (1867), the Netherlands (1881), Italy (1889, 1930), Russia (1903–17), Turkey (1926), Norway (1902), Denmark (1930), Poland (1932), Germany (1935, 1953), Romania (1938), Hungary (1948, 1961), Czechoslovakia (1950), Belgium (1961), Switzerland (various). In the United States also, the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Vermont have them, despite the basis of US law in English common law (Schick 2000: 185). The penalties here may not be as severe as in the French system but the principle is clear: many parts of the developed world not only consider it a virtue to help one's neighbour, but also think not doing so is a crime.

The right to life accordingly carries with it the right to the means to live and therefore carries a sense of reciprocal obligation between, the community that provides it and the individuals of that community. For communitarians, the pursuit of pure self-interest is self-defeating. But even if we accept the pursuit of self-interest as primary, some degree of error in our judgement is inevitable. The right to an easy rescue if we make mistakes might, paradoxically, be in our long-term self-interest and give us greater freedom in planning for the future, knowing that we can count on the assistance of others when we really need it. It might also encourage greater inventiveness and entrepreneurship in the economy by promoting higher levels of trust, especially in making the first move in initiating new transactional relationships. "Good Samaritan" laws therefore might promote liberty and market freedom rather than curtailing it, in a truly *social* market.

RESPONSIBILITY AND FIDELITY

Responsibility towards the other can be constructed in different ways. Clarkson (1996) identifies two major forms of construction of responsibility, and later discusses a third alternative construction of responsibility: fidelity. *Responsibility as liability* is interest-based. It requires a fixed view of how that responsibility may be determined and sees that responsibility as finite and bounded, even proportionate. It tends to be applied primarily to self and immediate family members and unless contractually specified tails off dramatically after that and may not even include friends. Ultimately, it psychologically engenders *inauthentic or neurotic guilt.* This form of guilt is essentially an overreaction and prevents any practical steps being taken towards redress of the situation. It is an entirely narcissistic response in which the subject is paralysed by the realization of their own guilt.

Figure 1. Three forms of responsibility (developed from and based on Clarkson 1996, Linstead 2006: 218)

	Responsibility as Liability	Responsibility as Relational	Responsibility as Fidelity
Motivation	*Interest*	*Empathy*	*Intuition*
Ontology	*Fixed* Essential Universal	*Situational* In flow	*Multiple* Evoloving
Epistemology	*Finite* Principled Contractual Rational	*Complex* Transactional Reciprocal Asymmetrical Negotiable	*Fragmented* Logical Affective Irrational Generous
Domain	*Self* and immediate family	*Other* Not limited to localized groups	*Immanent* Processual Polyvant
Guilt	*Neurotic* Unauthentic	*Existential* Authentic	*Absurd* Collective, shared

Responsibility as a relationship, in contrast to the first form, is empathy-based. Accordingly it remains in flux, to be determined situationally and relationally. Rather than being finite, it is complex and may extend in many directions. It is not limited to existing groupings of friends or family. It is characterized by *authentic or existential guilt*. Genuine guilt involves a desire to make reparation for acts committed, but this may only result in situationally determined action rather than any change of life-position by the guilty. Existential guilt, on the other hand, is both a "deep personal awareness of the suffering of others" and a commitment to change, to use "one's life and one's resources differently". This involves "celebrating opportunities with joy and gratitude without demeaning others or ourselves with false hypocritical protestations" of guilt or claims of responsibility recycled for their social popularity or academic currency, with no actual effect on present or future behaviour (Clarkson 1996: 16).
Responsibility as fidelity is drawn from the thought of Gabriel Marcel but with a postmodern twist. Emmanuel Lévinas's (1969, 1981, 1987) great insight was that morality is situational and evolving and that it must therefore be determined by relationships. The relation with the Other, for him, was prior

to the relationship with self, as self could only be discovered in relation to the Other and difference. So the Other places an imperative to respond upon the self. Lévinas argues that this ethical situation must therefore be the first consideration of philosophy or our *first philosophy*. But if this is so, it also follows that connectedness must be our *first nature.* Disconnectedness, initiated at the first moment of differentiation, is ironically a part of sociability, a learned behaviour that is *second nature*, intervening at the very moment we become aware of the divisibility of individuality and sociability, of selves as *dividuals* (Backius 2005). Responsibility then is immanent in the relationship with others of which the dominant awareness of structure, and of interior and exterior as difference, robs us.

As Marcel (1952) observes, discussed by Blackham (1961: 76, emphasis added):

> *The concrete historical permanence that I give myself in fidelity cannot be derived from a universal law … in fidelity I continuously inform myself from within … in fidelity I am not merely cultivating an ideal, I am making a response: I am not merely being consistent with myself, but I am bearing witness to an other-than-me which has hold of me. Fidelity is not a mere act of will, it is faith in the presence of an other-than-me to which I respond and to which I shall continue to respond. It is this continuous response in the bond of fidelity which is my life and my permanence.*

Fidelity, then, is both fidelity to the concrete other and fidelity to being-in-relation. It is, as implied here, intuitive: the relationship is one of multiplicity and hence is in constant evolution, a minor shift here requiring an adjustment there. A range of jurisprudential and philosophical concerns lead us to the principle of being in relation as a key to the moral question of bystanding but in practice, research in psychology and social psychology demonstrates that bystanding continues to be characterized by non-intervention. In the next two sections we will consider research on bystanding and how it may be understood in terms of organizations, paying particular attention to research on bullying in the fields of education and social work.

FROM BYSTANDING TO ORGANIZATIONAL BYSTANDING

"Organizational bystanding" occurs when we are aware of or even witness behaviour that we know will harm others (such as corruption, injustice, bullying or moral harassment) but do nothing to stop or ameliorate it. The classic study into the social psychology of bystanding was undertaken by Darley and Latané (1968a, 1968b; Latané and Darley 1968; Latané and Darley 1976). They studied the brutal murder of Kitty Genovese, a young woman who was beaten to death in a public place in New York over a 30-minute period. Some 38 people either heard or watched from their windows but only one called the police, and then only after some considerable delay. Darley and Latané (1968a, 1968b, 1969; Latané and Darley 1968, 1970) attempted an analysis of how the bystanders accounted for their non-intervention, although there was some controversy arising from the original newspaper report as to how many of the 38 could hear or see the events sufficiently well to be fully aware of what was taking place. In subsequent studies and a book, Latané and Darley

explored "bystander apathy" through laboratory experiments that collectively rank with Milgram's "obedience to authority" studies in the exploration of non-intervention. Curiously, although Milgram is well-known in organization and management studies, Darley and Latané are not. Clarkson (1996) summarizes these and other studies and identifies a number of common rationalizations for non-intervention.

One of the key findings of this work appears to be that the presence of others makes it harder to take action or to define the situation as one in which action is required, especially where the rapid processing of information is critical (Fischer et al 2006). The relative unfamiliarity of a situation is also a factor. Perhaps oddly, this tendency seems to be *reversed* in decision-making groups where decisions to act are made and debated over time, where "risky shift" indicates a propensity for more extreme decisions to be made collectively rather than by individuals (Latané and Nida 1981). Significant here is that there is a focal event that requires a time-critical decision, or one that can be made, or made to appear, urgent. Skilled moral harassers are accomplished in the informal manipulation of background discussions with key groups or subgroup members towards extreme positions, whilst pushing non-key or non-involved group members into bystander apathy by pressing for formal decisions. "What did we just do?" and "how did we decide *that*?" are frequent questions after such meetings.

By combining the insights of Latané and Darley and Clarkson, we can identify differences between bystanding in an emergency and organizational bystanding:

-       *First*, bystanders such as those in the Genovese case and subsequent experiments are a collective only by virtue of being in the same place at the same time. They have no particular connection either to the victim, the perpetrator or each other. In an organization this is certainly not the case, although the strength, saliency and value of the connections will vary.

-       *Second*, bystanding in an emergency is temporally bounded by a specific traumatic event; in organizations it is usually a series of often connected events that may escalate in seriousness. Where the consequences of bystanding in an emergency are discrete, in an organization they are continuous. Consequently, there is a greater degree of reflexivity potentially implied in organizational bystanding.

-       *Third,* events in organizations may be even less clearly defined than in emergencies, although research demonstrates that even apparently straightforward situations can be problematic to define.

-       *Fourth*, bystanders are not a language community, and are likely to share no common argot, whereas organizational members to a greater or lesser degree will be co-participants in a language game of organizing. Clarkson (1996: 76–7) argues that gossiping, which is an inauthentic form of communication insofar as it does not involve the subjects of the gossip, is itself a form of bystanding or non-engagement. Gossip and rumour, as Noon and Delbridge (1993), Clegg and Van Iterson (2009) Michelson et al (2010) and Van

Iterson et al (2011) have demonstrated, are important means of both organizing and resisting organization.

- Organizational bystanding is a necessary condition of a context in which corruption or moral harassment are successful and sustained (Paull et al 2012). The politics of organizational hierarchy ensures that *parrhesia* – the speaking of truth to power – is never easy or without risk or necessarily effective, yet it is simultaneously a responsibility of both individuals and communities (Foucault 2001). A similar observation has been used as a learning tool in the training of torturers where systematic acts of evil are to be performed. Inductees are taken through a process of desensitization and dehumanization in order to carry these acts out and bystanding is the first step in their training. Enforced witnessing and enforced silence make bystanders complicit in the acts witnessed and hence form part of their legitimation (Clarkson 1996: 29; Conroy 2000; Staub 1990). Here, as in organizations, bystanding is not neutral but reflects the state of non-involvement as a form of involvement, a dissolution of any resolution to resist and a prelude to active involvement. People begin by seeing something they know is wrong and doing nothing about it, thus perpetuating it, and eventually accepting it.

BYSTANDING AND BULLYING

Bystanding as it occurs in organized settings has been studied in the field of education in the form of bullying in schools. This phenomenon has received considerable attention from behavioural scientists, and Twemlow, Fonagy and Sacco (2004) have developed a model of the significance of the social connections between perpetrators, victims and bystanders/audiences alongside the individual mental processes that are in operation within bystanders and which may be conditioned by the wider social system. What they call "mentalization", following Fonagy (2001), is a construct comprised of "self-awareness, self-agency, reflectiveness, and accurate assessment of the mental states of self and other people" (Twemlow et al., 2004:217) and they develop a typology of bystanding roles in which mentalization, subjective states and role in the system interact. For example, the aggressive supporter of bullying displays a collapse of mentalization or, in other words, is unable adequately to reflect their own mental state or those of others affected by their actions. The bully exists in a sadomasochistic subjective state of excitement and actively plays a role that establishes victimization as a "way of life" in the community. At the other end of the scale, the helpful (altruistic) bystander who intervenes on behalf of the victim has enhanced mentalization, operates from a compassionate subjective state, and perhaps shows outrage at the harm done to others. The altruistic bystander is mature and effective in the use of individual and group psychology "to promote self-awareness and develop skills to resist victimization" (Twemlow et al 2004: 218). This promotion of mentalization in the interests of the wider community is seen by Tremlow et al as a form of primary prevention of social violence, with the active exercise of mentalization being a secondary form that acts to prevent the formation of "coercive, humiliating power dynamics" between sub-groups and individuals

leading to their "social disconnection" from each other (Twemlow et al 2004:229-30). Tertiary prevention involves the attention paid to victims and the aftermath of violent or crisis episodes (which may have lethal consequences) and prevents the complete breakdown of a sense of community.

Whilst there is much of value in Twemlow et al's work, from the perspective of organizations their definition of bystanding is both enabling and restrictive. They challenge the dictionary definition taken from Webster (1996) that a bystander is "a person present but not involved; an onlooker" with synonyms including "viewer", "observer", "witness", and "passerby" (Twemlow et al 2004:217). For them, "the bystander is defined as an active and involved participant in the social architecture of school violence, rather than a passive witness". The bystander is situated "in an unavoidably active role created, in the case of school violence, by the victim/victimizer interaction; it follows that being passive is not possible from this perspective". The enabling dimension of this perspective is that bystanders are seen to be connected and in relation to others, and that the organized context of schooling provides a means for this connection to be articulated in ways that the public contexts of the classic bystanding studies do not. As Lewis and Sheehan (2003: 6–7) also remind us, it is important not to forget "other component elements in the (bullying) experience, namely bystanders ... including consideration of the role they play in the construction of different realities (of bullying)". What is restrictive, however, is that schools are a particular type of institution, the majority of the populations of which are not mature adults, are compulsorily present for a time-bounded period and whose power structures, as far as the community is concerned, are less ambiguous than those in more diverse organizations. Large organizations with several sites may operate via project teams who are otherwise unfamiliar to each other, whose sense of community is not powerful but is more task-based, whose motives and contexts for action are opaque to one another, and in which "bullying" may take forms that are not easy to discern. Symbolic violence in these situations may not always be obvious, nor capable of direct confrontation, which makes passive bystanding possible through different definitions of the situation and opacity of implication.

Paull, Omari and Standen (2012) attempt to apply work from education and school bullying to bullying in the workplace, drawing explicitly on Twemlow et al (2004) and Salmivalli (1999) to develop a typology of bystanding. They operationalize a definition of bullying by Timo, Fulop and

Ruthjersen (2004: 38) as "a set of dysfunctional workplace behaviours ranging from those that adversely impact emotional well-being and stability to physical violence causing injury and harm". Rayner and Hoel (1997) identified five categories of workplace bullying that remain a standard for other work: threats to personal standing, threats to professional status, destabilisation or undermining, overwork or undue pressure and isolation. This may include overt aggression or insulting behaviour directed against a person or their work, including emotional, psychological, sexual or physical acts. Alternately, it may include the covert withholding of information or interaction, cutting someone out of the communications loop or "sending them to Coventry". As Paull et al (2012) put it,

> *almost everyone has witnessed difficult interactions [such as those above – SL] in the workplace; some have walked away with a sigh of relief rather than tackle an uncomfortable situation with potential to escalate into dysfunctional conflict. There are many underlying reasons: a deliberate choice not to get involved in others' business, a conflict-avoidant style, an inability to see the potential harm, and limited emotional intelligence and hence ability to respond to conflict, are some.*

Although Paull et al (2012:352) argue there has been no work done directly on bystanders, they do identify that consequences of bystanding are mentioned in the literature. As many as 30% of office and bank workers surveyed reported witnessing bullying (Ólafsson and Jóhannsdóttir 2004: 325). In another study, "22% of respondents reported leaving their jobs due to the workplace climate associated with bullying, while 70% reported experiencing stress as witnesses to bullying incidents"(Paull et al 2004:352; Rayner, Hoel and Cooper 2002:58). Negative effects on bystanders' health were reported by Salin (2011), and Johnson (2009), with some nurses notedly leaving the profession as the result of bullying culture. Bystanding also affects victims negatively, as Van Heugten (2010) noted, when colleagues withdraw from potential conflict and fail to support victims, increasing their isolation. Lewis and Orford (2005) similarly found bystanders felt themselves to be vulnerable if they supported victims openly and were at best covert and passive. Whilst recognising that it is of little help if witnesses themselves become targets, Paull et al (2012) take up Rayner, Hoel and Cooper's (2002:141) exhortation that "it is imperative that witnesses understand and undertake their responsibility to let others know what is going on" and incorporate the work of Salmivalli (1999) and Twemlow et al (2004) into a typology of bystanding that they intend to be used in awareness-raising education of potential bystanders, to encourage the development of cultures and to make available a range of responses that could mitigate against bullying.

Table 1. Typology of bystanders (modified from Paull, Omari and Standen 2012)

Label	Description	Salmivalli (1999)	Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco (2004)	Paull, Omari and Standen (2012)	
Instigating Bystander	Sets up actions of bully; initiator, creates situation		Bully (aggressive) bystander; Puppet-master	Destructive/Active	ACTIVE ACCESSORY
Manipulating Bystander	Seeks to influence actions of bully, takes advantage of existing situation		Bully (aggressive) bystander; Puppet-master	Destructive/Active	ACTIVE ACCESSORY
Collaborating Bystander	Actively joins in, assists bully	Assistant	Bully (aggressive) Bystander	Destructive/Active	ACTIVE ACCESSORY
Facilitating Bystander	Provides audience (close to joining in), can be inadvertent	Reinforcer	Bully (aggressive) Bystander	Destructive/Active	ACTIVE ACCESSORY
Abdicating Bystander	Silently allows bullying to continue by doing nothing, despite being in position to do so		Abdicating bystander	Destructive/Passive	BYSTANDER
Avoiding Bystander	Walks away	Outsider	Avoidant bystander Abdicating bystander	Destructive/Passive	BYSTANDER
Intervening Bystander	Takes action to halt bullying or prevent retaliation			Constructive/Active	WHISTLEBLOWER WITNESS
Defusing Bystander	Involves themselves in preventing escalation of the situation			Constructive/Active	MEDIATOR
Defending Bystander	Stands up for victim	Defender	Helpful (altruistic) bystander	Constructive/Active	ADVOCATE
Empathising Bystander	Identifies with the victim; says/does nothing		Avoidant bystander	Constructive/Passive	INDEXICAL VICTIM
Sympathising Bystander	Identifies with the victim, remains silent for fear of becoming target, offers comfort and support in private		Helpful (altruistic) bystander	Constructive/Active	POST-HOC COMFORTER
Succumbing Bystander	Becomes fellow victim		Victim (passive) bystander	Destructive/Passive	COLLATERAL VICTIM
Submitting Bystander	Substitute victim			Destructive/Passive	COLLATERAL VICTIM

In Table 1, I extend Paull et al's (2004:355) table to look more closely at the nature of the bystanding activities they describe. One problem with their approach is that they convert Twemlow et al's position that bystanding is not inactive into a pair of polarities: bystanding is, first, constructive or destructive; second, it is active or passive. The possibilities that it might be simply doing nothing, hedging one's bets or picking one's moment are dismissed and despite the ambiguity of many workplace situations, what is constructive or destructive is presented as self-evident rather than problematic and potentially subject to retrospective redefinition. The typology does, however, present a wider and more nuanced range of positions than its predecessors. Their two categories of Abdicating and Avoiding Bystander fall unequivocally into the category of Bystander as understood in the legal and philosophical literature, which is reflected in my modification of the typology, but the other categories from

these perspectives represent something slightly different. I have used the term Active Accessory for their cluster of categories that includes the Instigating *Bystander*, Manipulating Bystander, Collaborating Bystander and Facilitating Bystander. Their terms Succumbing and Submitting Bystander are better expressed as forms of *Collateral Victim*. Other terms are better represented by more specific rather than generic titles. The Intervening Bystander becomes the *Whistleblower/Witness*; The Defusing Bystander becomes the *Mediator*; the Defending Bystander is the *Advocate;* the Empathising Bystander the *Indexical Victim*; and the Sympathizing Bystander the Post-Hoc *Comforter*. This terminology also, I think, is helpful in resisting the tendency to turn a challenging moral dilemma – or maze of dilemmas – into what is, in effect, a decision-tree diagram, as Paull et al (2004) do, despite the other merits of their approach. What is important, if typologies are to be useful, is that they preserve the dimensions of the moral challenge implicit in the question of bystanding and the substantial issues of human responsibility are not reduced to mere behavioural categories.

FURTHER ASPECTS OF BYSTANDING IN ORGANIZATIONS

With these considerations in mind, our discussion of responsibility can now be brought to bear on our earlier outline of possibilities for and problems facing the extension of the concept of bystanding into organizations, which consequently acquires a more distinctive texture.

- *First*, in organizations rather than general society, selves and others are more formally interconnected. This inevitably means that with more interlocking   sets of responsibilities and consequences of individual   actions, and the greater organizational focus on action itself, more moral dilemmas are likely to be generated. They won't be of the type that moral philosophers usually use to illustrate moral issues, which tend to be stylised life-or-death sorts of considerations that we will rarely ourselves have to encounter in real life, but those that we have regularly to resolve in the ordinary interactions that characterize our everyday existence.

- *Second,* if we turn to the idea of resolving individual and collective self-interest, we find that *self, collective, organizational, stakeholder and customer interest overlap*. They are neither always easy to distinguish nor always in conflict. Not helping one "other" that one could reasonably help might in fact help a different other and vice versa. So where interests interlock, theatres intersect and decisions need to be made that prioritize and thus make bystanding more difficult: we have to choose one action or another and inaction without consequence is not always an option. This opens up the recognition that we are presented with a *frequent need for paradoxical thinking*. Actions don't appear from nowhere, as I have noted above, and they have histories and are reconstructed in multiple narratives. The full range of outcomes of actions is not always obvious. There can be multiple unintended consequences of actions, and time and space, or timing and spacing, can be actants in these situations, as what is

possible in one time and place may not be in another. Even when we might wish to act or be seen to act altruistically, because of the intertextual nature of accounts of action and history *sometimes it is hard not to be self-serving or to be seen as such.*

- *Third,* power and knowledge are inseparable. We tend to conceal our vulnerabilities, or our less worthy motivations, or even just a few facts, until we feel we are in a position not to be harmed by their exposure. Knowledge, whatever its epistemological status, is therefore organizationally very far from being perfectly or evenly distributed. Robert Jackall's (1988) study of the politics of organizational knowledge and the moralities of managerial decision-making, observed accordingly that moral dilemmas become"moral mazes" in which dilemmas are multi-dimensional and interlocking and choices are complex and confusing. The idea that ethical and moral actions are what reasonable men and women of good Aristotelian character would do in a given set of circumstances, were they in possession of all the facts, offers no recourse here. This is because, regardless of the problematic status of what is "reasonable", the facts can never all be fully determined and in fact probably contradict each other. Within these moral mazes *multiple conflicts of interest* occur. Indeed an individual may often have more than one interest in conflict. Such conflicts may be subconscious, latent or subversive yet despite their relative lack of visibility exert an important influence on ethical decision-making.

- *Fourth*, in organizations that are committed to high reliability, high performance levels and/or excellence, *the supererogatory becomes a cultural obligation* (sometimes even a contractual one) and this can have negative moral consequences. The requirement to act consistently above and beyond the call of duty becomes itself a duty, one that is culturally policed by concertive control, with surveillance exercised by colleagues on each other (see Smith and Wilkinson 1996, for a good example of this at work in a high performance culture). In such cases the supererogatory and the minimal decency poles may collapse into each other, the result being an imperative to act in a way that is oriented towards excellence without any acceptable minimum standards of performance other than to be "excellent". Of course, exhortations to excellence may or may not have a moral dimension, and frequently do not, so high performance cultures, such as that prevailing in NASA at the time of the Challenger disaster (Schwartz 1990) or at Enron in more recent times, may behave collectively in an unethical, immoral or even evil manner (Darley 1992, 1994, 1996, 2001).

- *Finally*, there are many ways to define the terms "unnecessary suffering" and "risk to oneself", terms that commonly appear in related legislation, especially when the degree of risk or suffering is not specified, but these need to be applied to the organizational context. One might begin with the relatively unusual but obvious risk to "life and limb" or health, but detriment and risk could equally be applied

to financial matters, career, psychological well-being, opportunity cost, the consequences of offending the powerful, the consequences of being oneself exposed (the collateral disinterment of our own skeletons from the closet), fear of retribution or the harbouring of grudges. All of these more minor, less visible but no less real possible consequences are perhaps the most relevant ones to the issue of organizational bystanding, where the offences are often moral and psychological rather than physical. But moral harassment and organizational bystanding happen and regardless of the difficulty of addressing them and the appropriateness of a legislative response, they are issues that demand our consideration. When financial harm or unnecessary risk to others are concerned, it may be necessary not only to encourage whistleblowing, but to *require* it – to extend our social responsibility towards fidelity.

ORGANIZATIONAL BYSTANDING REDUX

Distilling this discussion, we can, I think, discern three main features at the core of organizational bystanding, both tying it to bystanding in general and lending it particular distinctiveness:

To ignore what's going on around you – not to see

This can have almost limitless scope: from the head in the sand general strategy, through turning the occasional blind eye, to the "banality of evil" of the Third Reich administrators whose Nuremburg Defence attempted to hide their personal responsibility behind the orders that they were "only following". In all of these cases, we can create narratives through which to defend, mask or divert attention away from our inaction. We can ignore the moral dimensions of a situation altogether and see each unfolding episode only in terms of technical or functional issues. This general focus on the minutiae of events entails a larger refusal: the failure to connect means that it becomes impossible to sustain any meaningful definition of organizational citizenship (except in a very formal sense) or of collegiality.

To witness but fail to recognize or make the effort to recognize what is really happening

Not everything we see is self-evident. We have to make an effort to understand things and often we doubt our interpretations of events if they seem to indicate shocking behaviour or terrible and unexpected consequences. There is a hermeneutic effort involved in comprehending that moral harassment exists and is being put into action in the events that we have witnessed. We don't want to believe in its truth, we don't want to be hypersensitive or over-react. But this is exactly why we must engage our critical faculties despite our puzzlement and make the effort to understand what is really going on. We must take the issue of bystanding deeper than simply seeing and failing to act – the offence should include failing to interrogate, investigate and understand.

To witness and recognize injustice but refuse to act

This is perhaps where we most often find ourselves sitting and where the introduction of inducements and preferments by moral harassers are most often felt. We have seen something, we have made our inquiries and we know that what was and is happening is wrong. We can no longer hide the truth from ourselves. Here we lack either knowledge (which in reality is unlikely to be the case) or courage or experience or, we believe, potential support from others (there but for the grace of God go I) and we choose not to act in accordance with what we know and believe to be true. Our excuse for not acting might be that we did not feel we could act without danger to ourselves but this merely allows the abuses to roll on unchecked and neglects the fact that action, rather than simply attracting retribution, creates the possibilities for its own future.

Organizational Bystanders don't so much break the law as break the faith – the faith that we need to have in each other in order to make life not only tolerable but joyous. Neither Lévinas nor Solzhenitsyn lost that sense of joy during their own torture and captivity, even when it dwindled to only a spark. Foucault may have at times lost sight of it in the byways of pleasure. But even so, we are at our most human when we laugh with each other at ourselves and shed all responsibility save to care for each other in our absurdity. It is how we keep faith in our humanity.

I have argued that bystanding is a relational crime. But it is also not a victimless crime and it enables further crime in the future. It is not singular but continuous and becomes cultural and contextual. It enables oppression, exploitation, discrimination, corruption and harassment to hide themselves under the cloak of desensitized and dehumanized customary relations and artificially objectified interests. Its consequences can be fatal. Both those whom bystanders fail to support and the bystanders themselves are diminished by the act of bystanding. In failing to keep our "brothers" and "sisters", we lose something of ourselves. In the field of management we need more research to help us to recognize the pervasiveness of organizational bystanding, to understand its extensive and problematic effects on our societies and economies. Furthermore, we need reflexive scholarship, learning interventions and political initiatives so that we can generate options for reconnecting with each other in responsible relationality.

Stephen Linstead is Professor of Critical Management, Director of Postgraduate Research, and Director of the Centre for the Study of Working Lives at The York Management School, University of York, where he has worked since 2005. He has previously held chairs at the Universities of Durham, Essex, Sunderland and Wollongong, NSW. He has made several contributions to the incorporation of philosophical thought into organization theory, particularly with regard to poststructuralism and postmodernism, Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze, but also contributes to management learning and development.

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