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In Practice

Fostering Constructive Action by Peers and Bystanders in Organizations and Communities

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Abstract

Peers and bystanders play important roles in organizational and community conflict management. Bystanders often learn relevant information and have opportunities to act in ways that can affect the three basic functions of a conflict management system (CMS.) They can help (or not help) to identify, assess and manage behaviors that the organization or community deems to be "unacceptable." Examples in which bystanders play important roles include sexual and racial harassment, safety violations, unethical research, national security violations and insider threats, cyber-bullying and cyber-sabotage, violence, fraud, theft, intimidation and retaliation,

and gross negligence. Bystanders often are a missing link in conflict systems.

For the purposes of this article, I define peers and bystanders as people who observe or learn about unacceptable behavior by others – but who are not the relevant supervisors, or knowingly engaged in planning or executing that behavior. I define CMS managers as all those people, including line managers, who have responsibility for managing conflicts. Conflict managers face many challenges in fostering constructive behavior from bystanders. The interests of bystanders may or may not coincide with the interests of conflict systems managers in an organization or community. Bystanders often have multiple, idiosyncratic, and conflicting interests, and experience painful dilemmas. In addition, peers and bystanders – and their contexts – often differ greatly from each other. Blanket rules about how all bystanders should behave – like requirements for mandatory reporting – are often ineffective or lead to perverse results.

Bystanders are regularly equated with “do-nothings,” in the popular press. In real life, however, helpful bystander actions are common. Many bystanders report a wide variety of constructive initiatives, including private, informal interventions. In this article, I report on forty-five years of observations on bystanders in many milieus. I present what bystanders have said are the reasons that they did not – or did – take action, and what can be learned to help organizations and communities to support bystanders to be more effective when faced with unacceptable behavior.

Key words: Conflict management systems, bystanders, peers, harassment, workplace safety, school safety, bystander effect, organizational ombudsman, management training.

Bystanders: A Missing Link in Conflict System Design

Bystanders are being recognized as a promising “new link” in conflict management. After most unfortunate – or terrible – events, the news media now remind us that someone usually knew of problematic behavior before the event. Scholarly research affirms this phenomenon. For example, in a report on preventing school violence published by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service, the authors concluded, “targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and oftentimes discernible, process of thinking and behavior” (Fein et al. 2002: 22). In that study and in many studies since then, we read that sometimes the “people who knew” did not take action, and sometimes bystanders helped or even colluded with a perpetrator.

On the other hand, peers can “swing” a situation for good as well as ill. Adolescents sometimes stop other adolescents from harassment; powerful managers are often the only people who can and do stop other powerful managers from abuse. Adolescents – and powerful managers – sometimes even *pivot* their peers, 180 degrees, into allies who help in preventing harassment. For example, a student notices attempts being made at a party to get someone drunk and appeals to the offender to “please help me get our friend medical attention.” Or a faculty member appoints a colleague noted for arrogance to a committee investigating the prevalence of bullying, which prompts the faculty member to become more respectful – and also to support others to become more respectful.

Over the years I have collected stories from hundreds of bystanders – and from “bystanders of bystanders” – about the actions they took to curtail unacceptable behavior on their own or to relay information about such behavior to managers and authorities (see Table One).

Bystanders also often help authorities understand serious crimes, and serve as witnesses in formal proceedings. Information from bystanders and the “bystanders of bystanders,” can help authorities, and even historians, to determine what happened, and to work for effective change.

Helpful bystander behavior is common in those situations in which peers and bystanders are unlikely to experience much conflict about the decision to intervene. Lost items are returned to their owners; strangers alert people when they drop something on the sidewalk. Motorists and pedestrians stop to help direct traffic to undo a gridlock. Travelers switch seats on an airplane to help a family; neighbors shovel snow for the people who live next door. Co-workers prevent and remediate the mistakes of others on a daily basis – in fact, bystander remediation of errors, omissions, and injuries is often of major importance to a community or organization. Community members sometimes turn out in large numbers to help in communities and organizations in times of disasters and attacks. As “Mister Rogers,” (Fred Rogers), repeatedly said on his television show for young children, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping” (Breznican 2017).

Interest in the helpful roles that bystanders can play has intensified in recent decades. “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk” is the slogan from a well-known public-service advertising campaign launched thirty-five years ago to encourage peers and bystanders to prevent drunken driving (Ad Council 2017). Many institutions, including the armed services, now train members to encourage responsible bystander behavior. Literature devoted to preventing safety problems, errors and accidents in multiple sectors emphasizes the importance of bystander action. Public and private institutions around the world have launched efforts to prevent “insider threats,” malicious acts that come from within an organization, for example, from employees, contractors, etc. who have inside information concerning the organization's

security practices, and data and computer systems. “See something – say something” is a well-known refrain as part of anti-terrorism efforts. Many organizations, schools, and universities, seek to enlist bystanders in efforts to prevent and address bullying and sexual assault. Evaluations of bystander training are gaining attention (see Tabatchnik 2009; Banyard, Moynihan, and Crossman 2009; Coker et al. 2015; U.S. Department of Justice; Prevention Innovations Research Center 2015; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2016; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2017)

My own organization, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has conducted intermittent bystander training for students, faculty, and staff for more than forty years. Programs have ranged from those focused on preventing harassment, alcohol abuse, and violence, to promoting laboratory safety, diversity, research integrity, business integrity (within management education), and effective team behavior.

Understanding bystanders and their behavior also has implications for extending negotiation theory as well as for adding a missing link to conflict management systems. Bystanders may draw from many of the same sources of power identified by negotiation theorists: positional or role authority, rewards, sanctions, use of force, information, expertise, ability to craft solutions, charisma, moral authority, relationships, commitment, and their best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) or “fallback position.” They may also feel exceptionally vulnerable to these same tools of power and influence. In these circumstances, bystanders may hesitate to act – and then turn to what they see as their best alternative, that is, to take no action. Providing resources and opportunities that give individual bystanders the safety they need to examine their interests and sources of power in a particular situation, can make the difference as to whether a bystander will take constructive action.

This article is centered on my experiences working directly with hundreds of bystanders in workplace and community settings over several decades. As a third-party practitioner, I may be subject to biases that affect how I have understood these real-life cases; (one clear bias was my effort to offer effective and acceptable options to bystanders). Nonetheless, I believe the patterns I have observed over forty-five years have repeated themselves with sufficient frequency to support the frameworks developed in this article.

In this article, I present an inductive framework for studying, analyzing, and, eventually, better understanding what bystanders actually choose to do. My goals are to assist practitioners to develop conflict management systems (CMS) approaches for fostering helpful bystander behaviors and to encourage further research about bystanders, their behavior, and the dilemmas they confront.

Understanding Bystander Behavior

Many people – although not all – hesitate, in the face of unacceptable behavior. In sudden, dangerous emergencies some people help instinctively, without consciously thinking about it. Instantaneous actions of this sort – like jumping to save a child who falls from a subway platform – may be what Professor Daniel Kahneman would characterize as “System One” actions that occur faster than “conscious” decisions can occur (Kahneman 2011). On the other hand, others may think for a long time about whether they will or will not help. Understanding bystander behavior is anything but simple.

Long-standing research about bystander inaction has focused on what early researchers called the “bystander effect” (Darley and Latané 1968.) This often-cited “effect” is thought to

explain why individual bystanders sometimes do not intervene in a particular (often rare) event. Much research focused on single-incident, dangerous emergencies that occur in public among people who do not know each other. Research in this tradition often focuses on one or two bystander actions: typically, immediate intervention and/or reporting to authorities. The apparent choice of inaction in such situations is often attributed to a particular barrier, namely, “diffusion of responsibility.” That particular belief – “there are a lot of us here so I personally do not need to act” – is in some circumstances thought to be stronger when there are more rather than fewer bystanders.

The term “bystander effect” is now used in many languages to refer to generalized bystander inaction; it often is a term of opprobrium. And contemporary research does find the “bystander effect” to be one important factor in some situations. For example, a recent article on cyberbullying found that bystanders demonstrated more defending behaviors in the absence of other bystanders; this was one condition of five that made defending behavior more frequent (Song and Oh 2018).

The bystander “effect,” however, is quite limited as a general explanation for bystander behavior. It is obviously inappropriate to apply it to those common situations in which bystanders readily lend a hand. And most bystander situations are not single-incident, dangerous, public emergencies involving groups of strangers. Moreover, even in the stereotypical public emergencies with groups of people, bystanders do sometimes act in helpful, effective ways (Levine and Crowther 2008; Levine, Taylor, and Best 2011; van Bommel et al. 2012).

Helpful bystander behavior also occurs when peers and bystanders perceive unacceptable behavior in on-going work situations with people that they know. For example, a major study in published in the journal *Nature* (Koocher and Keith-Spiegel 2010) cited both private and formal

interventions by scientists who saw various kinds of unethical behavior in laboratories. Notably, the study attributed some of the impetus for intervention to scientists' identification of themselves as members of scientific communities, as well as to the importance of rules in their own organizations.

Bystanders may be influenced to act or not to act by the multiple concomitant “contexts” in which they find themselves at the time that they observe questionable behavior. As an ombuds, I would regularly hear bystanders consider the immediate situation, recent events, and organizational or community rules, and then also reflect the norms of their families, faiths, friends, cultural traditions, affinity groups, or professions.

As this article will describe, I have heard (and heard about) *dozens of reasons* bystanders have offered to explain why they did not act in the face of unacceptable behavior. (“Diffusion of responsibility” is sometimes one of those reasons – but also may sometimes seem to be a secondary barrier that occurs after primary sources of hesitation led a particular bystander to inaction.) By the same token I have heard bystanders give many reasons as to why they *did* act in helpful ways.

In this article I offer one glimpse – from one practitioner – into one corner of a truly broad field of research. As just one example of the breadth of the field, a Google search produces thousands of entries about bystander-whistleblowers acting inside and outside their organization or community. These studies regularly illuminate the multiple and conflicting motivations of those who see unacceptable behavior. Many of these studies also illuminate how painful whistleblowing can be. One clear reason for bystander reluctance, according to much of the literature, is the robust history across the world of the implicit and explicit, painful consequences of intervening (see Lambe et al. 2017; Witte et al. 2017; see also Rowe, Wilcox, and Gadlin

2009).

Whistleblower researchers have found that some bystanders profoundly disagree with their organizations about which given behaviors are beneficial or unacceptable. These disagreements are regularly echoed in the press about whether and when a given act of “whistleblowing” constitutes noble and ethical civil disobedience, or is despicable criminal behavior. (The wide divergence of public opinion with the regard to Edward Snowden’s release of confidential U.S. government documents is just one example; see Fick 2017). These discussions underscore the important point that bystander interests may differ from those of CMS managers.

Additional bystander studies focus on such specific topics as preventing or catching “errors” in various kinds of systems; preventing alcohol and drug abuse, sexual assault, and other criminal abuse; dealing with “insider threat” and sabotage; the effects of gender, ethnic, and generational differences; responses to genocide; the use of bystanders in domestic surveillance and as snitches (for example in Nazi Germany); and “tattling” among children.

In a different but related area, authors have also examined how positive relationships and empathic joy may affect helping behavior (see Zaki 2016; Pittinsky and Montoya 2016). In addition, numerous institutions including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) have advocated that organizations build cultures of civility and respect as a way of preventing harassment. Future research that examines the effect of positive and affirming cultures on fostering helpful bystander actions as well as on how bystanders respond to exemplary behavior seems likely (see Rowe 2017).

Bystanders and their situations are so complex that they are difficult to study in the real world. In part because the concept of bystander behavior is so broad, scholars often focus on just

one or two issues in a narrowly defined context. Many studies use “hypotheticals” to examine what people say they would do as bystanders; hypotheticals are also used in training bystanders. We need to know more, however, about the dilemmas actually experienced by bystanders and about how they actually behave in real life.

The assumption in traditional research is that bystanders allow bad situations to get worse when they *do not act*. But bystanders can also make matters worse by *taking action* – even when they seek to act constructively. For example, bystanders can cause harm through lack of skill, by making inappropriate accusations, inadvertently tipping-off a perpetrator before the authorities can act, or ineptly putting themselves and others at unnecessary risk.

And some bystanders who take action may not be constructive – we need to know more about harm caused by bystanders. Bystanders can sometimes be destructively judgmental. Some create or spread rumors or infringe on the privacy of others; some turn into vigilantes; some seek to get an alleged offender into trouble, or to waste the time of authorities, or put authorities in harm’s way. We need to know more about how peers and bystanders are recruited into violent dyads, triads, groups, and mobs and how bystanders make the transition from being observers to becoming participants in conflict or wrongdoing.

In this article, I first review some of the many reasons that I have heard from bystanders for hesitating to intervene and then some reasons that others have given as to why they have taken helpful action. I present an inductive framework for studying, analyzing, and, eventually, better understanding what bystanders actually choose to do. My goals are to assist practitioners to develop CMS approaches for fostering helpful bystander behaviors and to encourage further research about bystanders, their behavior, and the dilemmas they confront.

Why Some Bystanders Do Not Act

Each bystander may behave differently in a different context about different issues. The challenge for an organization or community is to help their members manage a wide variety of barriers. (In this section, I discuss a few specific supports to help bystanders overcome specific barriers. I later discuss more general, systems approaches in a broader discussion of how conflict management system design and practice can better integrate bystanders.) Readers will wish to evaluate each of these ideas for relevance to local issues and contexts and of course think about initiatives of their own.

I describe four sets of common factors that inhibit or stop some bystanders from identifying, assessing, and helping to manage unacceptable behavior:

- a bystander *may not “see”* unacceptable behavior;
- a bystander *does not or will not assess the situation as unacceptable*;
- a bystander *may not believe* that any action needs to be taken; and, finally,
- a bystander may *choose not to take personal action* himself or herself.

These examples are by no means exhaustive and may instantaneously overlap with each other.¹

Actual bystanders are likely to have multiple interests and may face more than one of these barriers at a time. In this case they may need several kinds of support.

The Wrongdoing Is Unnoticed

Frequently, a bystander does not notice the unacceptable behavior or intuitively avoids seeing it.

An employee, manager or community member may not know enough about the situation – or the

rules – to think about a particular behavior as unacceptable, and may not even notice that it occurred. When someone they know is making preparations to commit a crime, fellow employees and family members may be literally too absorbed in their own activities to notice unacceptable behavior. This phenomenon was powerfully illustrated by the results of a famous study, in which many participants failed to notice a gorilla walking through a scene when they were asked to concentrate on a different task (Mack and Rock 1998). People forget ephemeral glimpses of unacceptable behavior when the behavior comes and goes very quickly. People become habituated and desensitized to many kinds of odd behavior if they occur constantly in contexts in which unusual behavior is common.

In order to help bystanders to actually “see” unacceptable behavior – either occurring or being prepared – conflict management systems need to communicate regularly about rules and expectations for behavior and with *specific details* about locally relevant behaviors that are not acceptable. These communications must be shared with all cohorts, and be refreshed constantly, so they get noticed. Success examples could be made public when appropriate (with or without identifying names), for example if a night janitor spots and reports seeing something hazardous in an inappropriate waste container or an information technology staff person detects and reports signs of hacking.

It also is common for people to *avoid* seeing unacceptable behavior – and this may happen unconsciously. “Motivational blindness” may keep a person from noticing behavior that is inhumane or upsetting (Bazerman and Tenbrunsel 2011). A bystander may know intuitively, below the level of conscious thought, that it is not safe or advantageous to “see” unacceptable behavior at work or in the community. The bystander may then take steps to avoid being in the presence of that behavior, without necessarily questioning the behavior itself and what may be

behind it. For example, a person may become uncomfortable with the behavior of a secretive, untrustworthy boss, and decide to leave that job, thinking that the supervisor in question is a “miserable boss” without thinking further or making a complaint.

In my experience, bystanders are more likely to “notice” problems, if a manager asks specific questions about behaviors of local concern in public (e.g. in team meetings) and in private (e.g. anonymous surveys). One corporate CMS now uses stories in the organization’s newsletter to illuminate the kinds of unsafe work conditions that should be “noticed,” and conducts a yearly competition to identify “blind spots” in safety procedures.

The Wrongdoing Is Not Assessed

Sometimes, the bystander may see the questionable behavior but cannot or does not judge it to be unacceptable. An employee, manager or community member from a background that is “non-traditional” for the given environment often does not know how to assess a problematic behavior. In diverse communities with high turnover, detailed training may be needed on a frequent basis. It helps to have the same ideas repeated regularly in different ways.

People sometimes decide that an issue cannot be too serious, if they have only noticed it once. Conflict management systems need to communicate what bystanders should do if they notice a concerning behavior but are unsure if it constitutes a problem. For example, some workplaces have addressed this issue by asking constituents to “take notice and speak up if they are feeling even a bit uncomfortable.” Some organizations use color-coding to help people talk when they are not sure *why* a situation causes them discomfort. The dialogue might go something like this: “Working here today feels ‘yellow.’ I am not sure why. It is not ‘red.’ But it definitely

is not ‘green.’ Can we talk about why our conversations have gotten so personal?”

A bystander may also be swayed by deference to hierarchy, if an apparent perpetrator is highly placed, like a unit head, a visiting consultant, or a religious leader. The deference may be reinforced if peers seem to go along with the behavior in question.

Bystanders frequently look away if they stand to gain from the problematic behavior or its perpetrators. Unsurprisingly, a bystander may go along with problematic behavior if the apparent perpetrators are family members or members of the same affinity group. Potential gains – both intangible (like gaining approval) or tangible (such as a promotion or a bonus) – for ignoring the questionable behavior can tilt bystanders away from forming any judgment. (The points at which such behavior becomes collusion, on the part of the bystander, are regularly discussed in the press.)

Organizations and communities must be persistently proactive to identify and assess specific situations in which they define “unacceptable behavior” differently than do many employees or community members. *Managing* such situations may be quite different depending on context, but I believe that it will always help to provide confidential resources and safe options in the complaint system. Explicit conflict of interest rules sometimes help when family, tribal, or contractual relationships are at play. It helps when external definitions of unacceptable behavior are strong and relatively clear – as in the case of scientific fraud, (see for example Koocher and Keith-Spiegel 2010.)

Action Is Not Seen as Necessary

Some bystanders recognize that certain behaviors are perceived as “unacceptable” but it is not

clear to them that any action should be taken by managers or other authorities. Some feel incapable of making such a decision. Such decision-making seems beyond their status, age, experience, or skills. (Many employees, managers, students and community members have little understanding of what will happen if unacceptable behavior is addressed within the relevant conflict management system.)

Much hesitation – about whether anybody should do anything about a given problem – arises from a bystander’s difficulty in balancing the unacceptability of a given behavior with fears about the possible consequences of official action. Bystanders often remark that official “action” will result in too much being done or nothing being done.

In particular, many people fear and dislike investigations. In my experience, concern about investigations is a major impediment for effectively managing information about unacceptable behavior. Investigations are often perceived as disruptive, invasive of privacy, expensive in time and costs. And the results are unlikely to please everyone. As my colleague, workplace scholar Corinne Bendersky and I wrote (Rowe and Bendersky 2003: 124):

Many employers have discovered that there is no way to design a formal investigation that the whole workplace will like. Relatively “cooperative” people (those whose typical strategy in interpersonal relations is ‘win-win’) tend to dislike the dry, formal, tough methods of criminal investigation that have crept into the U.S. workplace for issues like sexual harassment. However, ‘win-lose’ people, who are oriented toward rights and power, paradoxically also sometimes dislike formal investigations. For example, the win-lose witness may feel “he who is not with me is against me,” unless the investigator appears to side with that witness. Since a good investigator will strive to be and to appear impartial, the distrust that is sparked by impartiality happens quite often.

In addition, the employer that protects privacy will discover that many employees think that ‘nothing is ever done’ against those who behave illegally. (An employer that does not protect privacy in an appropriate way, and that speaks openly about individual offenders, may be attacked by all sides for several other reasons.)

We believe, in sum, that there will always be some tension about investigation procedures. And this tension has implications for the design of complaint systems, since any tension about investigation procedures also increases the majority's general dislike of formal, win-lose, grievance options. This is yet another reason to offer problem-solving options in a complaint system, so that only the bare minimum number of concerns, those that must be investigated, actually go to formal processes.

A parent, relative or employee may not want even to think about what would happen to a family member, dear friend, or cherished mentor if the unacceptable behavior were to come to light. A department head may think that any kind of action will threaten the whole department. A student may think the fraternity or sorority might be closed down if alcohol-related assaults are discussed. How many people have ignored the unacceptable behavior of a donor or benefactor – or a powerful politician? People sometimes believe so strongly in the general strategy of an apparently successful leader that they may ignore her or his unethical and illegal tactics.

Some bystander hesitation can be alleviated by providing lucid and accessible information about the different functions of a conflict management system, in the context of specific offenses. A bystander's refusal to judge concerning behavior may change after learning the details of the damage done by a particular offense. The organization must engage in focused planning to grapple with *all* the potentially serious divides between its own interests and the possible interests of bystanders. With respect to racist and sexist behavior, for example, senior managers may themselves be offenders, which can cause distrust of the entire CMS. And the safeguards against such potential issues as insider threat, cyber-bullying, substance abuse, misuse of weapons, and fraud may seem as invasions of privacy or infringements on free speech and expression or otherwise onerous.

Personal Action Is Not Taken

A bystander may see the wrongdoing, perceive it is wrong, and even believe that action is appropriate but not take personal action. It is difficult to overestimate the number and variety of concerns that bystanders may have – in thinking about taking *personal* action – when they observe unacceptable behaviors. Some bystanders, even those who would be relieved if someone else took effective action, cannot see themselves doing so.

Bystanders may say that they have been taught from childhood not to attract attention. Many do not want to raise a concern about someone from a different religion, culture, gender, or race or conversely *against* someone from their own religion, culture, gender, race or family. Many organizations and communities have sponsored and self-formed affinity groups (as examples, “employee resource groups,” or a group of mothers in a faith-based community). Participating in such groups can give bystanders opportunities to discuss serious concerns with people they perceive to be like themselves in a way that may help them to act.

Some bystanders have promised their families they will not make trouble or draw attention to themselves. Some bystanders have signed agreements or taken oaths, or are working under strict confidentiality rules that they believe preclude talking about issues outside their local organizational unit or community.

Some worry that they may be wrong – that they may have misinterpreted the questionable action or the rules that prohibit it, and that if they act on an incorrect assessment, their own competence and behavior will be questioned. A bystander may believe that if the behavior really were a problem someone more expert would have acted or will act – in this case affirming the theory of “diffusion of responsibility.” Exhausted bystanders may say that they just cannot deal with the problem unless others will join them.

Many bystanders fear bad – or very bad – consequences. A few say they have “gone along” with the situation or unwittingly helped the perpetrator, and that their acquiescence or unwitting help could place them in jeopardy with authorities. Some bystanders have been threatened. Some fear direct retaliation by their boss, or sabotage, or violence; they relay frightening stories about what has happened to people who tried to stop unacceptable behavior (see Dyck, Morse, and Zingales 2010; Reuben and Stephenson 2013). Many believe there is no way to prevent indirect retaliation, and acutely fear loss of relationships with a mentor, friends, and family.²

Bystanders commonly tell ombuds, “No one wants to hear bad news here. No one is asking to hear about problems here. Problems just get ignored” (see also Colvin 2011). Bystanders often note that important people get treated differently. Bystanders are especially concerned when they believe their own managers are part of the problem – and may go “outside” the organization or community to complain, if they act at all.

Some bystanders are willing to let a given unacceptable behavior continue. “The people who may get hurt by this behavior deserve it. I do not like it but I certainly understand where (the perpetrator) is coming from.”

Each of these sets of concerns demonstrates the need for convincing responses from an organization or community. Each calls for focused planning by local leadership and conflict managers. Providing lucid and accessible information about the resources and functions of a CMS relevant to specific concerns can diminish some of the barriers that bystanders face.

Organization and communities may need to make major efforts to highlight the negative effects of certain misbehaviors. The “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk” campaign noted earlier is an example of such an effort (Ad Council 2017). It reiterated the lethal dangers of

drunk driving and then highlighted the positive impact of bystander action. Similarly, training to prevent harassment usually highlights the acute and long-term damage done by harassment and teaches specific skills for enabling bystanders to take personal action.

In other cases, the main goal is to increase reporting. For example a corporation may provide rewards for identifying fraud or safety hazards. The Federal Government provides recurrent stringent training about national security and makes reporting mandatory. Parents may choose to work with the authorities about children whom they believe are planning criminal behavior – in order to save those relatives from worse consequences – especially if there is a local effort supported by a coalition of law enforcement, faith-based community leaders, mental health practitioners and others to provide support to the children and families. (See for example, The Colorado Resilience Collaborative at <http://news.du.edu/new-du-initiative-addressing-identity-based-violence-due-to-radicalization-and-discrimination/>)

Why Some Bystanders Do Act

Here I review some of the many reasons bystanders have offered to me to explain why they chose to act. These explanations illuminate many different interests and concerns. Organizations and communities may wish to consider highlighting specific motivations, as relevant to the local context.

Unsurprisingly, many bystanders who take constructive action report socially constructive motivations. They cite relevant laws, rules, and policies; the requirements of their position; a responsibility to their work units, their professions, their communities, and their country; and often the obligations of their faith. Many also talk about the teachings of cherished

role models: older family members, mentors, and coaches. Many report that they seek to protect specific individuals. Sometimes bystanders report complicated and conflicting interests, but, on balance, decide to act. Each one of these motivations provides a possible platform for specific programming to encourage bystanders to take helpful action when they notice unacceptable behavior.

Bystanders' motivations to take action are not always unselfish, however. Some reporters seek retaliation: they may be angry with a perceived offender and will make an anonymous phone call as an act of retribution. Others may seek to punish a person who reminds them of someone who injured either them or a loved one. Just as others may consciously hope for some kind of gain for *inaction*, some may expect a tangible reward or intangible gains for coming forward. Some, opportunistically, may call out questionable behavior as an attempt to interfere with the progress of a competitor. A few say they feel a desperate need to punish someone, and see "dropping a dime" as the only option.

In the context of communities, I have heard of bystanders taking determined, unobtrusive, informal actions to prevent or stop criminal behavior by a family member, while keeping the authorities from finding out about it. These examples highlight the importance of private bystander actions different from reporting to authorities. (For example, see "rechanneling persons or resources" to prevent unacceptable behavior as listed in Table One.) Parents may hide their son or daughter's passport to prevent the child from travelling to Syria, for example.

Bystanders of bystanders often help in private ways: a college student may insist that a roommate report instances of cheating in a class; a community member may insist that a friend report illegal experimentation in a "do-it-yourself" laboratory.

The complexity of these situations usually makes it difficult to predict when bystanders

will take constructive action. The literature has identified one partial exception that my own experience affirms: when bystanders perceive a high likelihood of serious harm to themselves and significant others. Bystander action appears most likely when people see or hear of behavior they believe to be perilous or treacherous. They are especially likely to consider action if the behavior (or plans for wrongdoing) appear to them as an emergency – and that they or others (or the perpetrator) are in immediate danger (Fischer et al. 2006, Fischer et al. 2011). In urgent circumstances, a family member or close friend may actually turn in someone they love to the authorities to prevent a tragedy; and bystanders will often take action when they learn that someone who harmed others in the past is likely to cause harm in the future. Prominent examples include the case of Ted Kaczynski, whose brother and sister-in-law alerted authorities that they believed he was the Unabomber responsible for placing bombs that killed three people and injured twenty-three others over eighteen years (Siochet and Valiente 2016), and the “Christmas bomber,” Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, whose father tried to warn the authorities about his son’s plan in 2009 (Hughes and Shubailat 2010).

Action appears more likely if an apparent perpetrator is believed to have harmed people whom bystanders perceive to be “like themselves.” Of all the kinds of “harm,” perceptions of humiliation are among the most poignant. As an ombuds, I regularly heard – from bystanders and bystanders of bystanders – that they decided to act about a current situation because the perpetrator in the past had humiliated them or someone they cared about. In this sense, thousands of participants in the “Me Too Movement” are now coming forward as former victims, but their actions in the *present* are intended as the actions of supportive bystanders.

Unsurprisingly, bystanders are more likely to take constructive action when they believe they have the support of an effective CMS. Effective conflict management systems require

considerable internal coordination and coherence. A coherent systems approach is worth the considerable effort required. All *elements* of the system need to work integratively (with appropriate attention to confidentiality) to foster constructive action. For example, ombuds often hear from bystanders – as well as from complainants directly harmed by unacceptable behavior – that they have been told to “find a confidential resource person to discuss” behavior that concerns them. Some bystanders are referred by their families, but others are sent by contacts in employee assistance, human resources, the union, compliance offices, their line managers, fellow students, etc. The referrals go in both directions. Ombuds help bystanders who choose to do so to find safe ways – to go talk with or otherwise relay information to line and staff managers who can take management action. Ombuds also frequently refer bystanders to other human services professionals who can provide needed personal support.

Finally, in my experience, bystanders are much more likely to act when they believe their efforts will have a real chance at success. For example bystanders who believe they have “convincing proof,” and those who have the support of other witnesses are much more willing to make formal complaints than are bystanders who believe their word is their only evidence. In these situations, it is sometimes helpful for the ombuds to discuss effective informal options that do not require extensive proof.

Table One lists actions derived from many hundreds of self-reports from real bystanders who have taken action with respect to unacceptable behavior. Many of these actions are private actions and many are informal. It is not an exhaustive list. Authorities and system designers will wish to examine if and how each option or others might be supported in a specific organizational or community conflict management system. In considering a specific case, local experts might ask, “What might help particular bystanders to help in this situation?”

Table One: Some Naturally Occurring Helpful Bystander Actions³

Peers and bystanders can:

Ask civil, effective questions, of an apparent perpetrator, or of people around the perpetrator

Become active mentors, modeling accessible, trustworthy behavior, in a way that interferes with the unacceptable behavior

Consult with personal or professional resources, in a direct or indirect fashion, with or without information identifying a (potential) perpetrator

Discuss, discourage and disparage behavior that is unacceptable, on the spot, as in “speaking up” in public, or physically defending a target

Deflect or derail the behavior unobtrusively as with humor, cartoons, or posters

Engage friends, family or associates to help deal with the behavior; engage other bystanders and “bystanders of bystanders”

Instigate or trigger a “generic approach” such as asking for a relevant community or organizational program on the subject, without identifying any individual

Interrupt the behavior unobtrusively or overtly

Mitigate the effects of unacceptable behavior by personal action

“Name” or talk widely about associated unacceptable behaviors in the community, so they cannot happen unnoticed

Observe the behavior, gathering more information before choosing an option, collecting evidence, keeping a diary

Offer to accompany, call for help—or otherwise support—targets of unacceptable behavior, so that vulnerable persons are not left alone to deal with the behavior or possible retaliation

“Pivot” the situation, by encouraging or instigating positive alternatives for potential perpetrators

Prevent the behavior from recurring (e.g. by making certain behavior punishable, or eliminating resources)

Punish the behavior (at the time or later) or act to see it punished

Re-channel plans or persons or resources engaged in unacceptable behavior, (e.g.

engaging the relevant person elsewhere, removing their access)

Remediate the behavior, (e.g. noticeably or behind the scenes – overtly or “casually”)

Report the behavior in one of many different ways, (alone or with others, once or repeatedly, in writing or orally, identifiably or anonymously, formally or informally, immediately or later, directly or indirectly, with few salient details or with exhaustive information)

Repudiate the specific unacceptable behavior, after the fact, in an explicit public fashion

Stop the behavior in the moment, alone or with others

Stop the behavior and follow up, directly or indirectly, to assure no recurrence

Take covert action in such a way that the behavior of the perpetrator can come to the attention of some inside or outside authority

Teach others how to identify unacceptable behavior and to assess: “who, what, when, where, why, how, and with whom?” in thinking about options

Teach others how to lead and exemplify positive alternatives with systematically affirming behavior

Organizational Receptivity and Helpful Bystander Behavior

I believe CMS *receptivity* to bystanders is key to fostering constructive behavior from bystanders. A systems approach is critical, although coordination can be challenging. Each conflict management system has its own context and its own local concerns about unacceptable behavior. Managers must determine based on their local information and expertise what are the particular barriers to bystander action and which sources of encouragement will work in their specific setting; but I believe that all conflict systems require coordination to be – and to be seen as – receptive.

In this section, I build further on the idea of a coherent, coordinated systems approach and present several *general* attributes required in such a system. The first is that a CMS and its

managers must work to build trust – within the CMS itself and within the organization or community. The news media are full of stories about bystanders who believe their organization or community leaders do not want to hear bad news, and that they distrust the capabilities of conflict managers to investigate and address bad news, in an effective way—with minimal bad consequences. Perceived receptivity can be enhanced in a number of ways.

Visible Commitment

Leaders and managers wield significant influence, both negative and positive, over the context within which bystanders operate. Most members of an organization or community do not actually know the leaders – and may not instinctively trust them. Senior leaders who are invisible are less than helpful; senior leaders who offend are a major disincentive for many bystanders. Bystanders are much more likely to act if they perceive senior managers to be accessible, fair, and credible leaders who practice what they preach. They need to believe that if they decide to report unacceptable behavior the organization or community will act promptly and appropriately (Kish-Gephart et al. 2009; Colvin 2011). I have seen this vividly in practice. I remember many hundreds of times that a bystander cited messages from a chief executive or unit head as a reason for taking constructive action with respect to serious problems.

Training Bystanders – and Training Managers about Bystanders

In my experience, consistent communications – frequently endorsed by all relevant managers – help to address many of the barriers to bystander action described in this article. Public discussion and training are essential to teach how the conflict management system works. *All*

cohorts need to know the organizational rules, to understand “what is unacceptable and why,” how to access local resources, and to understand and build trust in the appropriate options for bystander action. People must understand the meaning of a “good faith report.” All managers and all bystanders need to know relevant policies and procedures with respect to intimidation and retaliation, and whether and how those who report can be protected from overt and covert retaliation⁴.

Where specific offenses are of major local concern, the relevant rules require regular restatement, with frequently updated posters, cheerful cartoons, or whatever will attract renewed attention. Regular, varied training is particularly essential in organizations and communities with diverse populations and high turnover (Moon and Franke 2000; Sims 2006). Some corporations have a regular “check-in” at the beginning of routine staff meetings, when participants are asked about recent events and expected to discuss both exemplary and unacceptable behavior. Hospitals famously use constant, varied and pointed reminders to wash hands and use checklists.

In addition to knowing the “organization chart” of the CMS and its rules, CMS managers often need to be trained about what bystanders need and how things actually work. Regular meetings in which managers get to know each other and learn skills from each other facilitate coordination (Rowe 2013). Staff who may be approached by bystanders should be trained to offer a respectful ear and affirm the *feelings* of the bystander in a reasonable way, while remaining explicitly neutral about any *facts* that are discussed. They also must know – and offer referrals in relevant cases – all the options that are available through the CMS.

Managers should familiarize themselves with the “naturally occurring” (often informal, often private) bystander actions, like those listed in Table One. Whichever of these options are deemed appropriate by the CMS should then be supported in training programs, to reassure

responsible bystanders that they can be helpful with – or without – making “formal reports.”

To managers and authorities the difference between personal action by a bystander and “reporting to authorities” – as these items appear on a CMS diagram – may appear clear cut. For bystanders, however, the differences may not be so clear – and the difference between the risks of informal versus formal action may be crucial. Formal reports can become public and expose a witness to unwanted attention, ostracism, and retaliation. On the other hand, “reports to authorities” can sometimes be made in many ways, including quietly, confidentially, and sometimes anonymously – via options that training programs for managers can make explicit.

Sometimes a staff person or senior leader acts effectively – often quietly – to protect the identity of a bystander who provides helpful information. Informal reports to formal authorities can still prompt effective action – action that itself may be either formal or informal. I have known a number of police officers, senior staff members, and line managers who were widely trusted throughout the organization.⁵ For bystanders the really important questions are: whom do I trust? Is it safe to consult with this person or that one? What are all the options? What will happen if I act?

Conflict managers need to communicate some of the ways in which unacceptable behavior can be addressed without the source of the information being identified. For example, an anonymous bystander can share information with a trusted resource person who can act as a go-between with senior managers. If managers receive sufficient information about gross negligence, for example, they can take generic action that prevents a problem without endangering the source of the information. If a compliance office receives (identity-free) information, it can conduct a “routine” audit or inspection that uncovers a pattern of financial crime. Within a conflict management system, some bystander education *issue by issue* may be

effective. Issue-focused training (e.g. about scientific integrity or financial fraud) can help bystanders develop specific skills in identifying and assessing problematic behavior.

Safety Training and Harassment Prevention

Safety training and harassment prevention are broad platforms that can encompass a number of specific initiatives and are important for several different reasons. Because of the obvious danger that safety violations and personal abuse may pose to the larger organization and larger community, messages couched in these terms may be more effective than occasional trainings focused on rare forms of misconduct. Safety and harassment concerns are more likely to attract attention because people are naturally motivated to protect themselves and those close to them from danger. In addition, these issues are common and more widely understood than, for example, financial mischief. Finally, the skills that members of the organization learn in these areas may be transferable when different problems arise.

Safety and harassment training can also encompass other forms of unacceptable behavior. Safety training could include, for example, a focus on misuse of alcohol and drugs. Substance abuse is associated with many additional forms of unacceptable behavior. Misuse of alcohol and various drugs is antecedent to many accidents and often associated with bullying, sexual abuse, and racial harassment. Bystanders are often aware of their peers' misuse of alcohol and drugs and may be able to identify and assess these issues – and then other associated concerns – quite readily. In addition, a broad concept of “safety” could include such concerns as insider threats, cyber-sabotage and other security issues, intimidation and retaliation, gross negligence, and all forms of assault and violence.

Harassment prevention is broadly helpful in similar ways. Perpetrators of other offenses often have a specific history of having harassed or bullied others. A strong emphasis on civil and professional behavior could help to discourage an array of unacceptable behavior in organizations and communities. A recent report by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (2016) cites fostering civility and respect as a major way of preventing sexual harassment. Providing training on inclusive, affirming and, respectful behavior may also help address unconscious bias (Rowe 2017).

In addition, as mentioned earlier, a perception of being harassed or bullied appears to be the tipping point for some bystanders to decide to take action about a *different* unacceptable behavior – for example theft or misuse of government property. Moreover, these associations also seem to function in reverse. I have noticed that helping bystanders to consider their options with respect to personal abuse may sensitize them to “see” other unacceptable behavior as well. The employee who is seeking respite from bullying by a supervisor may come in with notes about a pattern of thefts that were unobtrusive and had been ignored. A graduate student concerned about sexism in a lab may suddenly begin to notice deliberate interference with the integrity of a colleague’s research.

Success Stories

Some corporations communicate, in-house, the stories of bystanders who have behaved helpfully to address problematic behavior – thus affirming their receptivity. These successes may be extraordinary – or mundane. In my experience, it helps to describe constructive bystanders as ordinary human beings, who have chosen to do the right thing through alert observation and every day competence, rather than as extraordinary heroes with super-human skills. Portraying

helpful bystanders as role models we can *all* emulate can help diminish the inhibitions that prevent bystanders from acting, and helpful conflict managers should appear in success stories as receptive, effective, fair, thorough, and discreet professionals who are doing the right thing through everyday competence.

Appealing to Multiple Personal Motivations

As mentioned earlier, it can be helpful to appeal to multiple, *different*, socially positive motives. Much of the research about bystanders has narrowly focused on just one or two motivations for responsible bystander behavior, often within one specific context and with respect to one particular kind of issue. In practice, however, the challenge is to foster action among diverse groups of people whose opinions may be fluid, who work and live in multiple diverse contexts and cultures, and who confront complex, multi-issue dilemmas. Managers may find it useful to note a number of different motivations – in individual success stories – as part of their training efforts (see Ariely 2016).

It is not just that each bystander is a unique individual, even within an apparently homogenous culture. Each bystander will have multiple social identities, only one of which might motivate action in a given case – e.g. to maintain the reputation of our competitive technical group, to accomplish our mission, to honor a particular leader, to protect our safety and the safety of our co-workers and neighbors, or simply to obey the law. In a given case, it may be that only one important “identity” is salient – for example, being a survivor of personal abuse could propel a bystander to assist an abuse victim. Conflict managers who fully understand the range of possible bystander motivations will, I believe, better support a full range of resources and options for bystanders.

The Nature of the Evidence

Authorities should make clear that bystanders do not need “complete proof” in order to address their concerns. For example, bystanders do not need to offer evidence in order to ask a simple, casual question. In their study about the reporting of misconduct in scientific laboratories, Gerald Koocher and Patricia Keith-Spiegel (2010) urge bystanders to be willing to act on the spot in many situations.⁶ Bystander training could include stories that show how an (unnamed) bystander who was following “just a hunch” prevented serious misconduct or errors, or how unobtrusive inquiry helped fix problems through early, informal intervention. Such programs can teach people how, in relevant circumstances, to raise a question, person to person, without “rocking the boat.” Conflict managers should review the naturally occurring bystander actions listed in Table One and consider which informal, private options will work in their local contexts.

Safe and Accessible Resources

People within the organization need to know there are accessible and safe ways: 1) to find confidential support and consultation, and 2) to report problems, either anonymously or on the record. Many people want to discuss concerns before they decide to take action and before managers or authorities become formally involved. Consultation can also serve to address misunderstandings, provide information about regulations, or otherwise make bystander action more effective, especially if it includes some follow-up.

Access to resources is vital. Having multiple resource and access points – providing a

choice of options for talking things over, and for reporting – can be crucial for bystanders who want to consult with someone they perceive to be trustworthy. For example, some will prefer speaking first to a respected in-group “elder,” or a former boss, or family member.

In addition, in these days when many managers are too exhausted to “listen to bad news,” it also helps to have people in place whose job description includes being “receptive” to all concerns in the organization or community. The experiences of organizational ombuds (see International Ombudsman 2007-2018) who regularly hear all the types of concerns mentioned in this article – suggest that it is important to have at least one CMS resource person who is a “generalist.” A generalist has experience helping diverse populations to manage virtually every variety of unacceptable behavior. A generalist understands a wide variety of bystander motivations, knows the “naturally occurring actions” of bystanders, and knows in detail all the resources available to bystanders throughout the CMS and how they work.

Confidentiality is vital to the perception of safety. Organizational leaders may find it a challenge to provide confidential resources, in the context of “zero tolerance” policies. One reason that zero tolerance policies are controversial is that such policies typically require formal reporting and investigation of almost any information relevant to a particular violation. Current debates about requirements in various organizations to report sexual assault, sexual harassment, insider threat indications – or all illegal behavior – reflect these dilemmas. Those who design complaint systems find themselves grappling to meet the challenge of designing a system that preserves some of the benefits of “bystander choice.”

A “zero-barrier” office – like that of an organizational ombuds, or other office where the person seeking consultation is guaranteed near-absolute confidentiality – can significantly help promote perceptions of “receptivity” (Rowe and Bendersky 2002). This benefit is gaining

recognition. Title IX of the Higher Education Act anticipates the existence of designated confidential resources. Some workplace, university, and United States Department of Defense chaplains share with organizational ombuds a guarantee of confidentiality except in cases involving imminent risk of serious harm. Anonymous help lines, on-site affinity groups, and Internet support groups are also helpful. Mobile phone applications have proven increasingly helpful, around the world, in providing options for seeking assistance and reporting safety hazards, bullying and assault, and emergencies of all kinds.

Competent, Impartial Investigations

For a system to be seen as safe and credible, investigations must be competent, independent and fair, prompt, thorough, and discreet. Members of the organization or community must believe that false allegations will be dealt with appropriately, as well as good-faith concerns. Effective investigations usually require considerable resources, oversight by senior managers, and regular communications with the people concerned.

Conducting thorough and effective investigations is a considerable challenge. Investigators frequently find it difficult to respond fairly and effectively to reports of unacceptable behavior because they often receive incorrect or insufficient evidence about a wrongdoing. They may hear fragments of a story, some of it second-hand. In addition, they are often inadequately trained about how to deal with ancillary concerns, such as how to maintain privacy. They may not know how to prevent or address overt – let alone covert – retaliation. Investigators may lack the resources they need to deal with complex concerns about unacceptable behavior. (A complex concern might have multiple issues and multiple cohorts, or extend across multiple organizational, community, and national boundaries.) The charges that are

given to investigators may or may not be specified well for the particular task. Witnesses disappear or are unavailable. Hampered by a lack of resources, investigatory and decision-making processes may appear to complainants and witnesses to move slowly and awkwardly, which may lead to distrust.

Often, conflict management systems do not provide information about personnel actions – in order to protect the privacy of all concerned. An unintended consequence of this respect for confidentiality and discretion is that managers and community leaders may not have “learned how” by hearing about prior cases, and bystanders may have learned almost nothing about previous investigations.

Consider all these dynamics and it is easy to see why bystanders often do not understand what will happen if they come forward. Building the credibility of response mechanisms requires explaining in generic detail to members of the organization what happens when people report (Colvin 2011) even though CMS managers usually cannot report the results of personnel actions. They should explain generally and regularly how the response mechanisms work, how the rights of all stakeholders are taken into account, how long procedures have taken, and, in the aggregate, what are the results of CMS complaint handling. Some organizations do this regularly with monthly newsletters and on the organization’s intranet.

Respecting and Caring for Bystanders

Showing bystanders the appropriate level of respect and care is particularly important when they are bewildered and anxious, angry and seeking retribution, or mistaken in their perceptions of wrongdoing. Occasionally bystanders who come forward may also have committed offenses

themselves. Some are disrespectful. Women and men who believe they have been harassed, bullied, or otherwise mistreated may fear taking additional risks in coming forward, and need extensive reassurance about their safety. Some may even need protection.

We expect communities, complaint systems, and law enforcement to deal fairly with those who suffer from wrongdoing as well as those accused of it. But the needs of bystanders and witnesses are often overlooked. Organizations and communities must build reputations for treating bystanders who come forward fairly, competently, and respectfully if they are to be seen as “receptive.” Conflict managers need training and support about dealing with bystanders just as bystanders need training, and safe, customized support.

“Crowd-sourcing” Success

Organizational and community leaders – and CMS managers especially – need to build their knowledge of bystander behavior. In particular, we need more data about bystanders who have successfully pursued informal and formal options in a variety of milieus. We need, in other words, to “crowd-source” success.

Some organizations and communities are working innovatively, if often privately, to address the concerns I have identified in this article. They have analyzed cases and compiled helpful data about what works and what does not work. We need more evaluations of initiatives like those that follow here. Some organizations have integrated bystander training into general skills training programs, and others into specific safety and harassment training. Some research integrity programs offered by universities and scientific laboratories incorporate bystander training including the “possible options if you see problematic behavior.” Programs on

responsible sexual behavior and use of alcohol are leading the way on bystander training. Some mentoring initiatives have identified ways that bystanders can address bullying. Programs on diversity and inclusion sometimes suggest strategies for responding to micro-inequities, and including teaching about micro-affirmations. Large-scale affinity group actions are addressing racial discrimination and harassment and sexual assault. Government initiatives about insider threats encourage bystander behavior. Some of the most interesting programs work to teach bystanders how to “pivot” others from unacceptable behavior to constructive behavior.

Professionals in this field also need access to a body of contemporary cases about the risks of encouraging more bystanders to act. We need to gather data about false allegations, vengeful allegations, reports based on misinformation – and mischief makers who seek to interfere with or harm complaint handlers and damage a conflict management process.

Conclusion

The field of bystander research is truly vast and complex. Supporting bystanders to be helpful and constructive requires a systems approach with multiple and sometimes complex or customized options. This article focused narrowly on one practitioner’s understanding of information gleaned from discussions with hundreds of peers and bystanders over forty-five years. Much more is needed.

Those who do not take action often have multiple, idiosyncratic and conflicting motivations and many experience painful dilemmas. Those who do act may also have experienced dilemmas and pain, may have many different motivations, and may need individualized support.

Organizations and communities can work in specific ways to be seen as *receptive* to bystanders. Top management and line and staff supervisors need to communicate regularly and in many different ways to be seen as receptive. They need to review locally important issues where management interests may differ from some of the interests of bystanders and think about ways to manage these differences. Training managers how to listen to bystanders is as important as training peers and bystanders how to be helpful. Organizations must provide safe and accessible resources for bystanders; investigations that are perceived to be fair, prompt, and thorough; and detailed communications about how each element of the conflict management system works.

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Notes

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¹ Readers familiar with relevant social psychology and behavioral economics literature will

immediately recognize in these examples the importance of research on influence and motivation, and studies of relevant cognitive biases such as selective perception and risk aversion.

² Columnist Lindy West (2017: A19) wrote, “Our society has engineered robust consequences for squeaky wheels, a verdant pantheon from eye-rolls all the way up to physical violence. One of the subtlest and most pervasive is social ostracism”

³ This table illuminates the breadth of what active bystanders do and shows that reporting is only one of many options. Over the years I collected every effective responsible tactic described to me, in order to offer more options to the next complainant or bystander who felt he or she had no options. (The more specific an option is, the better it can help bystanders to understand how to deal with specific serious cases.) I have been deeply impressed by the array of helpful bystander actions undertaken by people who thought they had little power but actually had many sources of power.

⁴ A blanket policy is unlikely to be widely trusted. These protections often need to be constructed *ad hoc*. For example, a bystander can be provided with an alternative supervisor or references. I remember some dozens of complex *sui generis* protections designed by mentors for bystanders who took action against unethical behavior.

⁵ For example, Officer Sean Collier of the MIT Police, who was murdered in 2013 by the men who planted the bomb at the Boston Marathon, had in a few short months undertaken hundreds of warm and respectful interactions, in the international student community and with other communities who might otherwise have avoided law enforcement—and, thereby, engendered trust.

⁶ The “User-Friendly Guide” that accompanies their article could be offered to everyone who works in a lab (Koocher and Spiegel 2010).