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Bystander Effect and Diffusion of Responsibility in the Marange Diamond Mines of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The Marange diamond mines in Zimbabwe have been a source of conflict, abuse and abandonment of social responsibility since alluvial diamonds were discovered there in 2006. Much attention is given to the Kimberley Process which was set up to monitor conflict diamonds. But, the Kimberley process' narrow definition of conflict diamonds, contingent upon international collaboration, has limited its ability to reduce abuses and corruption in the Marange Mines. The present paper draws a connection between the social psychological phenomenon of the bystander effect and the present state of management for the diamond supply chain in Marange and beyond. Social psychological interventions to address the problems are suggested. It is understood that the complexities of the diamond trade require more than one approach to addressing potential abuses. The role of diffusion of responsibility and culture are also proposed as subjects for further study in the overall field of corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: Supply Chain; Diamonds; Zimbabwe; Bystander Effect

Bystander Effect

As the legend goes: On March 13, 1964, Kitty Genovese, a 23-year-old woman, was raped and murdered outside her apartment house in Queens, New York. The event was particularly shocking because it was reported that as many as 38 people heard her screams from their apartment windows. Yet no one intervened by calling the police or taking other action to prevent the crime.

We say "legend" because, in fact, there were only a handful of people who heard the screams, and some actually did intervene by calling out to the attacker and by calling the police [1].

Nonetheless, the shocking story spurred research which demonstrated the now well-established "Bystander effect." Briefly, the bystander effect is the idea that a person's willingness to intervene in an emergency is less likely when there are more rather than fewer other people around that person.

The bystander effect has been studied in many contexts and is found to be a durable phenomenon. In subsequent studies, other factors have been identified that affect the bystander response. These include characteristics of the victim, characteristics of the bystanders, perceived similarity between the actor and victim, and between the actor and other bystanders [2]. One study found that even just imagining being among a group of people led to a reduction in a person's willingness to intervene in a situation [3].

Darley and Latané, pioneers in the study of the effect, described a series of decisions that a person makes when confronted with an emergency situation [4]. These are:

- Assessing the situation,
- Determining it is an emergency,
- Determining that action can affect the emergency,
- Determining that you should take action,
- Taking action.

In trying to understand the cause of the bystander effect, Darley and Latané have spoken of a diffusion of responsibility [4]. One's willingness to intervene is diminished because one feels less personally responsible for the outcome when one is in a large group than when one is in a small group or alone.

For example, the person confronted with an emergency situation with other bystanders nearby might have any of the following thoughts or beliefs:

- *Perhaps there are other people who are better qualified or prepared than I to intervene.*
- *Perhaps my intervention will be misunderstood. Others will think that I am the perpetrator not the rescuer.*
- *Perhaps I will cause more harm than good.*

The Marange Mines

In 2006, alluvial diamonds were discovered in the Chiadzwa area of Zimbabwe. Currently this area is one of the largest if not the largest diamond mining reserves in the world.

The history of the mining in this area has been marked by many abuses, including but not limited to forced labor, torture, military intervention and environmental degradation [5]. Despite the existence of the Kimberley Process which sets guidelines and monitors compliance with respect to diamond mining, the Marange situation continues to present allegations of disregard and outright defiance of the Process.

Moreover, the benefit to the local communities from the resources which exist on their land has been minimal. Community members

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have been abused; their lands poisoned and the monies from the sale of the diamonds never making it to the local community.

Various authors have cited the social, economic and political factors leading to the abuses in the Marange mines and the continuation of the situation [5]. To be sure, there are many stakeholders and many historical and present-day influences that have affected the situation.

It is posited here that diffusion of responsibility in the diamond supply chain is a factor which allowed the problem to develop and to perpetuate. Taking this perspective can suggest areas for intervention to ameliorate the situation and to prevent future such abuses.

Diamond Supply Chain

Modern supply chain practices require the integration of the various actors as a single unit to convert raw materials from mother earth (the supplier's supplier) into products and to deliver those products to the consumer (the customer's customer) at the right time, right place, with the right quality, at the right cost, and with an acceptable risk whilst respecting the rights of all stakeholders. In sophisticated supply chains, these activities are integrated with a goal of creating efficiencies and minimizing error. They also require organizations to develop long term partnerships instead of arms-length relationships to ensure sustainability and to gain competitive advantage [6,7].

In less developed supply chains, these activities are not well integrated. Rather the actors in the less developed supply chain operate with a "throw it over the wall" approach. This approach means no seamless link between and within the various activities in supply chain. One actor does not know or does not express any need to know what other actors are doing, resulting in the absence of responsibility.

Diamonds are a unique commodity. Their value is affected by their scarcity as much as by their actual value in business and industry. In addition, the advertising campaign spurred and supported by the large DeBeers mining firm solidified an association between a diamond ring (as compared to some other metal or stone) and betrothal which has guaranteed consistent demand for diamonds.

The supply chain from field to retail is long and spans large geographic distances and disparate specialty services. The separate activities (exploration, mining, sorting, distribution, trade, cut, polish, manufacture and retail) occur at wide distances from each other [8,9].

Given the diverse nature of the diamond supply chain, many risks and challenges can be observed or imputed. These are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that each stage/activity of the diamond supply chain presents several potential risk factors such as labour abuse, use of hazardous chemicals, environmental degradation and pollution, embezzlement of revenue, corruption and unemployment (lack of local content policy) [10]. A given risk may be more evident at a given stage of the mining supply chain. Nonetheless in sophisticated supply chains, with close relationships between players that characterized such supply chains, a given risk is more likely to be shared as a concern. Less sophisticated supply chains, such as in the Marange case, allow players to ignore some risks. Having "thrown it over the wall" each player effectively washes one's hands of any subsequent risks.

In an effort to assure more ethical practices in the diamond supply chain, the Kimberley Process was formed. The Kimberley Process which has been signed on by 81 countries, with the European Union as one country, specifies how diamonds are to be identified as "conflict free." While the Kimberley Process is valuable it does not address all potential ethical concerns in the diamond supply chain.

There are also non-binding guidelines that address broader ethical practices across different industries [11]. Among these is the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Supply chain integration in Marange diamond mining operations

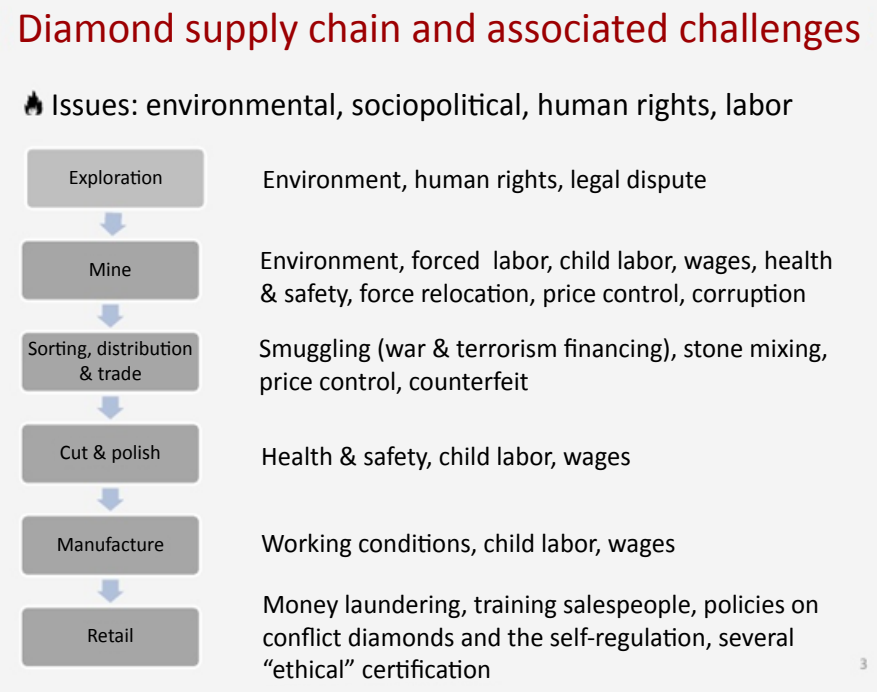

Figure 1: Diamond supply chain and associated challenges [10].

included the broad array of activities needed to plan, implement and control the sourcing, processing, and delivery processes. These processes stretched from the point of exploration to the point of ultimate consumption. In Marange, and likely also in other diamond industry centres, the various stages of the mining process were poorly integrated. The lack of integration made tracing and tracking of the precious mineral virtually impossible.

Diffusion of Responsibility in the Diamond Supply Chain

Consider the following statement (paraphrased) from an owner of an upscale jewellery boutique in the United States when asked what (s) he thinks about blood diamonds.

You want to know what I think about blood diamonds? I will tell you a story. A woman came into my store one day. She was browsing. She looked at various items then she stopped before one display case. She looked up at me and said, accusatorily, "Are these blood diamonds?!"

I had never heard the term blood diamonds before. I told her, "I don't know what you are talking about." The woman made an unpleasant expression and then left the store.

…When I go to a show, I only work with a few dealers I know and trust. I am looking for clarity and color in diamonds. I am not thinking about where the diamonds came from. There are so many people involved. You could never know.

This small, but likely common, anecdote illustrates the many challenges to understanding and monitoring the diamond supply chain. In the past decade, with attention to the ethical challenges associated with diamonds and their supply chain, several methods are being tested to create more accountability.

The present paper examines what social factors might be utilized to increase accountability. The characteristics of the supply chain bear some resemblance to an assemblage of people in an emergency situation.

- There are many people witness to the emergency situation.
- The people do not necessarily have any connection to each other.
- There may be a few persons who are connected. But their connection is random rather than deliberate. For example, among a group of 30 random people on a city street or sidewalk one might find connected individuals mostly perhaps in a group of 3, but rarely any cluster larger than that.
- Because the people in the random group do not know each other, they cannot know how each other will react to a situation, what information or knowledge they bring to bear on the situation and what their self-interests are.

Thinking back to the Kitty Genovese story in 1964, the people who heard or saw her assault and murder were also at varying degrees of closeness to the event. Some may have heard Ms Genovese's screams immediately. Some may not have been able to hear anything at all. Some may not have realized that the sound outside was a woman's scream for help.

Re-examining the decision steps laid out by Darley and Latané [4], one can apply them to the diamond supply chain with associated questions.

Assessing the situation

- What are the items or issues being assessed?
- Does the Kimberley Process address all relevant issues?
- Assessment is limited by one's access to information. How does this limitation figure into understanding the results of the assessment?

Determining if the situation is an emergency

- What are the criteria for an emergency?
- What is the immediacy of the problem: urgent or emergent?
- Where in the supply chain does the problem, if it is an emergency, occur?

Identifying what action, if any, can address the emergency

- What actions can one provide to ameliorate the problem?
- How much impact will those actions have?

Choosing to take action

- What is the scope of my responsibility as community member, individual consumer, business owner, stakeholder, world citizen?
- What are the consequences of acting and not acting?

Taking action

- What are the options for action?

Reducing Diffusion of Responsibility in the Diamond Supply Chain

With this background, suggestions are offered about how to reduce diffusion of responsibility. In doing so, it is recognized that these suggestions are only part of a larger examination of the supply chain, the monitoring processes and the multi-level relationships that are involved in the diamond supply chain.

For example, regarding the aforementioned question (Does the Kimberley process address all relevant issues?), Chardon and Martin note the limitations of the Kimberley process [12-14]. Most notably, the process defines conflict diamonds narrowly in terms of funding for or proceeds to political groups. Thus, diamonds that are mined under violations of human rights, political corruption or environmental degradation are not covered. Yet these circumstances often are connected to political conflict or lead to it [15].

Furthermore, some firms are seeking to shorten the supply chain in order to gain more control over the steps in it and reduce costs [9]. Contracts within supply chains are often multi-year, a sensible business decision in order to create more predictable costs and increase efficiency in operations. Do longer term contracts, however, cause the participants to ignore problems as they occur?

Awareness of information

Sharing of information, transparency of information to create greater awareness that a problem exists.

The challenge: Even a well-informed person enters a situation with incomplete information about it. The lack of knowledge is compounded

when the sources of information are few or inaccurate. Moreover, every person is also limited by his/her ability to assess the level of knowledge that others have about the situation. Social psychologists have amply demonstrated the different perceptions of actors in a situation and observers of the actors in the situation [16].

Without complete and accurate information, a person's understanding is more vulnerable to perceptual bias and the effect of experience and emotions, rather than being guided by rational decision making.

As noted earlier, in less sophisticated supply chains, each actor in the chain has circumscribed actions. The actor may deliberately choose to ignore other information or simply be unable to know more about the other actors in the supply chain. The gaps in knowledge provide fertile ground for expansion of risk and the growth of corruption.

The response: People share information with each other when trusting relationships are established. In the absence of trust, knowledge that the other party would gain access to the information through other means also increases one party's willingness to share information with another.

The diamond supply chain structure should realign relationships and processes to build financial solidity and standard of operations of suppliers, partners and customers. This, in turn, will build long-standing profitable relationships and auditable standards that will enable the diamond supply chain to transcend commodity-trading activity only but rather robust unit capable of tracking every piece of diamond produced from mother earth to the final user.

Blockchain technology is one promising method for creating a recognized common language for sharing information about diamonds [17,18]. With this basis, mining companies especially in the diamond supply chain will be forced to move away from rigid business models operating in isolation from other parts of the chain. The will perforce become more fluid, flexible and agile enterprises poised to ensure seamless collaboration within and between the various actors in the supply chain structure, and perhaps also be more open to innovation spurred by the sharing of information.

The robust technology platform will offer the consumers the opportunity to choose diamonds that are processed through the required standards as compared to those smuggled to the diamond market. When this is done, the various actors of the diamond supply chain can be traced, tracked and monitored to comply with the acceptable practices and standards. In the case of the Marange mine, the Kimberley process can be monitored, evaluated and improved to meet the changing demands in mining operations [19].

Heightening self-consciousness

Increasing the costs of not responding to a crisis, enhancing the sense of personal responsibility and providing options for action

The challenge: Social interactions develop from and rest upon negotiations and compromise, the belief that people working together stand a better chance of surviving and thriving than does each person standing alone. Nonetheless, even presuming the best of people-that they desire to be honest and fair-does not minimize the pressures in business to make difficult choices to meet the needs of consumers and to survive in a competitive world.

Therefore, while seeking to inculcate an ethical core within each supply chain actor, one must have a way of helping actors realize the costs of their actions and their sense of personal responsibility for an outcome that involves many players.

Despite training and personal effort to be objective, people are influenced by seemingly random events that occur around them, a phenomenon known as priming [20]. Priming can elicit positive or negative behavior. In the case of diffusion of responsibility, the priming effect could be used to increase awareness of the need for action.

For example, many persons feel as though the trouble of reporting an event and the potential problems of making an error, outweigh the benefits to themselves or to society. One of the positive effects of the Genovese case was setting into motion an awareness of intervention in crises and ultimately the development of Good Samaritan laws in some jurisdictions.

The response: Telling people about diffusion of responsibility and letting them know that some people take action, can lead them to be more likely to take action. The industry should make efforts to highlight individuals who take responsibility and speak up about injustice or other issues and correct these errors. Possibly the industry could create an innovation award to incentivize industry professionals to develop more transparent and equitable models.

Although rewards for whistle-blowing or other interventions are used, they are less effective than creating a culture of accountability. Nonetheless, they may be a part of a plan to reduce diffusion of responsibility. After all, protection from harassment and intimidation may be more important to people in speaking up about a matter than is financial reward.

Establish a means of reporting "compromised" diamonds

The challenge: Taking the initiative to make a report implies some willingness to trust the system; that there are no favourites:People avoid taking responsibility because they feel that the system is rigged. That they will be penalized for speaking up and that the system is not going to change. This is a difficult cultural belief to change but it must.

With respect to diamonds, as noted recent historical focus has been on so-called conflict diamonds. Yet, there are other circumstances that are worth reporting. Some persons may not take responsibility for reporting because they are uncertain of the criteria for reporting.

The response: The Kimberley Process provides a forum for addressing the special circumstances of conflict diamonds. If the Process is not to be expanded to include a broader definition of conflict diamonds, then some other process must be developed whereby diamond industry problems can be reported.

Given the geographic span of the diamond supply chain and the varying degrees of institutional strength among the countries that participate in the diamond supply chain, one might consider a multilateral commission to address "compromised diamonds" to distinguish from conflict diamonds. Compromised diamonds would be defined as those whose provenance has been compromised by illegal or unethical behavior supply chain actors.

In every case, diamond mining operations, must take a holistic view of the supply chain, working with partners and customers, breaking organizational silos, sharing knowledge and expertise, and remote operations that requires a new view of collaboration. This collaboration must be among departments, geographies, phases of the supply chain, partners, customers, and suppliers' enterprise agility. Collaboration within and between organizations in the diamond

supply chain improves the sharing of knowledge, adherence to world class standards, respect of labour rights, ownership, enables better decision-making, and better leverages experts who may be scattered throughout the supply chain.

Conclusion

It is recognized that the aforementioned suggestions are relatively easy to state but much more difficult to implement. Nonetheless, the purpose and value of stating them is to point out that business as a whole, and supply chains in particular, are social entities. Examination of social psychological phenomena, such as diffusion of responsibility can provide some alternative ways of addressing the problems that have emerged.

Diffusion of responsibility is also a factor that should be considered in theoretical and practical implementation of corporate social responsibility plans for businesses. To what extents do the CSR initiatives of a given business enterprise creates accountability? Or, alternatively, how do the company's CSR initiatives diffuse responsibility for the company's social obligations? These questions are worthy of future studies of CSR across all industries.

Culture is another factor which must not be overlooked, as it affects the individual and collective sense of accountability. Cultural factors are particularly important to consider in the diamond supply chain because the chain spans multiple cultures across continents and involves people at all levels of socio-economic status. The diversity of stakeholders in the diamond industry may be one cause for the egregious wrongs that have been attributed to diamond mining and refining. Diversity then becomes a force enhancing rather than reducing diffusion of responsibility.

Further studies in the extraction industries could examine the role of culture and values. Such examination may lead to further steps toward creating an ethical yet economically sustainable diamond industry.

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