

## Explaining Compassion Organizing

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We develop a theory to explain how individual compassion in response to human pain in organizations becomes socially coordinated through a process we call compassion organizing. The theory specifies five mechanisms, including contextual enabling of attention, emotion, and trust, agents improvising structures, and symbolic enrichment, that show how the social architecture of an organization interacts with agency and emergent features to affect the extraction, generation, coordination, and calibration of resources. In doing so, our theory of compassion organizing suggests that the same structures designed for the normal work of organizations can be redirected to a new purpose to respond to members' pain. We discuss the implications of the theory for compassion organizing and for collective organizing more generally. ●

Organizations are often faced with situations in which their members suffer. Natural disasters (e.g., floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes), human-made disasters (e.g., accidents and errors), personal tragedies (e.g., death, illness, and divorce), and job stressors (e.g., layoffs and injuries) are just some sources of organizational members' pain (Frost, 2003). While organizations have the opportunity to respond to this pain, not all do so, nor do it well. When individuals in organizations notice, feel, and respond to human pain in a coordinated way, we call this process compassion organizing. Compassion organizing in response to unexpected and painful events varies in how effective it is across organizations. For example, in the wake of 9/11/2001, firms responded very differently to the unexpected pain of human loss and devastation. Gittell et al. (2006) compared ten airlines' response to the events of 9/11 and concluded that relational reserves and financial reserves explained differences in adaptation to this painful jolt. As in Meyer's (1982) study of hospitals' response to a doctors' strike, features of the organization helped to predict the patterns of organizational responding. While previous research has suggested that organizational routines (Zollo and Winter, 2002) and values (Bansal, 2003) may also explain responses to unexpected events, it does not address how features of the organizational context interrelate to explain patterns of organizing. When the unexpected events are marked with emotion, as in human suffering, the process of organizing to alleviate pain is not well understood. Organizational researchers have not explained how responding to an unexpected, painful event is spontaneously organized, nor how and why some patterns of compassion organizing emerge while others do not, and some are more effective than others.

The question of organizing is central to understanding the patterning of human action inside work organizations (Weick, 1979). Some have even argued that a focus on organizing is vital to organizational researchers' ability to add value to scholarship (Heath and Sitkin, 2001). In adopting a focus on organizing as opposed to organization, a theoretical emphasis on process becomes critical (Weick, 1979). In studying processes of organizing, researchers typically consider how structures and actions interrelate to accomplish organizationally relevant outcomes such as innovation, creativity, learning,

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reliability, and adaptation (e.g., Tushman and Romanelli, 1985; Weick and Roberts, 1993; Glynn, 1996; Sutton and Hargadon, 1996; Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 1999; Huy, 2002; Orlikowski, 2002). These studies help organizational researchers see how patterns in organizing depend on the interrelationship of actions and structures over time, on the ground, in the actual doing of work activities. What is less often a primary research focus is that the same structures that are designed to do the normal work of organizations can be redirected in the course of responding to human pain. Redirecting these structures to a new purpose can create a type of collective capability around emotion-based organizing that arises from human compassion in response to pain.

Strategy researchers (e.g., Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Zollo and Winter, 2002) and organizational theorists (e.g., Weick and Roberts, 1993; Orlikowski, 2002) explain that organizations develop ways of doing activities that develop a capability that allows competent action in particular domains. Most research on collective capabilities examines how routines and knowledge facilitate capable action, ignoring the critical role of emotion. Further, it tends to examine how collective capabilities arise that involve repeated activities that are central to an organization's mission or strategy. A focus on compassion organizing puts emotion center stage in explaining a collective capability, while at the same time explaining how an organization can use elements of its current capability to improvise a process of organizing that provides help and assistance to members.

An emphasis on compassion in organizational studies is relatively new (Frost et al., 2006). Our definition and operationalization of compassion builds on three assumptions. First, we assume that compassion is an expression of an innate human instinct to respond to the suffering of others (e.g., Wuthnow, 1991; de Waal, 1996). We define suffering as the experience of pain or loss that evokes a form of anguish that threatens an individual's sense of meaning about his or her personal existence (Reich, 1989). Loss and pain that induce suffering are inevitable (Harvey, 2001) but understudied features of organizational life (Frost et al., 2000; Kanov et al., 2004). Second, we assume, as sociologists such as Clark (1997) have suggested, that compassion (like sympathy) can best be described as a three-part process that includes (1) noticing or attending to the suffering of another; (2) feelings that are inherently other-regarding (Cassell, 1991; Solomon, 1998) and resemble empathetic concern (Davis, 1983; Batson and Shaw, 1991) involving someone imagining or feeling the condition of the person in pain; and (3) action or response, or what Clark (1997) called a behavioral display, aimed at easing suffering in some way (Reich, 1989; Frost et al., 2000). Thus we define compassion as noticing, feeling, and responding to another's suffering. As a type of social motive (Nussbaum, 2001), compassion, in contrast to the feeling of sympathy (von Dietze and Orb, 2000), implies action and must involve some sort of response in addition to the other crucial elements of attention and emotion. Although the response or display does not have to eliminate or remedy suffering for compassion to exist (Blum, 1980; Solomon, 1998), there

## Compassion Organizing

must be a movement to respond. The social significance of this important human experience lies in the joint occurrence of attention, feeling, and action (Clark, 1997).

In studying compassion organizing, however, we ask not only about individual noticing, feeling, and acting but also about how a trigger of human pain occasions a process of activating others' attention to pain, felt empathetic concern, and action to extract and coordinate resources from an organizational system. Thus we define compassion organizing as a collective response to a particular incident of human suffering that entails the coordination of individual compassion in a particular organizational context. We assume that compassion organizing creates a pattern of collective action that represents a distinct form of organizational capability that alleviates pain by extracting, generating, coordinating, and calibrating resources to direct toward those who are suffering. Patterns in compassion organizing depend on contextual and emergent factors that influence resource dynamics. For example, an organization that extracts, generates, and coordinates resources—e.g., social support, food, shelter—but does not align those resources with individual needs would be considered less capable in enacting compassion organizing than an organization that generates resources and calibrates the response to individuals' unique needs. Thus we do not assume that there are compassionate organizations *per se*. Instead, we examine how compassion organizing unfolds—depending on actions of human agents in the context, the social architecture of the organization, and emergent organizing dynamics endogenous to the process—and develop an induced theory of compassion organizing.

## COMPASSION ORGANIZING

Our study of compassion organizing draws on three broad areas of organizational theory: emotion, structuration, and resource-based views. These areas represent orienting points that informed the case design, provided motivating research questions, and guided the theoretical analysis of the case study of compassion organizing we describe here.

First, a study of compassion organizing needs to begin with a recognition of the importance of emotion as a prompt for and an effect of action in organizations. Emotions have been feared, shunned, or repressed in writing on organizations (Fineman, 1993; Martin, Knopoff, and Beckman, 1998; Rafaeli and Worline, 2001). In fact, much of organizational theory, particularly with roots in the work of Taylor (1911) and Weber (1946), focuses on how organizations systematize, rationalize, routinize, and bureaucratize human action in an attempt to strip away or control emotion that might interfere with rationality (e.g., Mumby and Putnam, 1992; Fineman, 2000; Rafaeli and Worline, 2001). In contrast, in organizational responses to human suffering, emotions are vital and necessary resources. Building on work that has introduced emotion into the field of organization studies (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Fineman, 1993; Rafaeli, 1996; Meyerson, 1998; Huy, 1999; Ashkanasy, Hertel, and Zerbe, 2000; Fineman, 2000), this study illuminates the role of emotions as central rather than peripheral forces in collective organizing processes. Building

on Huy's (1999, 2002) insight that strategic organizing relies on emotion-based capabilities, one of our motivating questions involves how emotion activates and mobilizes responses to human pain.

A second theoretical foundation is that of structuration and the interwoven nature of structure and agency (Giddens, 1979; Orlikowski, 2002). While previous research has suggested that contextual features such as organizational culture and routines matter for collective organizing (e.g., Weick and Roberts, 1993; Zollo and Winter, 2002), researchers rarely address how multiple features of an organizational context work together to shape patterns of action. Some researchers have suggested that the situated embedded agency of individuals (Creed and Scully, 2000) endows organizational members with an important role in "working the system" in ways that get things done and contribute to organizing dynamics (Bansal, 2003). Our second research question addresses how contextual features constrain or enable agentic responses to human suffering and, in particular, how an amalgam of contextual features, or the social architecture of the organization, works to constrain and enable patterns of activation and mobilization over time.

A third theoretical foundation for this work relates to resources in organizations. According to resource-based views of the firm (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991), an organization's internal resources are keys to organizing capabilities. Although such resources should also matter for collective organizing, current views of resources in organizing focus on a limited resource range and most often depict resources as fixed stocks. Consistent with Feldman's (2004) idea that resources are not fixed but rather are altered in use, we focus on resource dynamics—the patterning of resource extraction, generation, coordination, and calibration—that influence compassion organizing. By conceptualizing resources broadly to include such things as attention, emotion, trust, and legitimacy, as well as material goods, and by depicting resources as dynamic flows in the organization rather than fixed stocks, we are able to examine and theorize about how resource dynamics interact with features of the context to shape the activation and mobilization of action triggered by human pain.

## **METHOD**

We built our theoretical model of compassion organizing from an in-depth case study of one organization and a fire that destroyed three members' belongings. By members we refer to people whose self-identity is connected to the organization. To be a member, individuals need not be paid employees, but they must have a temporal, material relationship to the organization, creating a sense of common identity and shared fate (Rafaeli, 1996).

A case study method fits our theory-building goal and interest in documenting a process unfolding over time (Yin, 1994). Yet, in truth, we did not originally intend to do this particular case study. As we were designing a different study related to workplace compassion, one of the authors shared observations about how a big ten university business school (BTUBS)

## Compassion Organizing

was responding to three Master's of Business Administration (MBA) students who had lost everything in a fire. Other research members, who were not BTUBS members, saw the response as unusual and encouraged the conduct of initial interviews. The possibility of developing a full account of compassion organizing prompted us to drop other projects and proceed with a full-scale case study.

Selecting a case this way offers distinct research advantages. One is the immediacy and range of access to key organizational members. Within a short time following the incident, we conducted interviews and documented the process first-hand. We also had ready access to important archival and observational data. Our research team observed and documented the case as it happened, and we gained access to relevant electronic mail. Third, this case selection method made use of the familiarity and trust between organizational members and members of the research team. Thus our research employed an insider/outsider team design with its attendant advantages and disadvantages (Bartunek and Louis, 1996). One possible disadvantage arose from the research team's intimate familiarity with the context. The concern was that some members might have been too steeped in the organization's culture to adequately or objectively describe it or might disregard important information because it was overly familiar. Having multiple research team members from different organizations helped to minimize the impact of these biases. A second disadvantage involved possible conflicts of interest in case analysis if a negative picture of the organization arose. We attempted to be aware of such conflicts and report results vigilantly. A third disadvantage arose from "selecting on the dependent variable," in the sense that we already knew that this case was an instance of compassion organizing and therefore might be an inflated example. Case studies usually offer limited generalizability to other contexts, and this one—selected as an instance of compassion organizing—thus may be severely limited. For the purposes of developing a processual model, however, its extremity can become an asset (Eisenhardt, 1989a; Pettigrew, 1990; Starbuck, 2001).

### Data Sources

We used three data sources in constructing the empirical case: interviews, archival electronic correspondence, and audience responses to the case material.

**Interviews.** We conducted open-ended interviews with fifteen people between March and May of 2000. We began with the three fire victims and interviewed all students (8), staff (5), or faculty (2) who were mentioned as playing a role in anyone's account of the organizational response, thus sustaining a snowball sampling technique. All interviews, with one exception, were conducted within three months of the fire, which helped to ensure that people's memories of the organizing process were relatively fresh. Interview questions focused on capturing each informant's account of the unfolding of events from the time of the fire until responses to the fire had tapered off two weeks later. We began by asking each informant, "Imagine that I am a reporter writing the

story of what happened. Beginning with when you learned about the fire, can you tell me the story of what happened in as much detail as possible?" Answers to this question were the main data used in our analysis. Follow-up questions, shown in Appendix A, were open-ended and asked about coordination processes, other participants, and time frames.

**Electronic correspondence.** We secured a nearly complete account of all electronic mail communication between the Dean's Office and others involved in the school's response, in the form of chronologically organized e-mail logs. In addition, we captured almost all interstudent communication about the fire and the related responses, facilitated by the main student coordinator. From these sources, we developed a detailed timeline of the response, shown in Appendix B. The accuracy and detail that we capture in this case study is largely a result of meticulous record keeping by the dean's assistant and our student informants.

**Audience responses.** Another key data source arose from audience responses to the case. After composing a case draft, we shared it with 65 MBA students who were attending BTUBS at the time of the fire and who reviewed the case as part of a course. We collected their feedback and reactions to the case on audiotape. The audience response gave us multiple insiders' views of the contextual contributors to the case. The responses allowed a comparison of our analysis with their insider experience. These data served as an additional check for biases involved in opportunistic case selection and gave us additional information about the organization's culture, validating our characterization of the values and routines at BTUBS. The usual response of the MBA students analyzing the case to the explanation of the social architecture was "that's obvious," which we interpreted as affirming the accuracy of our analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

We followed two parallel paths in analyzing the three data sources. First, we conducted a theme analysis using the methods prescribed by Miles and Huberman (1984). We used the themes to develop a conceptual framework that would help integrate these themes into a coherent picture. The goal in deriving the conceptual framework was to address three different questions: (1) What was the pattern of action prompted by the fire?; (2) What roles did individuals play?; and (3) What features of the organization enabled or disabled the pattern of response? Following the convention used in Dutton and Dukerich (1991), a theme became part of our model if at least 25 percent of informants mentioned the feature of the process or the organization in their account. For example, over 25 percent of the informants had to mention an organizational value as distinguishing BTUBS for it to be counted as a theme. The analytic strategy of looking for at least minimal convergence in the elements of the process provides one check on our claims' validity. Two other checks came from having interviewees and other BTUBS members provide input and validation of the case sequence.

We created a detailed case history of the organization's fire response. Following Eisenhardt (1989a) and Yin (1994), we



## Compassion Organizing

sought to document the different actions and responses from all participants. This case narrative yielded a 28-page, single-spaced case history, along with a detailed timeline of unfolding events. After compiling the case history, we sent the complete draft to all informants. We were unable to contact two student participants, but 13 of the 15 original interviewees reviewed the case history, confirmed its accuracy, and added revisions they deemed warranted. We revised the case based on informants' feedback and distributed the case to 65 MBA students, as described above.

### DESCRIBING COMPASSION ORGANIZING

We present our analysis in two ways. We first use the data to re-create the story of the organization's response to the fire, noting and describing key events in the narrative that serve as touchstones for our induced theory of compassion organizing. By touchstone, we mean "an excellent quality or example" (Oxford English Dictionary online, 2005) from among the events in the story that serve as our data to be explained. By singling out these touchstones, we illustrate key events that are especially clear examples of the kind of activity we take to be important in compassion organizing. We then describe and summarize the touchstone events and show their relationship to our induced theory.

#### Case Narrative

The big ten university business school (BTUBS) is a professional school for business students that is part of a large public Midwestern university.<sup>1</sup> Established in 1924, BTUBS employs 135 full-time staff and 140 full-time faculty. It offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in business administration and graduates 330 students each year from its undergraduate program, 10 students per year from its Ph.D. program, and 1,020 students each year from several Master's degree programs. In addition to these, it offers a full menu of executive programs that operate year round. Executives are housed in a full-service Executive Residence that is physically attached to BTUBS.

On February 15, 2000, a fire ignited in a home that had been converted into student apartments near the BTUBS campus. The building housed nine occupants, three of whom were full-time Master's of Business Administration (MBA) students at BTUBS. Sara, a first-year MBA student, was preparing for a major job interview the night the fire broke out. Patience and Alba, second-year MBA students who were roommates, were looking forward to graduation and returning to their homes outside of the U.S. once finals were over two weeks later. Sara, Patience, and Alba awoke in the early hours of the morning to heavy smoke. With the help of firefighters, all nine occupants of the building safely escaped, but the building was destroyed. Neighbors took in the building's occupants until morning light, when they congregated outside to inspect the remains of the building. They discovered that all of their belongings were burned or destroyed by the smoke and water damage [Touchstone 1].

By happenstance, an adjunct BTUBS faculty member, Kellie, drove by the fire scene on her way to work and recognized

<sup>1</sup> All names in the case are pseudonyms.

one of the MBA students. Kellie stopped to check on the student and then proceeded to BTUBS, where she sent messages to different parts of the school to notify people of the fire. In particular, Kellie contacted (1) the dean's assistant, Sheryl; (2) a women's faculty network called Neighbors; and (3) the BTUBS Student Services office [Touchstone 2].

Meanwhile, Sara was nervous about how the fire would affect her ability to participate in her interview at 11:00 that morning, but she was determined to keep the appointment. She trudged the three-quarters of a mile from her burned apartment to BTUBS in her smoke-saturated pajamas, overcoat, and winter boots. Ves, a student services staff member, responded quickly to Sara's request for help. She alerted Heidi, the BTUBS financial aid officer, to the students' need for emergency cash, and contacted the Career Services office, allowing Sara to keep her interview appointment [Touchstone 3]. In an attempt to secure some emergency cash for the students, Heidi immediately began filling out paperwork for emergency student loans, something she had never done before. As she improvised on the loan forms, she also obtained new ID cards for the students [Touchstone 4]. She escorted the students to the university cashier's office that same afternoon to pick up their new university ID and checks for \$3000 emergency cash.

Upon hearing of the fire from Kellie, Sheryl (the dean's assistant) notified Dean Smith, contacted the school's Student Services office, and began working with the school's information technology (IT) systems to get laptop computers on loan for the three MBA students, which she secured and delivered to the students that day [Touchstone 5]. That afternoon, Meg, leader of the BTUBS Global Citizenship Club, learned of the fire from Kellie and sent a message to the full MBA student body notifying them about the fire and the needs of the three MBA students. Meg was nervous about sending this message; in her words, "When I sent out that e-mail my heart was beating really fast . . . how are people going to respond? Am I asking too much by saying 'help'?" [Touchstone 6]. As the fire message went out, faculty, students, and staff began to respond with offers of help and with donations of both money and household goods. Sheryl and Kellie began a practice of walking to the bank several times a day to cash donation checks in order to get cash to the students quickly, a practice they sustained for the two weeks until the term ended.

As the day progressed, Kellie and Jeanne, the assistant dean of Student Services, attempted to secure housing for the students at the Executive Residence. Because the Executive Residence is designated for sole use by executive education participants, its director initially denied their requests. Upon learning that these slack resources could not be made available, Kellie became angry and made a special appeal to the dean in an impromptu face-to-face meeting. After assessing the situation, the dean asked Sheryl to call the director to urge the commitment of the Executive Residence [Touchstone 7]. That afternoon, the three MBA students received offers for housing and food service at the Executive Residence for as long as they needed it. The Executive Resi-



## Compassion Organizing

dence staff was instructed that the students were to receive the same quality of service and hospitality as other guests, and the staff went out of their way to make the students feel welcome and to provide them with anything that they needed [Touchstone 8].

During this time, the students also responded. Meg set up a collection point for donations in the MBA student lounge. Dina, a close friend of one of the students, sent a message to their MBA section alerting them that two section mates had been involved in a fire and calling for help.<sup>2</sup> In response to Dina's message, Karl, an international student himself, was moved by the story and the magnitude of the students' losses to volunteer to coordinate all incoming offers of help. As an international student, Karl found the loss of the students' course materials particularly disturbing. As he explained, "It was a rather big shock to me, because I had been thinking about what would happen if I lost all of my stuff that I've done, my books and notes and stuff. Those are very important things." Karl found the unique course schedules of each of the three students and engaged teams of students in photocopying to reconstruct and replace all of the students' coursework, course packs, books, and notes. It was important to Karl not to waste volunteers' time as they worked to replace the materials, and he kept close tabs on what had been done, to eliminate duplicate efforts [Touchstone 9]. Karl kept in close touch with Dina, who relayed questions to the fire victims and kept them apprised of the ongoing coordination process [Touchstone 10].

At 4:00 that afternoon, Dean Smith was scheduled to give an annual and highly visible "State of the School" speech to key stakeholders in the school's large public auditorium. At the beginning of his speech, the dean interrupted his scripted talk to tell the audience about the fire, the situation of the three students, and the BTUBS response. As part of his improvised message, he mentioned the importance of "taking care of our own," and he pulled his wallet from his pocket and spontaneously wrote a check for \$300 and handed it to Meg, who was in the front row of the auditorium [Touchstone 11].

By the end of Day 1, students, staff, and faculty were highly aware of the fire and the needs of the fire victims, and stories of the rapid response began to circulate in BTUBS [Touchstone 12], fueled by messages from Karl that mentioned the \$1800 in donations, thanked people for their responsiveness, and informed them of students' more specific needs. These stories received additional fuel on the morning of Day 2 of the response through Sheryl's message to the entire BTUBS community that notified them of the fire, the actions the school had taken, and what materials were still needed [Touchstone 13].

On the morning of Day 2, people continued to offer monetary donations, clothing, and household goods, filling Kellie's office to the ceiling. Kellie had discreetly learned the needed clothing sizes, to slow down donations of materials that weren't useful, and Sheryl updated people about the most necessary donations to discourage them from bringing items

### 2

A section designates a permanent grouping of 60 students to which each full-time MBA student is assigned in the fall semester. There are six student sections, and from the time of their arrival on campus, the sections establish a strong identity. They are small communities that report news in the student newspaper, have social events together, take the required core classes together, and often stay connected after graduation.

that couldn't be used [Touchstone 14]. Meanwhile, fire victims attended classes on Day 2 and were greeted by fellow students with custom-stocked, supply-filled backpacks to get them through the day. The Admissions Office beat all known records by securing replacement immigration cards for the international students. At midnight on Day 2, Karl sent another update to the entire student body, informing them that the students did not have fire insurance and reiterating the need for help. He also acknowledged the generous donations and help from faculty, staff, students, and the school as a whole. He ended his message with a note of both gratitude and pride: "We are grateful for all of your donations, contributions, efforts of help, words of encouragement, thoughts, and prayers. There are none who beat the BTUBS community!" [Touchstone 15].

At 1 A.M. on Day 3 of the response to the fire, an undergraduate business student wrote to Karl, notifying him of two undergraduate students who were also in the fire. The student writing to Karl noted, "I am not sure if they need help, but I feel bad sitting here and reading this knowing they could also use help." At 7:45 that morning, Karl e-mailed Kellie with this news, and she responded that she would go to the Dean's Office to see what they could do. After inquiring about the undergraduate students, staff learned that they did not need help because their families had responded rapidly, picking them up and transporting them to their permanent homes. In the afternoon of Day 3, Karl sent a message updating the whole school about the fact that there were in fact five instead of three fire victims, and again asking for help, especially monetary donations [Touchstone 16].

From Day 4 forward, over 50 students participated in building course materials to replace the two years of lost materials for the MBA students. Momentum toward continued activation and mobilization began to dwindle, but BTUBS received two large financial donations for the students—\$1,000 from a future employer of a different MBA student and \$5,000 anonymously given by an alumnus [Touchstone 17]. All three of the students successfully finished the semester, regained financial and material resources, and graduated with their class [Touchstone 18]. After getting back on their feet, the students used any money that they did not need to create an emergency fund for future students.

Three weeks after the event, Dean Smith sent a message to the entire student body. In the message, he explained that he had just met with one of the fire victims, and he wanted to pass along three things from his conversation: (1) his gratitude that she and her colleagues were safe; (2) his appreciation for the outpouring of help; and (3) the story of this student turning down competitor schools and choosing BTUBS. He reported that the way BTUBS responded to the fire had affirmed her choice to attend. He closed the note with, "Thanks to all of you for making BTUBS the way she has experienced it and for your part in reaching out to these women in a time of crisis in their lives. I think it's a moment in which we can all take pride. Our students are . . . amazing people" [Touchstone 19].

## Compassion Organizing

The fire victims also sent a note of thanks to the full BTUBS community [Touchstone 20]: "To the faculty and staff: We would like to tell you how much we have genuinely appreciated all of the words, gifts, and acts of support we have received from each of you in the community. As difficult of a time as this has been, it truly meant so much to know how many people were thinking of us and were on hand to help. The measure of any organization is how it takes action when faced with difficult circumstances. This school served as a foundation when ours was destroyed. The community came together to help before we even knew how to help ourselves. We thank you—each of you. Sara, Patience, and Alba"

## EXPLAINING COMPASSION ORGANIZING

Table 1 describes the touchstone events and summarizes their significance for an induced theory of compassion organizing. Using the touchstones, we first describe the nature of the pain trigger (Touchstone 1) and the evidence for compassion in response to that trigger, followed by the activation

Table 1

<b>Summary of Touchstone Events and Their Theoretical Significance</b>		
<b>Touchstone #</b>	<b>Key event</b>	<b>Theoretical significance</b>
Touchstone 1	Students lose all of their belongings in a fire	This is the pain trigger. Two of the victims had no insurance, two were international students with little support nearby, and all three were in the midst of finishing a graduate degree program. The pain trigger was unambiguous, salient, and vivid, increasing attention and empathetic concern in response.
Touchstone 2	Kellie stops at the fire scene and then immediately sends messages to three different people/groups upon her arrival at BTUBS	Kellie's agentic moves to stop at the fire scene and to follow up with messages about the students' suffering were prompted by empathetic concern. Action based in felt empathetic concern is one means by which compassion organizing became activated. Calls for help prompted three different sub-networks in BTUBS to begin issuing their own notifications about the fire, which spread the social reality of the pain trigger quickly and widely.
Touchstone 3	Sara arrives in the Student Services office in her smoke-saturated pajamas, overcoat, and winter boots	Sara's presence was a source of compassion activation that made the pain trigger vivid and salient. Ves used her repertoire of student services routines to respond, which speeded the response of the Student Services office and imbued compassion organizing activity with legitimacy.
Touchstone 4	Heidi delivers emergency cash and ID cards	The BTUBS financial aid officer improvised normal work routines to meet the students' needs for emergency cash and identification. Empathetic concern for the suffering of the students sparked improvisation of routines, which became an emergent feature of the compassion organizing process, patterning the resources to meet specific needs of the students.
Touchstone 5	Sheryl acts to secure laptops, alert the dean, and contact the Student Services office	Sheryl played a critical role in moving the compassion organizing process from activation, the creation of a shared reality, to mobilization, with the extraction of resources to alleviate suffering. The transition from activation to mobilization depends on agentic moves in which people who encounter the spreading social reality of the pain trigger feel empathetic concern and act to draw on whatever resources they can to alleviate suffering.
Touchstone 6	Meg sends message to the MBA community alerting members to the fire and the needs of their fellow students	This is an additional improvised response to the pain trigger that helped to spread attention and empathetic concern. Meg's nervousness about using the network in this way is one indication that she felt she was improvising an established routine.

*(Continued on next page)*

Table 1 (Continued)

Touchstone #	Key event	Theoretical significance
Touchstone 7	The director of the Executive Residence refuses to house the MBA students, citing lack of precedent, and Kellie appeals to the dean	Obstacles to organizing inevitably arise. The fire was a "gray zone" event that did not fall clearly within the mandate of the organization. This obstacle could have hampered the scale and scope of resources offered to the students without Kellie's appeal to the dean, which illustrates how emotions other than empathetic concern can be important in generating emergent structural and symbolic features in the process.
Touchstone 8	Students are admitted to the Executive Residence, and staff make them feel welcome	The social architecture of BTUBS included hospitality routines associated with having a full-service executive hotel attached to the school. These hospitality routines allowed staff to use established work practices to respond to suffering.
Touchstone 9	Karl offers to coordinate the incoming offers of help from students	Karl created a role as a resource coordinator, spurred by feelings of identification and empathetic concern, as well as concern over potential resource duplication in the response. Karl's efforts increased the customization of resources offered to the students, and his regular communication with the BTUBS community allowed for acceleration and deceleration of donations (e.g., we need more money), broadening and narrowing of the scope of resources (e.g., we have enough clothing), and the constriction of scale when resources were no longer required (e.g., the students can't use more household goods).
Touchstone 10	Dina acts as buffer for the fire victims	Karl worked closely with Dina, who created the role of emotional buffer because she was concerned about her friends being overwhelmed by attention and offers of help. Without her creating such a role, the organizing process could have inadvertently amplified the pain of the loss.
Touchstone 11	Dean Smith interrupts his "State of the School" speech	The dean's interruption of a formal event and his symbolic action of writing a check and handing it to Meg serve as symbols that reinforce the shared values in the community and model appropriate action to relieve suffering.
Touchstone 12	Stories begin to circulate around BTUBS about the magnitude and scope of the response	Each person interviewed mentioned the importance of the dean's action at the State of the School speech, which became an element in stories of care that circulated through the organization. As these stories spread, they too became emergent symbolic features of the process, reinforcing activation and mobilization.
Touchstone 13	Sheryl e-mails BTUBS community about the fire, the school's actions, and materials still needed	Sheryl's e-mail broadens the school's attention to the students' situation, modifies knowledge of what is needed, increasing speed and customization of the response.
Touchstone 14	Kellie shares the most appropriate and useful sizes of clothing donations	A marker of the unique patterning of resources is Kellie's discreet sharing of information about the sizes of clothing that would be most useful to the students. In this way, the scope and scale of donations is narrowed and reduced to what can be best utilized. Emergent roles facilitate customization of responses in the compassion organizing process.
Touchstone 15	Karl sends a message at the end of Day 2, expressing gratitude	By expressing gratitude and general positive emotion, messages such as this one facilitated continued mobilization and reinforced the social reality of the fire.
Touchstone 16	Karl learns that undergraduate business students were also affected by the fire	Because of incomplete information about all of the students involved, the activation process initially included calls for help only for the 3 MBA students. When Karl learned that undergraduates were also affected, a new round of activation began. That Kellie recognized an MBA student at the scene of the fire and issued calls for help for only some of the fire victims illustrates that incomplete information can influence the overall shape and efficiency of a process of compassion organizing.
Touchstone 17	Donors outside the immediate BTUBS network provide financial help	When calls for help came at BTUBS, one response from some members was to reiterate those calls for help among networks outside of the school. The activation of networks outside the immediate BTUBS community increased the range and scope of resources that could be mobilized for the fire victims.

(Continued on next page)

## Compassion Organizing

Table 1 (Continued)

Touchstone #	Key event	Theoretical significance
Touchstone 18	Fire victims receive resources that illustrate broad scope, large scale, high speed, and significant customization of responses	The students received a substantial amount of monetary help, customized household goods, clothing donations in their sizes, shelter and food, books and case materials, backpacks and school supplies, new eyeglasses, and other small personal goods. In addition, they received slack to recuperate and emotional support.
Touchstone 19	Dean Smith writes to student body after talking with a fire victim	The dean's continued leadership actions served as emergent symbols that sparked emotion and reaffirmed the social architecture of the organization. The dean's closing memo expressed positive emotion and affirmed the values of the community, which amplified the response of the organization.
Touchstone 20	The fire victims write a letter thanking the community	Ultimately, the impact of the process of compassion organizing is gauged by the extent to which it alleviates the suffering of those in pain. The positive impact of the process is evidenced by this heart-felt letter from the fire victims.

and mobilization elements in the process and the emergent features of the process, emphasizing how these are shaped by the context (i.e., social architecture) and how each contributes to the pattern of compassion organizing.

**Pain trigger.** Compassion organizing begins with a trigger that signals human pain. When members of an organization notice this pain trigger, they may (or may not) initiate a response or generate calls for others to respond. In this case, the fire is a pain trigger large enough to gain attention from others at BTUBS, to generate a feeling of empathetic concern from many people, and to spark action to relieve the students' suffering (Touchstone 1). As one student said about the pain trigger, "My heart started to beat a little faster thinking about how horrible it would be to lose everything. I keep all my notes from every class, and if I lost that I would be really lost. They were so far away from home."

The magnitude of trauma differs across pain triggers. Researchers who study the mobilization of social support in crises show that the magnitude of the crisis affects the level of mobilization of social support (Eckenrode and Wethington, 1990; Kaniasty and Norris, 1995). Hence while individual pain may be met by individual compassion, pain triggers that prompt compassion organizing are likely to be noticeable to others and of some considerable magnitude. Because the process of compassion organizing begins with individuals noticing, feeling, and acting on a pain trigger, the pain trigger affects how the process of compassion organizing unfolds. In this case, the pain trigger involved a loss that was salient and easily imaginable for other members, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing.

**Evidence of compassion.** The case data support the existence of all three elements of compassion. First, compassion involves noticing another's pain. The case data support noticing, illustrated in Touchstone 2, when Kellie stopped at the fire scene and then notified others at BTUBS, Touchstone 3, when staff met one of the fire victims and experienced the immediate smell of fire, and Touchstones 6 and 9, when Meg and Karl learned about the fire. In addition, 100 percent of the informants referred to noticing the students' pain, primarily through e-mail notification. Second, compassion involves

feelings of empathetic concern, indicated by imagining the feelings of the person in pain. Empathetic concern is evident in Touchstone 9, when Karl is moved by the loss to imagine himself in the same situation. More than 50 percent of the informants spontaneously expressed empathetic concern when describing the unfolding responses to the fire. A fire victim's words illustrate that she experienced empathetic concern as part of her experience: "I had a lot of people who came up to me and said, 'Oh my God, if this had happened to me, I don't know what I would have done.' They could see this happening to them and saying, 'Oh my God, my whole apartment.' . . . I think people identified with it more and put themselves in my place. Maybe that's why they even felt more overwhelmed." Third, compassion involves action to relieve the pain. Again, the case data provide ample evidence of action, from small acts, such as cards or expressions of care, to larger acts such as giving donations, to extensive actions such as Karl's ongoing coordination of replacement course materials. All informants reported responding to the suffering in some way, and 100 percent of them responded affirmatively when we asked them if they would characterize what happened at BTUBS as compassionate. A typical response to the question, "Would you categorize this as compassion?" was the answer, "Oh yes, very, very much so." MBA students who were uninvolved in the response but who read the case also indicated that they would characterize what happened as compassionate. In sum, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the people who participated in helping the students were acting with compassion as we define it.

### **Dimensions of Compassion Organizing**

Across episodes of compassion organizing, variance in the responses can be gauged by four dimensions of the outcomes: scale, scope, speed, and customization (Dutton et al., 2002). These four dimensions and their evidence in the current case are summarized in table 2, providing an extensive overview of the resources offered to the fire victims.

The scale of response refers to the overall amount of resources offered to alleviate suffering, which is in line with adaptation researchers' claim that it is meaningful to gauge an organization's response magnitude (e.g., Normann, 1977; Tushman and Romanelli, 1985; Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Bansal, 2003). Table 2 summarizes the scale of resources generated in the process (see also Touchstone 18). Scale alone does not capture the response magnitude of the compassion organizing process, however. Strategic adaptation researchers also use the scope of response as a dimension to gauge response magnitude (e.g., Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Bansal, 2003). Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) argued that the scope of response gauges the breadth of the action repertoires. Here, scope refers to the breadth and variety of resources directed to alleviate suffering. Table 2 illustrates the broad scope of resources offered to the fire victims at BTUBS. The impact of compassion organizing also depends on speed, the timely availability and delivery of resources to those who are suffering. Speed is a common dimension for capturing response patterns (e.g., Eisenhardt,



## Compassion Organizing

Table 2

### Dimensions and Evidence of Compassion Organizing\*

Dimension	Definition	Evidence
Scale of the response	Amount of resources generated and directed toward persons suffering	Over 100 people responded to Meg's initial request for help. Over 50 students participated in reproducing notes. Over \$3000 in emergency loans. Approximately \$3000 in donations per student. Gift of free housing and food service at Executive Residence for as long as needed.
Scope of the response	Variety of resources generated and directed toward persons suffering	Breadth of items: Money in the form of cash and loans, computers, housing, clothing, furniture and household goods, certification papers, everyday necessities. Breadth of people involved: Students (day & evening), parents of students, employers of students, staff at BTUBS and across university, faculty, alumni, spouses of students.
Speed of the response	Amount of time taken to initiate and complete the response to persons suffering	A flurry of the compassion organizing activity occurred within 48 hours following the fire. Specifically, time that passed between the time Kellie first became aware of the fire and action is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various networks notified (15 minutes).</li> <li>• Processing of emergency loans begins (30 minutes).</li> <li>• Students driven to the mall to buy replacement clothes (2 hours).</li> <li>• \$3000 in interest-free loans secured and processed for each student (4 hours).</li> <li>• Identification replaced (4 hours).</li> <li>• Loaned laptop computers secured (5 hours).</li> <li>• Efforts to coordinate course material replacement begin (6 hours).</li> <li>• Accommodations at the Executive Residence secured (7.5 hours).</li> <li>• Dean interrupts the State of the School speech to discuss event (8 hours).</li> <li>• Student donations reach \$1800 (9 hours).</li> <li>• Detailed request for specific donations sent to victims' MBA section (9.5 hours).</li> <li>• Global message sent to the BTUBS community detailing help needed (26 hours).</li> <li>• Coursepack office offers to replace coursepacks at no charge (26 hours).</li> <li>• Donations of clothing and appliances up to what is immediately useful (32 hours).</li> <li>• Replacement immigration documentation secured by Admissions Office (36 hours).</li> <li>• Current semester's course materials rebuilt (48 hours).</li> <li>• Response to the fact that 2 undergraduate students were also involved in the fire (48 hours).</li> <li>• Another \$7200 donated by students, alumni, and corporations, including an anonymous \$5000 donation from an alumnus (14 days).</li> </ul>
Customization of the response	Efficient patterning and shaping of resources to meet the particular needs of those who are suffering.	Attention toward non-duplication of efforts or resources reflected in the e-mails and interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-mail from Meg to Karl: "Below is a list of things they need, but we don't want to send this out to the whole school, or we'll end up with way too much stuff!"</li> <li>• E-mail from Karl to Meg: "I am currently compiling an e-mail to ensure that we do not duplicate efforts."</li> <li>• E-mail from Karl to one MBA section: "Please include your name on donations so that unused items can be returned."</li> <li>• Interview with Meg: "He [Karl] just sent me a note, not in any way saying 'stay out of it,' but just saying 'to cut down on the confusion.'"</li> <li>• Interview with Karl: "I was worried about ending up with a whole bunch of stuff that we can't do anything with."</li> </ul> <p>Explicit seeking of information around the particular needs of the fire victims results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification papers for international students.</li> <li>• Special living accommodations for married students.</li> <li>• Eyeglasses for near-sighted students.</li> <li>• Customization of course material replacement to each student's course history.</li> <li>• New clothes quickly delivered to accommodate job interview.</li> <li>• Donations of appropriate size clothing.</li> </ul>

\* This documentation is conservative, as we only state a response when it was explicitly noted or documented in e-mails or interviews. The three students involved in the fire made general comments about a broad range of other smaller acts of comfort (e.g., cheer-up e-mails, handwritten notes of concern, hugs, etc.), which they mentioned were important indicators that people cared.

1989b; Eisenhardt and Tabrizi, 1995). Finally, while adaptation researchers have relied on the three dimensions of scope, scale, and speed to measure responses, compassion organizing also varies in levels of response customization, which refers to the efficient patterning and shaping of resources to meet the particular needs of those who are suffering. Scholars doing research on service encounters use customization as a gauge of effectiveness, and more effective organizations customize service to customers' needs (Gutek et al., 1999). Here, this quality of the process is reflected in efforts to ensure that sufferers' unique needs (e.g., eyeglasses in the right prescription; immigration paperwork) are met and that the scale of the resources offered doesn't expand beyond these needs, nor the scope broaden beyond resources that are useful. At BTUBS, the customization of the response as part of the process is especially notable.

### **Compassion Activation**

In our model, both the social architecture (described below) and human agency are forces that transform individual compassion into a social reality that commands collective attention. Activation refers to the ways in which the pain trigger takes on a social reality. At the heart of activation is the generating and directing of attention to some change in condition that communicates pain or suffering. Activation of compassion organizing happens in multiple ways and re-occurs several times. Activation occurred when individuals made efforts to draw others' attention to the pain trigger, most often through e-mail. Activation also happened through the vivid presence of a pain trigger in a public place (Touchstone 3). Reactivation of compassion organizing happened when new people learned of the students' plight, new information about the state of the students was received, and new evidence of additional students involved in the fire came to light (e.g., Touchstone 16).

Our induced theory posits that compassion activation is enabled by the characteristics of the social architecture—the amalgam of social networks, values, and routines that structure an organization and that constrain and enable individual action. Drawing from insights of a structuration perspective (Giddens, 1979; Barley, 1986; Yates and Orlikowski, 1992), we propose that the process of compassion organizing unfolds through the complex interaction of social architecture and human action over time. Through an organization's social architecture, people are able (or not) to call collective attention to pain and spread feelings of empathetic concern that are likely to prompt a response.

**Compassion activation and values.** Shared values define what is important in an organization and create expectations about how to act in different situations (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1996), as well as supply an impetus to act and help people to make meaning from actions (Smircich, 1983). As Swidler (1986: 277) argued, shared cultural values lead to "strategies of action." Informants at BTUBS consistently mentioned three values that distinguished BTUBS: (1) *People are more than their professional identities*. According to members of BTUBS, it is appropriate and good to know

## Compassion Organizing

about each other's lives outside of one's role requirements and professional identity as an employee or as a student. This shared value helps ensure that people are treated holistically (Friedman, Christiansen, and DeGroot, 1998) and implies that people are viewed as more than their formal roles. This value enhanced people's willingness to attend to those in pain, as well as infused people's pain with significance, motivating attempts to notify others of the pain. (2) *People's humanity should be displayed*. This is an expression that comes from Dean Smith's explanation of BTUBS's response to the fire. The value of "displayed humanity" helps ensure that suffering is recognized as a legitimate part of life in the organization. Displayed humanity is routinely emphasized as part of the Global Citizenship program, and it shows up in active efforts to respond humanely to the needs of the world as a core part of the leadership model that BTUBS aspires to teach. This value facilitated activation through legitimating pain and motivating people to be open about their suffering and gave others in the organization room to feel and display empathetic concern. (3) *Members are like family*. As one participant summed it up, "The organization cares for its own." Dean Smith reinforced this shared value in his public speech (Touchstone 11). This value normalized attention to the pain of members and infused it with significance, making attention to the students' plight more likely. All three values together guided and motivated attention to the students in pain and emotion surrounding their pain, and legitimated the spread of attention and emotion over time.

**Proposition 1a:** Widely shared values of holistic personhood, expressed humanity, and family increase attention to pain.

**Proposition 1b:** Widely shared values of holistic personhood, expressed humanity, and family increase felt empathetic concern for those in pain.

**Compassion activation and routines.** Every organization has routines created through sustained interaction (Cohen and Bacdayan, 1995; Feldman, 2000), and such routines ease action and coordination by providing well-grooved scripts that require relatively little thought and reflection (Cyert and March, 1963; Nelson and Winter, 1982). Routines are often construed as the building blocks of organizational capabilities (Nelson and Winter, 1982), and here they played a vital role in compassion organizing. Routines enabled people to notice, feel, and respond to the students' pain in legitimate and timely ways. Four sets of routines are particularly important in BTUBS' response to the fire, three of which played an important role in compassion activation. First, as a university unit, BTUBS has a well-developed set of *routines for student services*. In the case of the fire, student services personnel were already sensitive to changes in students' emotional states as part of their routine service delivery. As a result, people enacting these service routines were primed to notice and respond to the students in pain, and the service routines made it quicker, easier, and more legitimate to spread attention to this pain trigger (Touchstone 3). Secondly, BTUBS has developed an extensive set of what we identified as *routines for civic engagement*, called the "Global Citizenship" pro-

gram, although none of the respondents call them routines. All students participate in the Global Citizenship program when they begin their MBA studies. Within 24 hours of their arrival, students are put into teams to participate for a day in some form of community service. After their participation, students make commitments about the form and level of community volunteer work for the next two years in their MBA program, which they typically meet or exceed. Accustomed to attending to pain and to coordinating in teams to help others as part of the routines of this program, when students were alerted to the fire through the mechanism of the Global Citizenship Club (Touchstone 6), these routines helped to spread attention and empathetic concern quickly, endowed the notice with legitimacy, and eased coordination of people's responses. A third routine that facilitated compassion activation involved *the frequent and normal use of e-mail to notify the BTUBS community about severe harm or loss to members*. At the time of the fire, the BTUBS community was accustomed to receiving notices of harm related to faculty, staff, or student members or their families. The routine use of e-mail for this purpose increased the speed of sharing information about the fire, spreading attention and emotion and adding legitimacy to the calls for assistance. Legitimacy, the "perception that actions are desirable, proper, and appropriate in some socially constructed system of norms, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574), allowed members to use information about pain and build on others' attempts to respond.

**Proposition 2a:** Routines associated with customer service, community service, and notification of harm increase attention to pain and increase the diffusion of attention to pain.

**Proposition 2b:** Routines associated with customer service, community service, and notification of harm increase empathetic concern for those in pain and increase the diffusion of empathetic concern.

**Proposition 2c:** Routines associated with customer service, community service, and notification of harm facilitate coordination of responses.

**Compassion activation and networks.** In addition to multiple and diverse clusters within its network, BTUBS is composed of networks that are rich in strong ties that carry trust and credibility (Uzzi, 1997; Baker, 2000). By trust, we refer to an individual's willingness to rely on another person when there is risk of some kind (Zand, 1972). People who called for help enjoyed a common identification with BTUBS that also signaled credibility and trust (Brewer and Kramer, 1986). Compassion activation was facilitated by people's use of a variety of networks within BTUBS, as well as by the strength of the ties between network members. For instance, the message of alarm and help-seeking initially went out from Kellie to two intact networks: the network of women faculty and the network of student services staff (Touchstone 2). Later in the afternoon, information about the fire traveled across several student network clusters, such as MBA Section 3 and the Global Citizenship Club (e.g., Touchstone 6). The utilization of different network clusters expanded the

## Compassion Organizing

spread of information about the pain trigger across diverse groups and generated awareness and empathetic concern among different populations that might attend to the event for different reasons. For instance, Kellie notified the “neighbors” network, a group of women faculty members who were likely to respond with donations of women’s clothing or other household goods, while Meg notified the MBA student network through her role as president of the Global Citizenship Club, activating compassion among a different subnetwork that was likely to attend to the call because of an interest in civic engagement. The network reach was wide, and members within these clusters were non-redundant, so the pattern of activation was broad and varied from the outset. Credibility and trust in the message sender facilitated people’s noticing the message and responding to it, leaving little ambiguity that the event had happened or that the students were in need.

The lack of ambiguity is evidenced by the speedy donations and offers of help, all of which came without question. These dynamics among network clusters illustrate that activation is not a one-time event. As members learned of the pain trigger in different ways, reactivation spawned iteration in the process of compassion organizing. As time passed, word of the fire spread to additional organizational networks outside of BTUBS through e-mail messages from individuals who appealed to additional contacts. These e-mail messages to secondary organizational networks served as an additional compassion activation mechanism, adding to the overall resources offered to the students and keeping the organizing process moving as long as necessary.

**Proposition 3a:** Activation of multiple and diverse network clusters among different organizational subgroups increases attention to pain and the diffusion of attention to pain.

**Proposition 3b:** Activation of multiple and diverse network clusters among different organizational subgroups increases felt empathetic concern for those in pain and the diffusion of empathetic concern.

**Proposition 3c:** Networks that are high in credibility, trust, and common organizational identification increase the legitimacy of attention to pain and felt empathetic concern for those in pain.

**Proposition 3d:** Activation of secondary networks outside of the organization increases attention to pain and felt empathetic concern for those in pain.

The social architecture of this organization directly enabled the noticing and feeling associated with compassion, as well as the spread of attention and emotion around the pain of the students. In addition, aspects of the social architecture endowed the information about harm to the students with legitimacy as people came to understand the reality of the students as a meaningful circumstance that required a response. Thus in our induced theory of compassion organizing, the social architecture directly shapes attention, emotion, and legitimacy in the process and serves as a springboard for improvisation of action that purposively extracts, generates, and coordinates resources to direct toward those in need.

## Compassion Mobilization

Compassion activation is linked to compassion mobilization, the processes involved in extracting and generating resources to deliver to those in pain. While activation also involves resources (e.g., attention, emotion, trust, and legitimacy), mobilization refers to the coordination and calibration of resources involved more centrally with trying to help the persons in pain. Though the line between compassion activation and mobilization is imprecise, compassion activation is marked by spreading attention to the social reality of the pain trigger, while mobilization is marked by action in response to the growing social reality that is visible in the assembly and coordination of a range of resources to direct toward those in pain. Whether compassion activation leads to compassion mobilization is likely to depend again on elements of the social architecture and its interaction with the agentic responses of people in the organization.

**Compassion mobilization and values.** In terms of compassion mobilization, members drew on the values at BTUBS described above as they heeded calls for donations and responded in an immediate, caring, and familial manner. For example, the fire victims' student peers showed little concern over demonstrating a detached professional demeanor, drawing on the value that people's humanity should be on display to welcome the fire victims back into the classroom right away and to coordinate resources such as backpacks full of school and personal supplies that they anticipated the fire victims might need. Values at BTUBS eased coordinated action in response to the pain by imbuing individual and collective response with significance and meaning, further fueling people's willingness to contribute and to stay involved. In addition, the use of organizational technology to issue updates about the fire victims and to calibrate the resources that they needed illustrates the value that members are like family—in this case, sharing such personal information as clothing sizes, housing status, and insurance coverage, personal information that facilitated tailoring response to members' unique needs.

**Proposition 4a:** Values of holistic personhood, expressed humanity, and family increase the scale, scope, speed, and customization of responses directed toward those in pain.

**Proposition 4b:** Values of holistic personhood, expressed humanity, and family facilitate the coordination of resources directed toward those in pain.

**Compassion mobilization and routines.** As described above, the social architecture contained a particular set of routines that are important in compassion mobilization as well as in compassion activation. Student services routines facilitated mobilization by providing scripts for efficient action to help students get back on their feet. The civic engagement routines of the Global Citizenship Program facilitated quick coordination of students into teams that set out to generate resources such as academic books, sets of notes from entire classes, and expressions of care through cards, flowers, and gifts. Frequent and normal use of e-mail to notify the



## Compassion Organizing

BTUBS community about harm or loss to members contributed to a quick and efficient prompting of action and updating that eased customization of resources to unique needs. This use of technology also facilitated the cycling between activation and mobilization, because frequent calls for additional forms of resources generated additional responses that were customized to the needs of individuals and also kept attention on the pain trigger. Finally, a unique set of routines was important in compassion mobilization—those associated with hospitality and the Executive Residence hotel located in the school. Compassion mobilization was initially hindered by the hospitality routines, which generated resistance to setting a new precedent by housing the students in the residence and created an obstacle to mobilization that generated significant negative emotion (Touchstone 7). This obstacle and its associated emotion fueled additional mobilization attempts. Once the initial resistance was overcome, hospitality routines ensured that the students were treated as cherished guests of the Executive Residence, subject to the same hospitality services as all of its guests (Touchstone 8), greatly expanding the range of resources delivered to the students and the customization of care to their particular needs.

**Proposition 5a:** Routines associated with customer service, community service, notification of harm, and hospitality increase the scale, scope, speed, and customization of responses directed toward those in pain.

**Proposition 5b:** Routines associated with customer service, community service, notification of harm, and hospitality facilitate the coordination of resources directed toward those in pain.

**Compassion mobilization and networks.** Compassion activation is enhanced when multiple clusters within an organizational network are notified of harm and receive calls for action, as described above. In addition, compassion mobilization is enhanced because members of diverse network clusters have access to different arrays of resources that they can call upon, customize, and direct toward alleviating suffering. Many of these resources are summarized in table 2. In addition, multiple network clusters and the trust and credibility of ties in the network help members coordinate resources to direct toward those in pain. For instance, Touchstones 17 and 18 illustrate the variety of resources that Karl, Kellie, Sheryl, and others were able to mobilize as they coordinated across multiple clusters of student, faculty, and staff networks. They were also able to coordinate across secondary networks beyond the organization itself once those were activated by others, coordination that generated additional resources that could be directed to ease suffering. For example, one student's future employer donated \$1000 and an anonymous alumnus donated \$5000, pools of money that allowed the school to convert the emergency loans into grants for the fire victims, which may have otherwise been impossible.

**Proposition 6a:** Access to multiple and diverse network clusters inside and outside an organization increases the scale, scope,

speed, and customization of responses directed toward those in pain.

**Proposition 6b:** Access to multiple and diverse network clusters inside and outside an organization facilitates the coordination of resources directed toward those in pain.

Features of the social architecture are important for explaining the frequency, extensiveness, and effectiveness of mobilization processes that contribute to the pattern of compassion organizing. The social architecture directly facilitates the generation, extraction, and customization of vital resources that could be delivered to the persons in pain (e.g., food, clothing, housing). At the same time, the social architecture itself contained resources, such as trust in networks, service in routines, and humanity in values, that worked to ease the coordination of action in response to pain. Thus the social architecture served as a type of bedrock that both directly and indirectly enabled mobilization efforts.

### **Emergent Features of Compassion Organizing**

By themselves, compassion activation and mobilization are mutually reinforcing and are the “engine” for a process of compassion organizing. But compassion organizing is also shaped by emergent features, both structural and symbolic, that shape the evolving process and pattern of responses. Emergent structural features consist of created roles and improvised routines, while emergent symbolic features consist of leaders’ actions and caring stories. Emergent features in the process of compassion organizing affect the ongoing pattern of activation and mobilization by redirecting attention and emphasizing moment-to-moment adjustments in resources, affecting the patterns of outcomes in the organizing process.

**Created roles.** In our model, a key emergent structural feature involves created roles, which are the informal, unofficial roles that emerge during the organizing process, last as long as the process demands them, and fade away as the process winds down. Three created roles emerged in this case: (1) Kellie as an expeditor of the response process, (2) Karl as a coordinator for academic resources, and (3) Dina as a buffer for the fire victims (Touchstones 2, 9, and 10). These created roles allowed certain individuals to monitor the ongoing process and redirect it as necessary. People who occupy emergent roles often have specialized knowledge or a particular emotional capacity that allows them to respond in a particular way to the pain trigger. In this case, Kellie had experienced a fire as a college exchange student, which gave her insight into the needs that were likely to arise for the fire victims. Her faculty position gave her knowledge about available organizational resources and networks. Karl shared an identity as an international student with two of the fire victims and drew on this shared identity in determining that replacing course materials was a pressing need. He also drew on his graduate student identity to determine how best to coordinate this effort without wasting others’ time or resources. In his words, “I figured, instead of having them each receiving five different copies of the same course, let me sort that out for them and make sure they get one of each and we don’t

## Compassion Organizing

waste a whole bunch of other people's time." Dina was a close friend who used the knowledge and emotional capacity built by her friendship with the fire victims to inform her role as buffer, ensuring that the delivery of resources didn't inadvertently cause more pain. These emergent roles are similar to what Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) identified as a form of ad hoc structuring that facilitates problem solving as people with knowledge self-organize to smooth the organizing process.

**Proposition 7a:** The emergence of roles in the process increases the scale, scope, speed, and customization of responses directed toward those in pain.

**Proposition 7b:** The emergence of roles in the process facilitates the coordination of resources directed toward those in pain.

**Improvised routines.** Improvised routines in compassion organizing are normal work routines that are spontaneously modified to address suffering. This structural feature allows well-rehearsed templates of organizational action to be redirected toward assisting those in pain. For instance, Touchstone 4 describes Heidi's improvisation of her normal work routines for processing emergency loans. Another example involves Sheryl and Kellie's coordination with donors to make checks out to them personally and walking them to the bank several times a day to generate cash, which allowed them to bypass organizational "red tape" and greatly speed delivery of cash to the fire victims. These improvisations allowed for quick resource delivery and increased the scope and scale of resources directed to those in need, at the same time that drawing on normal work routines added legitimacy to the process (Feldman and Pentland, 2003).

**Proposition 8a:** Improvisation of routines in the process increases the scale, scope, speed, and customization of responses directed toward those in pain.

**Proposition 8b:** Improvisation of routines in the process facilitates the coordination of resources directed toward those in pain.

**Leader's symbolic actions.** A second category of emergent features involves the symbolic actions of leaders. A central symbolic leadership action is described in Touchstone 11, when the dean acknowledged the pain trigger and described the activation and mobilization efforts at a large, formal, public event. This symbolic act broadened attention to the pain trigger and also added to the recursive relationship between activation and mobilization because the dean's striking public acknowledgement was widely shared across the key stakeholders of the school. Symbolic leadership draws on the idea that a leader can influence people and direct action largely through cognitive and emotional means, especially by creating powerful symbols that carry meaning that extend beyond the person (Pfeffer, 1981; Gardner, 1999). Gardner (1999) suggested that leaders who create powerful symbols generate a bond with their audiences and can use symbols to alter the feelings and actions of a community. In this case, the dean's symbolic act of stopping the speech, describing the fire, and writing a check on the spot modeled compassionate

action (Dutton et al., 2002), helping to spread attention to pain, evoking emotion in the audience, and demonstrating appropriate actions.

**Proposition 9a:** The more that leaders model compassionate action in public settings, the greater the attention to pain and empathetic concern directed toward those in pain.

**Proposition 9b:** The more that leaders model compassionate action in public settings, the greater the scale, scope, speed, and customization of responses directed toward those in pain.

**Stories of care.** A second emergent symbolic feature involved stories of care that circulated around BTUBS, reinforcing activation and mobilization and shaping the compassion organizing process. Stories are short pieces of oral or written narrative that encapsulate action, feeling, and thought in a particular time within a three-part structure (beginning, middle, and end) and can be socially shared (see Reissman, 1993; Bruner, 2002). For example, all but one of our informants mentioned hearing the story of what the dean had done in his State of the School speech. The circulation of this story increased attention to the pain trigger, increased the number of people who felt empathetic concern for the fire victims, and increased the number who became involved in generating, coordinating, and calibrating resources in response. Another story that became an emergent symbol at BTUBS involved Meg and the students' collection box, which raised \$1800 within hours of the fire. Several faculty and staff members mentioned feeling inspired and elevated upon hearing about the amount of money donated in such a short time, a feeling that prompted them to accelerate their own giving (Haidt, 2003). These stories circulated through the BTUBS electronic mail system, accompanied by statements such as Karl's: "There are none who beat the BTUBS community!" (Touchstone 15), carrying positive emotions such as elevation, gratitude, and pride, which are linked with prosocial and helping behavior (Emmons, 2003; Haidt, 2003), further linking activation and mobilization.

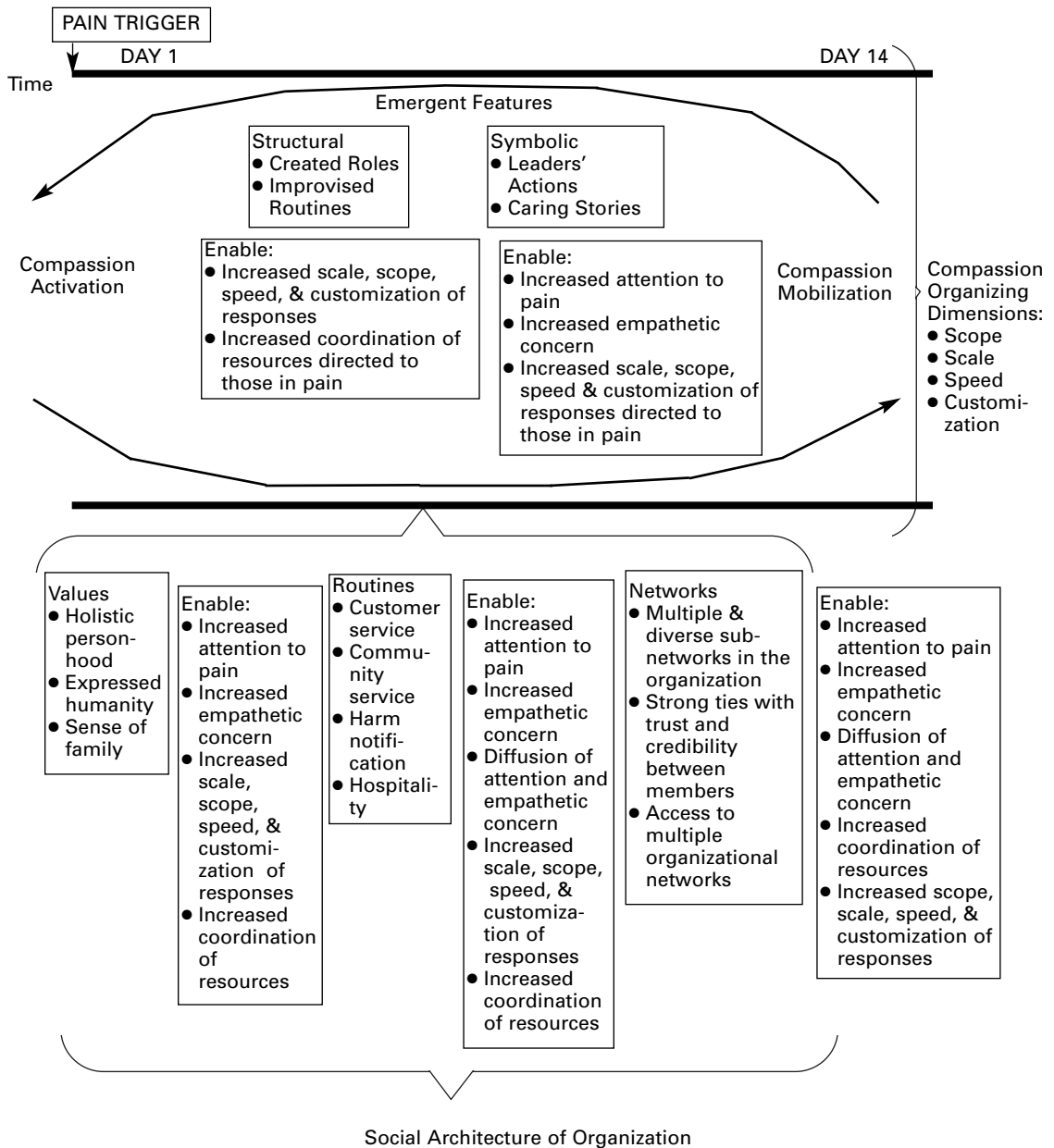
**Proposition 10a:** The greater the number and spread of caring stories, the greater the attention and empathetic concern directed toward those in pain.

**Proposition 10b:** The greater the number and spread of caring stories, the greater the scale, scope, speed, and customization of responses directed toward those in pain.

Figure 1 summarizes the ways in which the compassion organizing process is patterned from all of the elements discussed above working in concert. Figure 1 shows that as the process proceeds over time, the social architecture facilitates compassion activation and mobilization that proceed in iterative cycles. Characteristics of the amalgam of networks, routines, and values that constitute the social architecture make it more or less likely that members of the organization will attend to pain, feel empathetic concern, and respond to pain in some way. In compassion activation, organizational members draw on certain qualities of networks, routines, and values to activate a social reality surrounding the pain trigger.

## Compassion Organizing

**Figure 1. The Process of Compassion Organizing.**



The spreading of this social reality mobilizes more attention, feeling, and response to pain, leading into compassion mobilization and the coordination of multiple members' efforts, which extracts, generates, and coordinates resources directed toward those who are suffering. Over time, and in conjunction with emergent features that add fine-grained adjustments to the process, compassion organizing can yield broad and significant resources that are calibrated to unique individual needs and are delivered in a timely manner that helps to alleviate pain.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This exploration of one case of a pain trigger and its associated response was motivated by three questions that are cen-

tral to processes of organizing. This study set out to address the ways in which emotion activates and mobilizes responses to human pain in organizations. The induced theory of compassion organizing shows that, in keeping with Huy's (1999, 2002) findings related to the role of emotion in strategic organizing, emotion is a central means by which action in response to pain is prompted, accelerated, and moderated over time. A second question involved the ways in which contextual features constrain and enable responses to human pain in organizations. The induced theory of compassion organizing proposes explicit mechanisms by which the amalgam of contextual features that constitute the social architecture of the organization enables and constrains members' ability to extract, generate, coordinate, and calibrate resources to direct toward alleviating suffering. And finally, this case study was motivated by a question related to the role of resource dynamics in activating and mobilizing action to relieve suffering. The induced theory of compassion organizing engenders explicit propositions related to the centrality of resource dynamics in the expression of compassion in work organizations.

Our analysis depicts compassion organizing as a joint product of structures of the organization (the social architecture), the agency of individuals who get engaged in the process (activation and mobilization), and emergent features (structural and symbolic) that are unique to the situation. These three elements provide the skeleton of a theory of compassion organizing. The flesh of the arguments is revealed by the propositions, which contain insight about several core mechanisms at work in creating compassion organizing that direct attention, facilitate empathetic concern, ease coordination, and contribute to the scale, scope, speed, and customization of resources to facilitate recovery from pain. Our propositions suggest that five core mechanisms are particularly central to explaining the pattern of compassion organizing. These five mechanisms open up new considerations for theorizing about the dynamics of collective organizing.

First, attention to pain triggers is a necessary precondition for the compassion organizing process. It is conditioned by organizational values that sensitize people to noticing conditions that are painful for others and is directed and connected to action through actual and improvised routines that condition the response and through organizational networks that amplify and spread attention to pain. The symbolic actions of leaders and the diffusion of caring stories prompt further attention to the pain that is present in organizations. The enabling of attention as a key mechanism underlines the importance of attention as a vital, constrained, but renewable resource (Dutton, 1997; Ocasio, 1997). Our idea of contextual enabling of attention fits Ocasio's (1997) idea that individual attention is situated in the context of organizational activities and procedures, but our idea of the social architecture of an organization as a key enabling mechanism opens the question of how organizational culture works in conjunction with networks and routines to shape the activation, direction, and spread of attention. Our theory suggests that distributed attention gets organized into a collective pattern of action by



## Compassion Organizing

values, routines, and networks that focus and spread attention, facilitating the coherence of attention-driven action. This same idea is present in Weick and Roberts' (1993) claim that the attentional basis of heedful interrelating is anchored in the value of respect, which facilitates the dynamics of contributing, representing, and subordinating that ultimately produce the comprehension needed to sustain high reliability and reduce organizational errors.

Second, the generation and spread of emotions are central to compassion organizing. Emotions prompt and accelerate action and also serve as guides in the process, allowing people to fine-tune how they are responding over time. The contextual enabling of emotion as a key mechanism in compassion organizing underlines the importance of emotion for explaining organizing dynamics (Huy, 2002). These insights build on the role of emotion as a constructive force in organizing developed by Huy (1999, 2002) in his account of how emotional capability contributes to competent change processes. One central point in our theory is that rather than seeing emotion as something that interferes with the organizing process, emotions are constructive forces that contribute to compassion organizing. The contextual features of the organization enable emotion in a variety of ways. Routines that are linked to service and hospitality create scripts for action and legitimate attention to changes in the emotions of others in ways that inform appropriate responding. Humanistic values open space to allow people to respond to emotional cues with their own expressions of emotion, such as empathetic concern, which can mobilize action. Networks allow for the spread not only of information but of various emotions such as empathetic concern, gratitude, and pride, which fuels action. The fact that many of the generated emotions in this case happen to be positive broadens members' thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2001), increasing the response capability in the process. In addition, positive emotions like gratitude or elevation further spawn prosocial helping behavior, fueling responsive action (Emmons, 2003; Haidt, 2003). Finally, individuals' emotional responses to pain can prompt improvisational actions, symbols, and stories that further contribute to the patterning of responses. Thus emotions prompt, direct, and reward action patterns that are critical to collective organizing. Our results invite researchers to consider how features of an organizational context encourage and enable emotional expression, public emotional displays, and emotion-based responses, all of which contribute to compassion organizing.

Third, members relied on a significant level of trust and legitimacy at BTUBS in responding to pain. Members trusted one another to respond to the pain trigger, to coordinate quickly, and to act as necessary in the situation. Without legitimacy, however, activation and mobilization could not have proceeded over time. Trust and legitimacy were endowments of the routines and qualities of the networks that characterized BTUBS before the fire episode and were also evident in the improvised routines, created roles, and symbolic features of leaders' actions and caring stories that became important emergent features of the process. Trust and legitimacy are

resources that sociologists would see as central to social action. Both social resources are critical to compassion organizing because they facilitate the extraction and coordination of resources and facilitate the speed of adjustment to changing circumstances. In addition, trust and legitimacy facilitate the expression of emotion, which is critical to the process, and help to speed and spread emotion and attention, easing the coordination of resources. Future research could consider how these social resources are enabled by organizational routines, values, and networks and how they fuel the coordination processes that allow organizations to respond adaptively to triggers beyond the trigger of human pain that we document in this case.

Fourth, organizational members drew on their particular knowledge, position, and relationship with persons in pain to improvise roles and routines that further shaped the organizing process. Created roles and improvised routines facilitated moment-to-moment, on-the-ground adjustment of attention, emotion, and other resources to meet changing conditions. These emergent structural features, unique to the situation, help regulate the extraction, generation, and coordination of resources. The regulatory function of these emergent structures also contributes to customizing responses to the needs of the persons in pain. Agents improvising structures underlines the importance of agency in organizations and how members work the context to facilitate the organizing process. It highlights the pivotal actions of individuals who use their knowledge, emotion, and position to improvise roles and routines that directly contribute to delivering care, help, money, support, and other resources to people in need. Agents improvising roles resembles the way that individuals create the ad hoc networks that Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) argued are so helpful in creating resilience in high-reliability organizing. This mechanism relies on the use of flexible expertise (Fletcher, 1998) to create emergent structures so that agents who have the appropriate knowledge are structurally endowed with the capacity to act in ways that are well suited to the challenges at hand. Thus our theory of compassion organizing suggests that future accounts of collective organizing would do well to consider the effects of flexible and emergent structures in facilitating the extraction, generation, and coordination of resources. In addition, it reminds researchers to consider the situated embedded agency of individuals in a variety of locations in the organization. It is these agentic individuals who are often able to use their experience, knowledge, and emotional and practical intelligence (Wagner and Sternberg, 1985) to "work the system" to get things done (Fligstein, 1997; Dutton et al., 2001; Bansal, 2003), contributing to collective organizing processes.

Fifth, through symbolic enrichment, leaders created symbolic acts and members generated stories that carried meaning and evoked emotion. Leaders' acts and caring stories spread attention to the pain trigger and emotional responses to it, furthering activating and broadening mobilization efforts across new networks. These symbolic acts draw on and reaffirm the values that underlie a response to pain, lending legitimacy and importance to members' noticing, feeling, and

## Compassion Organizing

responding to pain. As symbolic elements heighten the legitimacy of the unfolding response process, they amplify members' sense that it is desirable to act. Symbols are important because of their ability to stand for and call on deeper meanings in the organization (Kluckhohn, 1942; Gagliardi, 1990; Strati, 1992). Members can use symbols as a focus of attention and share symbols to illustrate important aspects of an organization (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997). Symbolic enrichment contributes to compassion organizing when symbols clearly focus attention on pain. Symbols also carry and evoke emotions (Gagliardi, 1990; Jones, 1993; Katz, 1999; Rafaeli and Worline, 2000), which enriches compassion organizing. The symbolic aspects of organizing are often underestimated in their capacity to communicate legitimacy (Gagliardi, 1990; Strati, 1992; Jones, 1993), yet the public nature of symbols that support the compassion organizing process imbue members' responses with legitimacy and heighten trust that others will respond as well. Overall, symbols garner attention, engender and spread emotion, convey legitimacy, heighten trust, and spark action, suggesting that symbolic enrichment is an important means of amplifying any of the previously described mechanisms of organizing. Our theory suggests that organizational researchers should consider ways in which symbols enrich the organizational processes that contribute to collective organizing.

While each of these five mechanisms contributes a piece of the resource dynamic that helps to explain the achievement of collective organizing, another contribution of our theory is its integration of these mechanisms into a coherent processual account of collective organizing. Putting the pieces together reveals a theory of resource dynamics underlying collective organizing processes, a processual theory that goes beyond any single mechanism and suggests several interrelated ideas: (1) structures (e.g., routines, networks) enable and constrain resource extraction, generation, and coordination; (2) resources facilitate action and are created by action; (3) resources that matter include social (e.g., trust, legitimacy), cognitive (e.g., attention), emotional (e.g., empathetic concern, pride, gratitude), and symbolic resources (e.g., leaders' actions, caring stories); (4) emergent features provide moment-to-moment, fine-grained coordination and calibration of resource flows; and (5) through cycles of activation and mobilization, the process continues until the pain or suffering dissipates. This model depicts collective organizing in ways that are more dynamic than current theories that focus on how routines, bundles of routines, or knowledge resource dynamics shape organizing. Further, it highlights the important role of resources that are produced endogenous to the process in affecting the pattern of collective organizing (Feldman, 2005; Glynn and Wrobel, 2006). Our model infuses static structures (like routines and networks) with the active agency of individuals and underlines the importance of human-based resources (like trust, emotion, and attention) in contributing to patterns of collective organizing. This theory of compassion organizing breathes life into the depiction of organizing processes by more fully representing the vital, emotional, and efficacious actions of individuals and collec-

tives acting in context to produce a pattern of organized response to human pain (Sandelands, 1998; Dutton, 2003).

The story of compassion organizing at BTUBS illuminates how fixed and emergent features of organizations, which are both structural and symbolic, constrain and enable individual action, composing a cyclical pattern of activation and mobilization in response to a pain trigger. This pattern is what produces a response of large scale, broad scope, rapid speed, and adequate customization to alleviate suffering. Although the induced theory is based on an "N of 1" (Dukes, 1965), the mechanisms and propositions generated by this theory speak to processes of organizing more generally. A case study such as this one makes clear that the mechanisms underlying compassion organizing are complex and multi-level. A theory of compassion organizing as a form of collective organizing explains how actions taken on the ground in the everyday doing of work (a micro focus) link to a collective patterning of resource activation and mobilization at the macro level. Other scholars have pointed toward these links between micro-level practices and macro-level capabilities, such as Weick and Roberts' (1993) study of heedful interrelating, Orlikowski's (2002) study of distributed organizing, Wooten and Crane's (2004) study of an exceptional midwifery practice, McGrath, MacMillan, and Venkataraman's (1995) study of new initiative selection, and Huy's (2002) study of emotional balancing in strategic change. This study builds on these works by suggesting a set of core mechanisms that are likely to be important to the ways in which the micro practices of members coordinate to produce a pattern of collective organizing.

### **Limitations and Boundary Conditions**

A grounded theory of compassion organizing generated from a case study opens many questions about the conditions under which this processual theory will hold. Yet our hope is that the insights from the induced theory of compassion organizing, like single case studies in organizational research that have been generative (e.g., Hall, 1976; Bartunek, 1984; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Burgelman, 1994; Martin, Knopoff, and Beckman, 1998), will outweigh the costs of restricted external validity. A first set of boundary conditions concerns emotion and emotional expression in context. Given the centrality of genuine emotional displays to our theory of compassion organizing, our theory may be limited by organizational or institutional norms and values that suppress emotion or by contexts in which emotion is on display for solely instrumental purposes. While Martin, Knopoff, and Beckman (1998) reminded us of the difficulty of separating authentic from instrumental emotional displays in organizations, it is likely that differences exist across organizations and across institutional contexts in the degree to which conditions for genuine emotional displays are encouraged. These conditions bound the applicability of our theory.

A second set of boundary conditions stems from the fact that this theory was developed in an institutional setting (e.g., a university) with non-profit status, a history of diffuse power relations, and highly variable and diffuse participatory prac-

## Compassion Organizing

tices. The organization was subject to pressures for legitimation that are typical of organizations with equivocal and difficult-to-measure outputs. The institutional norms and values that typify this setting, along with its unique pressures for legitimation, may limit the applicability of our model to different institutional fields. In addition, the organization we studied had slack resources that may have facilitated the generation and coordination of resources in ways that might not apply in other settings. Finally, the nature of the pain trigger may provide a set of boundary conditions, such that different types of pain may be less amenable to collective responses. For example, if a pain trigger is stigmatized (e.g., a mental illness), it may prevent the activation of compassion organizing, as this trigger is less publicly discussable or less likely to evoke emotions such as empathetic concern. The dimensions of pain triggers and the ways in which pain triggers bound collective responses are important considerations for future research. Another limitation is that this study does not address the risks or liabilities associated with compassion organizing. In this case, the compassion organizing time frame was relatively short, minimizing the danger of conflicting motivations, resource exhaustion, burnout, or dilution of the organizational mission. Also, the loss was vivid, and there was little evidence of jealousy or resentment toward those who benefited from compassion. Nevertheless, these and other issues deserve further attention in future studies of compassion organizing.

Our theory of compassion organizing does not lend itself to exact prescriptions about creating compassionate organizations, nor does it suggest how isolated organizational features can create compassionate organizations. Instead, the theory suggests that more permanent features of an organization work together with emergent features to unlock and shape resource dynamics, and it is the pattern of these dynamics as they unfold over time in response to unique pain triggers that creates what one might call a more or less compassionate organization. Instead of focusing on compassionate organizations per se, we focus on compassion organizing as a process that unfolds or fails to unfold in regard to a unique pain trigger. The theory does not imply that organizations can create compassion organizing by simply hiring compassionate people. Rather, the general point is that organizations need a social architecture that allows for the emergence of dynamics that generate and coordinate key resources, such as empathetic concern, attention, legitimacy, and trust, and that it is a combination of structural and symbolic features that facilitates the creation of a pattern of responding over time that has the scale, scope, speed, and customization that is likely to reduce pain or suffering. Such a view also suggests that compassion organizing cannot be achieved by simply having compassionate leaders. Rather, leaders' actions can contribute to compassion organizing by strengthening features of the social architecture (e.g., by modeling values that encourage authentic emotional expression) or by unlocking emergent processes (disseminating care stories, modeling empathetic concern, encouraging improvised routines and emergent roles) that facilitate the

essential resource dynamics that undergird compassion organizing.

### Collective Organizing

Our focus on compassion organizing contributes to the burgeoning work in positive organizational scholarship (e.g., Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, 2003; Cameron and Caza, 2004). Focusing on compassion organizing directs attention to how organizational features cultivate the conditions for building and exercising collective organizational strengths, like organizational justice, wisdom, compassion, or integrity. By studying collective organizational strengths we highlight the potential connection between certain organizing dynamics like compassion organizing and the expression of more enduring collective virtues, such as humanity as a collective organizational virtue (Cameron, 2003; Cameron, Bright, and Caza, 2004; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Powley and Cameron, 2006). A focus on the organizing dynamics underlying collective virtues opens up consideration of how patterns of organizing create qualities or strengths of whole systems that various philosophers (e.g., Aristotle, Plato, or Confucius) and social theorists (e.g., Rawls, 1971; MacIntyre, 1984) have argued are good or valuable in and of themselves. In psychology, there is a growing interest in how organizations (schools, employers, clubs) cultivate strengths and virtues in individuals (e.g., Peterson and Park, 2004). Our research suggests it is equally promising to consider how organizations themselves develop patterns of organizing that manifest these strengths and virtues at the organizational level.

Organizations are sites of human pain, but they are also sites of human healing (Frost, 1999; Frost et al., 2006). A focus on compassion organizing unpacks the dynamics that create coordinated responses to facilitate the reduction of human pain over time. Though our induced model is intended to add to theories of collective organizing, our hope is that it is a compelling example of compassion organizing that, when coupled with a theory that explains it, opens up visions of what is possible in all organizations. In particular, we invite consideration of how social organizing processes that unfold inside organizations, where so many people spend the majority of their lives, cultivate life through how they foster collective goods such as compassion, wisdom, integrity, and other social accomplishments that represent the best of the human condition.

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## Compassion Organizing

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#### **APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol**

I. Introduction to the event, i.e., what happened and when? "Imagine I'm a reporter and I want to know the story from your point of view. Tell me about what happened in response to the fire."

- a. Follow-up on what people did and how they felt.
- b. Follow-up about comfort or discomfort with their own and others' responses.

II. Open-ended probes and possible follow-up questions, to be used as necessary

- a. How do you feel about the way that BTUBS responded to you?
- b. What effect did the BTUBS response have on you? On others around you?
- c. How did you feel about BTUBS before this event?
- d. Did this event and its response change the way you feel about BTUBS? How? Why?
- e. What did you learn about BTUBS from its response to this event?
- f. Has this event changed your relationships with anyone at BTUBS? How?
- g. Are there particular people who were pivotal in the BTUBS response, from your point of view? Who? Why were they pivotal?
- h. Is this kind of response typical of BTUBS? Why or why not?
- i. Would you characterize what happened as compassionate? Why or why not?
- j. Were there ways in which you would have liked BTUBS to respond that it did not?

III. Background information

- a. What is your background?
- b. How long have you been associated with BTUBS?
- c. Is there anything in your background that you think especially affected the way in which you saw this event?
- d. How can we contact you if we have follow-up questions?
- e. Do you think we should talk to anyone else to create a full picture of what happened?

## Compassion Organizing

### APPENDIX B: Timeline of Events

#### Day 1

- 3:00 A.M. Fire ignites at 408 Hill Street, in a house near BTUBS.
- 3:15 A.M. Three MBA students (Sara, Patience, and Alba) escape from the fire with nothing but their pajamas.
- 8:00 A.M. Kellie (a faculty member) recognizes her student, Sara, at the fire scene as she drives by on her way to work and stops to check.
- 8:15 A.M. Kellie e-mails several groups and calls Sheryl (the dean's assistant), notifying her of the fire.
- 8:30 A.M. Sara walks to BTUBS to get help. Ves (a student services staff member) and Heidi (a financial aid officer) begin to secure emergency loans and other student services.
- 10:00 A.M. Students are driven to the mall to obtain clothing for the day.
- 11:00 A.M. Sara attends an interview with her future employer.
- 12:00 P.M. Heidi expedites university loan processes to get \$3000 interest-free loans for each student and expedites replacement identification for the students.
- 12:05 P.M. Dina (a friend and fellow student) sends an e-mail to her student section, urging fellow students to start collecting notes and handouts in classes as relevant.
- 1:00 P.M. Sheryl secures laptop computers on loan from BTUBS.
- 2:00 P.M. Karl (an international student) volunteers to coordinate replacing course materials. (Within two days, Karl coordinated 30–40 students to finish re-creating the current semester's materials.)
- 3:00 P.M. Kellie speaks to Meg (president of the Global Citizenship Club) who sends e-mail to all MBA students asking for help.
- 3:15 P.M. Kellie works with Jeanne (assistant dean of student services) to secure housing at the Executive Residence but is turned down.
- 3:30 P.M. Kellie approaches Dean Smith about housing in the Executive Residence, and he asks Sheryl to secure arrangements.
- 3:50 P.M. Meg forwards e-mail from Kellie to Karl detailing a specific list of the students' needs.
- 4:00 P.M. Dean Smith begins his "State of the School" speech but interrupts it to announce the student situation and what the school is doing, writing a personal check as a donation to the fundraising effort.
- 4:45 P.M. Karl e-mails Section 3 specifying procedures for donating.
- 5:00 P.M. Meg discovers over 100 e-mails with offers to help, and her collection box in the student lounge raises over \$1800 in donations by the close of the day.
- 5:30 P.M. Karl sends out e-mail detailing clothing sizes and book needs and thanking students.
- 8:00 P.M. Karl e-mails Sara asking if she is being taken care of or needs anything.
- Midnight Karl has received numerous help offers and multiple thanks for acting as coordinator, along with notifications of developments.

#### Day 2

- 7:40 A.M. Request for help goes to Deloitte Consulting, asking for furniture and appliances.
- 9:50 A.M. Sheryl sends e-mail to the BTUBS community notifying people of the arrangements made on the previous day and delineating the kinds of help needed.
- Same day Students move into the Executive Residence, receive replacement laptops and replacement course readings, as well as donations of clothing and housewares.

Students attend classes and receive backpacks stocked with pens, paper, computer disks, a toothbrush, a comb, and mints.

People offer permanent places for students to live.

Families of MBA students offer to go shopping or run necessary errands.

Admissions Office secures replacement immigration documentation for international students.

Midnight Karl sends update noting that students don't have insurance, expresses thanks, and suggests help with course pack replacement.

### Day 3

1:00 A.M. Undergraduate business student e-mails Karl that two male undergrads from BTUBS were affected by the fire.

7:45 A.M. Karl e-mails Kellie with information about undergraduates in the fire.

8:30 A.M. Kellie e-mails Karl that she will go to Dean's Office to see what they can do.

4:45 P.M. Karl sends e-mail saying there was five, not three, fire victims and gives options for donating.

### Day 4–Day 14

Students notify their future employers of the fire and ask for help. A \$5000 anonymous gift from an alumnus allows the school to convert the initial emergency loans into grants. More than \$6000 in monetary support goes to each MBA student.

In addition:

Over 50 students cooperate to build replacement copies of course materials.

Kellie and Sheryl take turns walking to the bank daily so that students can have quick access to cash.

Housekeepers in the Executive Residence begin to check on the students daily.

Team members finish papers and projects for fire victims, allowing students to successfully complete their courses and final exams.

Clothing donations exceed the ability to store them. Dean's wife takes excess donations to a local charity thrift store.

With help from Dean's Office, students find permanent housing.