

## Working Paper

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# Explaining Compassion Organizing Competence

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## Abstract

### Explaining Compassion Organizing Competence

In this article we develop a theory to explain how individual compassion becomes socially organized and how the organizing process gains collective competence in its ability to alleviate suffering. The theory is built from an in-depth case study of one organization's response to members who lost their belongings in a fire. The compassion organizing response was highly competent as reflected in the scale, scope, speed, and customization of resources extended in response to the members' suffering. The model theorizes five mechanisms as central to the competence in compassion organizing: 1) contextual enabling of attention, 2) contextual enabling of emotion, and 3) contextual enabling of legitimacy and trust, 4) agents improvising structures, and 5) symbolic enrichment. Together, these mechanisms elaborate a view of how the social architecture, agency, and emergent features of an organizing process create the extraction, generation and coordination of a variety of resources that contribute to compassion organizing competence. We discuss how our model adds to general theories of collective organizing competence.

## Explaining Compassion Organizing Competence

The idea of competence is central to organizational research. In order to understand competence, organizational scholars direct their attention toward features of organizations that produce patterns of organizing that are optimal, well-done, superior, or exhibit excellence in some form. For instance, strategy researchers convey interest in this idea by their focus on core competence (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990), distinctive competence (Selznick, 1957), and dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Researchers working on these topics aspire to understand how structures and processes combine to produce idiosyncratic resources that can be deployed to produce desirable competitive positions for organizations (McGrath, Macmillan, and Venkataraman, 1995). Organizational behavior and organizational theory scholars also convey interest in these ideas through their pursuit of questions about the origins and effects of structures and processes that contribute to organizational adaptability (e.g., Tushman and Romanelli, 1985), reliability (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 1999), resilience (Sutcliffe and Vogus, 2003), distributed organizing (Orlikowski, 2002), and emotional balancing (Huy, 2002). What these bodies of work have in common is that they attempt to explain how organizations achieve a pattern of collective action that represents a form of organizational strength or a manifestation of distinct and repeatable capabilities (what we refer to as competence in organizing). While early researchers' attempts to explain collective competence focused on endowments of fixed assets as sources of competence (e.g., Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984), more recent treatments have emphasized process-focused accounts of competence in organizing (e.g., McGrath et al., 1995; Orlikowski, 1992; Huy, 1999, 2002; Weick and Roberts, 1993).

In this research, we use a case study to induce a theory of collective competence in organizing that is quite different in type and form from what organizational researchers have previously studied. We build a grounded theory of *compassion organizing competence* from an in-depth study of one organization's response to an event that caused pain for some members. In relative terms the painful event was a moderate loss with temporary suffering for the individuals involved; yet, as the story will show, the organizing of compassionate responses was exceptionally competent. The questions that this paper addresses are twofold: what explains an organization's compassion organizing competence; and what can we learn more generally about the mechanisms that underlie collective competence in organizing?

#### DEFINING COMPASSION

Our focus on compassion in organizational settings builds on three assumptions. First, we assume 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 their personal existence (Reich, 1989). Loss and pain that induce suffering are inevitable (Harvey, 2001), although understudied, features of organizational life (Frost et al., 2000; Frost, 2003). Following Weick's (2003) assertion that organizations are enactments of human vulnerability, suffering and compassion are inevitable manifestations of this vulnerability. As such, suffering and compassion are central to organizing more generally, though they are not reflected as such in organization studies.

As part of an innate human instinct, we assume, as sociologists such as Clark (1997) suggest, that compassion (like sympathy<sup>1</sup>) can best be described as a three-part process that includes first noticing or attending to the suffering of another. Second, we assume, as the word implies (where com means with and passio means suffering) that there is an emotional element of compassion. Compassionate feelings are inherently other-regarding (Cassell, 1991; Solomon, 1998). Compassionate feelings resemble empathetic concern (Davis, 1983; Batson and Shaw, 1991), involving someone imagining or feeling the condition of the person in pain. This dimension of compassion implies some form of taking on the role of another (Mead, 1934; Clark, 1997). Third, as a type of social motive (Nussbaum, 2001), compassion implies attention, feeling, and action. Compassion involves some sort of response, or what Clark (1997) calls a behavioral display, that attempts to ease suffering in some way (Reich, 1989; Frost et al, 2000). While the response or display does not have to eliminate or remedy suffering for compassion to exist (Blum, 1980; Solomon, 1998), movement to respond must be present along with feeling and attention to comprise compassion as we define it. It is in the joint occurrence of attention, feeling, and action that we come to see the social significance of this important human experience (Clark, 1997).

In studying compassion organizing we ask how a trigger of human pain occasions not only individual compassion, but also a process of activating others' attention to pain and extracting and coordinating resources from an organizational system in a way that enables a collective response. Thus, we define compassion organizing as the coordination of individual compassion in a particular organizational context in response to a particular incident of human suffering. We

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<sup>1</sup> We agree with Nussbaum (2001) that sympathy and compassion are conceptually close. We chose to talk about the organizing of compassion (as opposed to sympathy) because compassion connotes deliberate action taken to relieve suffering, while sympathy is limited to a feeling (von Deitze & Orb, 2000).



define the competence of the compassion organizing process as a pattern of collective action that represents a form of organizational strength and distinct and repeatable capabilities that alleviate pain by extracting, generating, and coordinating resources that address suffering. In this view, compassion organizing that extracts, generates, and coordinates resources—e.g. social support, food, shelter—but does not match those resources with individual needs is defined as less competent than similar collective action that generates resources and customizes their delivery to individuals' unique needs.

Heeding the call by Heath and Sitkin (2001) for research that focuses on organizing processes, we chose to focus on the process of compassion organizing as the place where our theory can add value. Our theory does not assume that there are compassionate organizations per se. Instead, we argue that compassion organizing competence is more or less likely in organizations, depending on a variety of factors including the human agents in the context, the social architecture of the organization, and emergent organizing dynamics endogenous to the process—elements we elaborate in our induced theory.

#### THE VALUE OF STUDYING COMPASSION ORGANIZING COMPETENCE

The study of compassion organizing competence makes three important contributions to the study of collective competence more generally. First, it reveals the constructive force of emotion in activating, mobilizing, and calibrating responses to circumstances involving human pain. Building on Huy's (1999, 2002) insight that collective competence relies upon emotion-based capabilities, we elaborate new and significant ways that emotions contribute to the development and exercise of this competence. In much of organizational writing emotions have been feared,

shunned, or repressed (Fineman, 1993; Martin, Knopoff and Beckman, 1998; Rafaeli & Worline, 2000). 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 and interaction; all in an attempt to strip away or control emotion so that it does not interfere with rationality (e.g., Mumby and Putnam, 1992; Fineman, 2000; Rafaeli & Worline, 2001). In contrast, our theory showcases emotions as vital and necessary resources in the exercise of competent collective action. Building on work that has labored to introduce emotion into the field of organization studies (see e.g., Fineman, 1993, 2000; Meyerson, 1998; Huy, 1999; Ashkanasy, Hertel, & Zerbe, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli, 1996), this study illuminates how emotions are central rather than peripheral forces in collective processes. In particular we show the central, productive, and crucial role of emotion in the development and exercise of compassion organizing as a collective competence.

Second, a focus on compassion organizing competence demonstrates how an amalgam of contextual features (what we call the social architecture of the organization) works to constrain and enable patterns of activation and mobilization that ultimately comprise capable collective action to extract, generate, and coordinate resources to direct toward those in pain. While previous research has suggested that contextual features such as organizational culture and routines matter for collective competence in organizing (e.g., Weick and Roberts, 1993; Zollo and Winter, 2002), researchers have rarely shown how multiple features of an organizational context work together to shape patterns of action that create organizing competence. McGrath and colleagues (1995) suggest that because initiatives that create competence are likely to occur in sub-units of large organizations, the sub-unit structures and their managerial practices are

appropriate levels of focus for processual studies of competence creation. Our study of compassion organizing competence focuses on this sub-unit level of a large organization (i.e., a business school within a university), revealing how contextual features constrain and enable attention, feelings, and actions that feed organizing competence. This study shows that the social architecture of the organization provides a structural template for members' attending, feeling, and acting in ways that facilitate a coordinated response to pain. This view of the situated embedded agency of individuals (Creed and Scully, 2000) endows organizational members with an important role in "working the system" in ways that gets things done and contributes to the competence of the whole (Bansal, 2003). Thus, our theory integrates and enriches the available ways for organizational researchers to theorize about contextual shaping of action by showing how elements of the context work together to shape agentic attending, feeling, and acting.

A third contribution of a theory of compassion organizing competence relates to the role of resources in competent organizing. Our theory builds on scholar's claims that resources matter for the development of collective competence (e.g. Barney, 1991; Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984; McGrath et al., 1995; Lurie, 2000). In many cases, these views of resources focus on a limited range and depict them as fixed stocks in the organization. In contrast, we portray resources more broadly and depict them as dynamic flows in the organization. The contribution of our theory lies in its ability to expand scholars' view of resource dynamics and reveal that both fixed and emergent features of the context shape the extraction, generation, and coordination of resources, and that both structural and symbolic features of the organization contribute in important ways to the resource dynamics underlying collective competence. By resource dynamics we mean the patterning of resource extraction, generation, coordination, and

use. Resource-based views of the firm (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984) have long claimed that an organization's internal resources are keys to developing competencies. We elaborate on how a variety of social (e.g. trust, legitimacy), cognitive (e.g. attention), and emotional (e.g. empathetic concern, pride, gratitude) resources, along with symbolic resources (e.g. leader's actions, caring stories), and more instrumental resources (e.g. food, clothing, class notes) are activated and mobilized. We show how cycles of activation and mobilization create overall patterns of resource delivery to those in pain, achieving compassion organizing competence. Consistent with Feldman's (2004) idea that resources are not fixed but rather altered in use, we theorize that emergent features in the process of organizing—both structural and symbolic—create and change a variety of resources (e.g. positive emotions like pride and gratitude) that contribute to collective competence. Thus our theory enriches the ways in which researchers can see resources themselves and resource dynamics in context, particularly how both fixed and emergent features of the organizational context enable collective competence in organizing through how they facilitate the extraction, generation and coordination of resources.

## METHOD

We built our theoretical model of compassion organizing competence 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 do not have to be paid employees, but they do have to 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 our 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 in the process of designing a different study related to workplace compassion, one of the authors mentioned her observations about how BTUBS was responding to three MBA students who had lost all of their belongings in a fire. The other participants in the research team, who were not BTUBS members, thought that the response was quite extraordinary and encouraged conducting initial interviews to explore the response process. In relative terms, this fire was a moderate loss with temporary pain for the individuals involved, yet the organizing of responses was exceptional when gauged by the scale and breadth of resources involved in the response, the speed and timeliness of the response, and the capacity of the system to customize the resources delivered to the particular needs of the individuals involved. The richness of the potential for developing a full account of the organizing of a compassionate response to one event prompted us to drop our other projects and proceed with a full-scale case study of this incident.

Selecting a case this way offers distinct research advantages. One is the immediacy and range of access to key members of the organization. Within a short window of time following the incident, our research team conducted interviews and documented the process first-hand. A second advantage was the ready availability of important archival and observational data. Our research team observed and documented aspects of the case as they happened, and we gained access to most electronic mail relevant to the event. These data were critical for documenting the speed, scope, scale, and customization of resources involved in the response. Third, this case selection method made advantageous use of the familiarity and trust between organizational

members and the local members of the research team. Thus, our research employed an insider/outsider team design with all of its attendant advantages and disadvantages (Bartunek and Louis, 1996). One disadvantage comes from the research team's intimate familiarity with the context. Members of the research team may have biases of discernment, such as disregarding important information because it is overly familiar. Some members may be too steeped in the organization's culture to adequately or objectively describe it. Our use of multiple research team members from different organizations helped to minimize the impact of such potential biases. A second disadvantage involved possible conflicts of interest in the writing of such a case if a negative picture of the organization arose. As a research team we attempted to be aware of such conflicts and report results vigilantly. A third disadvantage arises from selecting a case deliberately because it is an instance of the phenomenon under study. In experimental terms, we might call this "selecting on the dependent variable," in the sense that we already know that this case is an instance of compassion organizing and therefore may be an inflated example. Case studies usually offer extremely 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 for composing 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 student fire victims and interviewed all students (8), staff (5), or faculty members (2) who were mentioned as playing a major role in anyone's account of the organizational response, thus sustaining a snowball sampling technique to determine who should be interviewed. 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 activity in response to the fire had dissipated 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?" The answers to this question (and probes of clarification) were the major interview data used for our analysis. Follow-up questions were open-ended (see Appendix A), and used to probe about coordination processes, other participants, and time frame.

*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, which we received in the form of chronologically organized email logs. In addition, we captured almost all inter-student communication about the fire and the related response, facilitated by the main student coordinator. From these sources, we developed a detailed timeline of the response (see Table 1). 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 form of data about the organizational culture and context came 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. These students reviewed the case as part of a course. We collected their feedback and reactions to the case on audiotape. The audience response provided us with 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 against the biases involved in opportunistic case selection, and gave us additional information about the culture of the organization. They validated 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 to 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% of informants mentioned the feature of the process or the organization in their account. So, for example, we used this criterion to identify the three core values that we discuss as part of the organization's social architecture. Over 25% of the informants had to have mentioned these



values as distinguishing BTUBS for it to be counted as a theme. In another example, all of the informants mentioned the importance of the Dean's speech and its impact on the response process. Half of the informants mentioned the importance of Global Citizenship as a program that educated people in the system about how to help. The Global Citizenship program provides an example where the data and interpretation blended together, however. None of the respondents called Global Citizenship a "set of routines." As organizational analysts, we used this conceptual description to explain the mechanism through which this institutionalized program allowed BTUBS members to respond quickly. The analytic strategy of looking for minimal convergence in the elements of the process (allowing for the fact that some features of the process were more visible than others) provides one check on the validity of our claims. Two other checks came from having interview participants and other BTUBS members provide input and validation of the case sequence.

We created an elaborate case history of the organization's response to the fire. Following Eisenhardt (1989a) and Yin (1994), we sought to accurately 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 (see Table 1). After compiling the case history, we sent the complete draft to all informants, with the exception of two students whom we were unable to contact. Thirteen of the 15 original interviewees reviewed the case history, confirmed its accuracy, and added any revisions they deemed warranted. We revised the case based on informants' feedback and distributed the revised case to 65 MBA students as described above.

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Insert Table 1 about here  
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## DESCRIBING COMPASSION ORGANIZING COMPETENCE

We present our analysis of the variety of data from BTUBS in two ways. First, we use the data to re-create the story of the organization's response to the fire, noting key points in the analysis that serve as touchstones for our induced theory of compassion organizing. We summarize the timeline of events in the story in Table 1. Second, we describe our theoretical interpretation of the data, again drawing upon touchstone moments in the story to provide examples and evidence for each theoretical claim. In using "touchstones," we mean to mark particularly significant events in the case narrative that illuminate the themes of our data analysis. The touchstone moments and their theoretical significance are summarized in Appendix B.

### Analysis 1: Case Narrative

The Big Ten University Business School (BTUBS) is a professional school for business students associated with a large public Midwestern university. Established in 1924, BTUBS employs 135 full-time staff and 140 full-time faculty. BTUBS 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 1020 students each year from a combination of masters' degree programs. In addition to these, BTUBS offers a full menu of executive programs that are operated year round from the executive education center. Executives studying at BTUBS are housed in a full-service Executive Residence that is attached to BTUBS.

On February 15, 2000 a fire ignited in a home that had been converted into student apartments near the campus of BTUBS. The building housed nine occupants, three of whom were full-time Masters of Business Administration (MBAs) 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 back to their homes outside of the US once finals were over in 2 weeks. Sara, Patience, and Alba were awoken in the early hours of the morning by 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 one of the MBA students. Kellie stopped to check on the student and learned of the situation of all three MBA students [TOUCHSTONE 2], and then proceeded to BTUBS, where she sent messages to different parts of the school to notify people of the fire and potential needs of the students. In particular, Kellie contacted one individual and two groups at BTUBS: 1) the Dean's office, in particular the Dean's assistant, Sheryl; 2) a women's faculty network called Neighbors; and 3) the BTUBS student services office [TOUCHSTONE 3].

Meanwhile Sara was nervous about her ability to participate in her 11:00 interview that morning because of the fire, but she was determined to keep the appointment. Sara trudged the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile

from her burned apartment to BTUBS in her smoke filled 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 fire and the students' need for emergency cash. Ves also alerted the career services office to Sara's situation and facilitated her ability to get new clothes quickly, allowing her to keep her interview appointment [TOUCHSTONE 4]. In an attempt to secure some emergency cash for the students, Heidi immediately began filling out paperwork for student loans. Though she had never before used loan forms for emergency purposes, she thought that if she used the standard financial aid forms but asked for long-term loans at no interest, her request could be granted quickly through the normal university channels. As Heidi and the student services office worked to secure the loans, they realized, however, that the students could not pick up the money because they had no identification. This necessitated work by Heidi and other student services staff members to expedite university identification that could be accessible at the same time as the emergency loans. After some calls back and forth with central university administrators and the university cashier, Heidi secured the loans and ID cards. 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 [TOUCHSTONE 5].

Upon hearing of the fire from Kellie, Sheryl (the Dean's assistant) also contacted the school's student services office. In addition, she began working with the school's IT systems to get laptop computers on loan for the 3 MBA students. Sheryl secured and delivered the laptops to the students that day [TOUCHSTONE 6]. 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 the student community about the fire and the needs of the 3 MBA students. Meg

was nervous about sending this message; in her words, “When I sent out that email my heart was beating really fast...how are people going to respond? Am I asking too much by saying ‘help’?” Meg called upon her fellow students to respond with donations of cash, and household goods [TOUCHSTONE 7]. As these messages with descriptions of the fire went out, faculty, students, and staff members began to respond with offers for help and with donations of both money and household goods. Sheryl and Kellie began to use Kellie’s office as a central depository for these offerings. Sheryl maintained almost continuous contact with Kellie throughout the day, as more people responded to the email notification of the fire and the initial calls for help. Sheryl and Kellie began a practice of walking to the bank several times each day to cash donation checks in order to get cash to the students quickly.

As the day progressed, Kellie and Jeanne, the Assistant Dean of Student Services, attempted to secure housing for the 3 students at the Executive Residence. Because the Executive Residence is solely designated for use by executive education participants, their requests were initially turned down by the Director of the Executive Residence [TOUCHSTONE 8]. After receiving the rejection of her request and moved by anger at resources that were sitting idle despite the compelling need for them, Kellie made a special appeal to the Dean in an unusual and impromptu face-to-face meeting. Kellie made a passionate case that it was essential for the students to have temporary housing. After assessing the situation, the Dean asked Sheryl to call to urge the commitment from the Executive Residence. That afternoon, the 3 MBA students received offers for housing and food service at the Executive Residence for as long as they needed it [TOUCHSTONE 9]. When the students were admitted to the Executive Residence, the Director made it clear to his staff that they were to receive the same quality service and

hospitality as other guests. The Executive Residence staff went out of their way to make the students feel welcome and to provide them with anything that they needed [TOUCHSTONE 10].

During this same time, the students responded to the plight of their colleagues. 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”<sup>2</sup> alerting them that two section mates had been involved in a fire and calling for help. In response to Dina’s message, Karl, an international student himself, who was unacquainted with the students but felt camaraderie with them as fellow international students, was so moved by the story and the magnitude of the students’ losses that he volunteered to coordinate all incoming help offers. 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.” By 5:00 that afternoon, Karl had alerted all of his section to his new coordinator role, and two days later he notified the entire student body [TOUCHSTONE 11]. Karl worked closely with Dina, who was concerned about her friends being overwhelmed by the attention and offers of help. Dina became Karl’s point person for getting information about the students’ needs. Karl became a central receiving point for all student offers of help. Karl found the unique course schedules of each of the three students and engaged over 50 students in photocopying to entirely re-construct and replace the students’ coursework, coursepacks, 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

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<sup>2</sup> A section designates a permanent grouping of 60 students to which each full-time MBA student is assigned in the Fall semester. There are 6 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.

what had been done in order to eliminate duplicate efforts. Karl kept in close touch with Dina, who relayed questions to the fire victims and kept them apprised of the ongoing coordination process [TOUCHSTONE 12].

Sheryl had alerted the Dean to the students' involvement in the fire early in the day. The Dean had also discussed the students' situation later in the day with Kellie. At 4:00 that afternoon, the Dean 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 and the situation of the three students. He elaborated all of the measures that BTUBS had taken to help the students. As part of his improvised message to the audience, he mentioned the importance of "taking care of our own," and he pulled his wallet from his back pocket and spontaneously wrote a check for \$300 [TOUCHSTONE 13]. He handed it to Meg, who sat stunned in the first row of the auditorium, before continuing on with the formal presentation [TOUCHSTONE 14].

By the end of Day 1 of the response, students, staff, and faculty were highly aware of the fire and the needs of the fire victims. Kellie and Sheryl had begun to collect money and household goods, designating Kellie's office as a collection point. Sheryl had secured and delivered loaned laptops for the students to use as long as they needed them. Heidi and the student services office had processed, secured, and delivered \$3000 emergency loans for each of the students and secured replacement university ID cards for them. Meg had received over 100 emails from students with offers of help, as well as actual cash donations of \$1800 in the collection box from the MBA lounge. The Dean had cleared the way for the students to stay at the Executive Residence, and

the students were assured of temporary housing and food service for as long as they needed it. Dina had alerted her MBA section to the fire, and Karl had received over 20 offers of help from just that one section of the MBA class. Karl's classmates expressed thanks to him for coordinating, and informed him of new developments as they happened, including the Dean's description of the fire at the State of the School speech and the \$1800 in donations from the first day. Stories of the rapid response began to circulate in BTUBS, helped by Karl who sent additional messages mentioning the \$1800 in donations, thanking people for their responsiveness, and informing them of students' more specific needs [TOUCHSTONE 15].

On the morning of Day 2 of the response, Sheryl sent a message to the entire BTUBS community, including faculty, staff, and students, notifying them of the fire, the actions the school had taken, and what materials were still needed. People brought monetary donations, clothing, and household goods for the students, filling Kellie's office to the ceiling. Kellie had discreetly learned the sizes of clothing that would be most useful in order to slow down donations of materials that weren't useful, and Sheryl updated people about the most necessary donations, discouraging people from bringing items that couldn't be used [TOUCHSTONE 16].

The fire victims attended classes on Day 2 and were greeted by fellow students with 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 expressed gratitude in his message, but also warned that he would be continuing to make requests for copies of old course



packs. 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 17].

At 1 a.m. on Day 3 of the response to the fire, an undergraduate student wrote to Karl, notifying him of two undergrad students who were also in the fire. The BBA 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 emailed 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 BBA students, staff learned that they did not need places to stay or clothing due to rapid responses from their parents and families, who had come to pick them up and transport 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 5 not 3 fire victims, and again asking for help, especially monetary donations. Karl asked in his message that people make checks out to Kellie or Sheryl personally, as they had learned that “checks made out to BTUBS have to pass through lots of red tape.” Kellie and Sheryl continued their practice of walking to the bank each day to cash the checks in order to ensure that the students had access to cash and could buy what they needed to replace their belongings. This practice continued until the response dissipated two weeks later.

From Day 4 forward, over 50 students participated in building course materials to replace over 2 years of lost materials for the MBA students. Momentum toward continued activation and mobilization began to dwindle, but BTUBS received two large financial donations on behalf of the students—one thousand dollars from a future employer of a different MBA student and five

thousand dollars anonymously given by an alumnus. The students received a substantial amount of monetary help, with a combined total of \$18,000 (\$6000 each) in donations, which allowed them to pay back \$3000 each in emergency loans and re-establish themselves. In addition, they received customized household goods and clothing donations in their sizes. Beyond money and clothing, the students had received shelter and food, books and case materials, backpacks and school supplies, new eyeglasses, and many other small personal goods. In addition, they received slack to recuperate from their teammates, who picked up quite a bit of end of semester work. The students received a great deal of emotional support, including comfort and good wishes, kindness and care. The students reported feeling as if they had become overnight celebrities at BTUBS, because even people they didn't know would stop in the hallways to inquire how they were and to ask if they needed anything. All three of the students successfully finished the semester, and the two 2<sup>nd</sup> year students graduated with their class. After getting back on their feet, the students used the money that they did not need to create an emergency fund for future students [TOUCHSTONE 18].

Three weeks after the event, the Dean 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 on three things from his conversation: 1) his gratitude that she and her colleagues were safe; 2) his appreciation for the outpouring of so much 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 come here. 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].

The students 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"

## Analysis 2: Elements of Compassion Organizing Competence

This section of our analysis describes an induced theory of compassion organizing competence, using the touchstone moments from the case narrative as evidence for each theoretical claim. We first describe the nature of the pain trigger and the evidence for compassion in response to that trigger. We then describe the activation and mobilization elements in the process, emphasizing how these are shaped by the context (i.e. social architecture) and how each contributes to the competence of compassion organizing. Finally, we describe the emergent features of the process, again describing how these are created in the context and emphasizing how each contributes to the overall competence of compassion organizing.

Before examining each element separately, however, we open this section with a discussion of the ways in which the process gains competence from all of these elements working in concert; an idea that is depicted in Figure 1. As the process of compassion organizing proceeds over time, Figure 1 shows that the social architecture of the organization feeds into cycles of compassion activation and mobilization. Figure 1 also shows that characteristics of the amalgam of networks, routines, and values that comprise 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. Figure 1 suggests that compassion organizing proceeds in iterative cycles of activation and mobilization that unfold over time, as discussed more fully below. In compassion activation, organizational members draw upon certain qualities of networks, routines, and values to activate a social reality surrounding the pain trigger. The spreading of this social reality mobilizes more attention, feeling, and response to pain, and the coordination of multiple member efforts begins to extract, generate, and coordinate resources that can be directed toward those who are suffering. Over time, and in conjunction with emergent features that add fine-grained adjustment to the process, compassion organizing can yield broad and significant resources that are customized and delivered in a timely manner in order to alleviate pain. The enactment of this process, resulting in appropriately broad, significant, customized, and timely resources to alleviate suffering, is the basic process that we refer to as compassion organizing competence.

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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*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 particular case, compassion organizing begins with a

fire, 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. (see Touchstone 1). As one student said about the pain trigger at BTUBS, "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 obviously 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 form of the pain trigger has important implications for the ways in which the process of compassion organizing unfolds.

*Evidence of compassion.* The case data support the existence of all three elements of compassion. First, compassion involves noticing or attending to another's pain. The case data gives evidence of noticing others' pain, especially as illustrated in Touchstone 2, when Kellie stopped at the fire scene, Touchstone 4, when a staff member ran into one of the students in the hallway and experienced the immediate smell of fire, and Touchstones 7 and 11, when Meg and Karl hear about the fire from others. In addition, 100% of the informants referred to noticing the students' pain by being directed to their fate (primarily through email notification). Second, compassion involves feelings of empathetic concern, indicated by imagining the feelings of the person in

pain. An illustration of empathetic concern is given in Touchstone 11, when Karl is moved by the story of the loss to imagine himself in the same situation. More than 50% of informants spontaneously expressed empathetic concern when describing the events that unfolded in response to the fire. A fire victim's words illustrate the expression of empathic concern as part of her experience of receiving compassion: "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 provides 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. In addition, all informants interviewed reported responding to the suffering in some way. In the interviews, 100% of informants 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." Classes of MBA students who were uninvolved in the response but who read the case also indicated that they would characterize what happened as compassionate in very much the same manner. In sum, there was sufficient evidence to suggest the people who participated in helping the students were acting with compassion as we define it.

*Evidence of competence of compassion organizing.* The overall pattern of the compassion organizing process at BTUBS was highly competent as demonstrated by its impact on relieving human suffering. Evidence supporting the competence of the process is described in Touchstone

20, in which the fire victims write to thank the BTUBS community for the impact that they made on their recovery from the fire. Competence can be gauged by four dimensions of resource delivery: scale, scope, speed, and customization (Dutton, Frost, Worline, Lilius and Kanov, 2002). These four dimensions and their evidence in the case are summarized in Table 2.

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Insert Table 2 about here  
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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). Touchstone 18 illustrates the large scale of resources generated in the process. Scale alone does not capture the competence 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) argue that scope of response gauges the breadth of action repertoires. Here, *scope* refers to the breadth and variety of resources directed to alleviate suffering. Touchstones 15 and 18 illustrate the broad scope of resources offered to the fire victims at BTUBS. The impact of compassion organizing also depends on the timely availability and delivery of resources to those who are suffering. *Speed* is a common dimension for capturing effectiveness, and researchers across many arenas use speed as an indicator of high functioning (e.g. decision researchers, see Eisenhardt, 1989b; Eisenhardt and Tabrizi, 1995; innovation researchers, see Sheremata, 2000; and adaptation researchers, see Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Bansal, 2003). The speed of the compassion organizing response at BTUBS is particularly striking, as illustrated in

Touchstone 15. Finally, while adaptation researchers have relied upon the three dimensions of scope, scale, and speed to measure response magnitude, the competence of compassion organizing hinges on an added dimension, customization. *Customization* refers to the efficient patterning and shaping of resources to meet the particular needs of those who are suffering. The notion of customization as a gauge of effectiveness has been used by researchers of service encounters, who find that more effective organizations customize service to customer needs (Gutek et al., 1999). Here, this patterning 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 broadened beyond resources that are useful. At BTUBS, the customization of the process is especially notable. The specific patterns of action and resources that add to customization are illustrated in Touchstones 11, 16 and 18, as well as summarized in Table 2.

*Compassion Activation.* In our model both the social architecture (described below) and human agency are important factors 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 activation re-occurs several times. For example, activation occurred when individuals made efforts to draw others' attention to the pain trigger, most often through email. Activation also happened through the vivid presence of a pain trigger in a public place, as illustrated in Touchstone 4. Re-activation 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.

Our induced theory posits that compassion activation is enabled by the characteristics of the social architecture of the organization in which individual compassion takes place. By *social architecture*, we mean 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. We summarize these features, their impact on activation, and our derived propositions about their impact on compassion organizing competence in Table 3.

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Insert Table 3 about here  
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Compassion Activation and Values. The social architecture at BTUBS featured values that emphasize the importance of a person's whole identity, the value of acting humanely, and the importance of taking care of members as one would family. Shared values define what is important in an organization and create expectations about how to act in different situations (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1996). Values supply an impetus to act and help people to make

meaning from actions (Smircich, 1983). As Swidler (1986: 277) argues, shared cultural values lead to “strategies of action.” As Table 3 shows, informants at BTUBS ranging from staff members to faculty to students consistently mentioned three values that distinguished BTUBS in their minds: 1) *People are more than their professional identities*. According to members of BTUBS, it is appropriate and good to know 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. As illustrated in Table 3, 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 the BTUBS 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.” The Dean reinforced this shared value in his public speech (see Touchstone 13). This value normalized attention to the pain of members, who were treated as multiple family 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, emotion surrounding their pain, and legitimated the spread of attention and emotion over time.

Compassion Activation and Routines. The social architecture at BTUBS featured routines that facilitated compassion activation in a variety of ways. 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 competence (Nelson and Winter, 1982), and here we see that they do play a vital role. Routines are a form of resource that enabled people to notice, feel, and respond to the students' pain. As shown in Table 3, four sets of routines appear as important in BTUBS' response to the fire, three of which played a particular role in compassion activation. First, BTUBS is a school that serves students, and thus the organization features 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 the students in pain and service routines made it quicker, easier, and more legitimate to spread attention to this pain trigger (see Touchstone 4).

Secondly, BTUBS has cultivated an extensive set of routines for civic engagement called the "Global Citizenship" program. 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 that they plan to participate in during their two-year MBA program. Students typically meet and exceed these commitments throughout their two-year stay. Accustomed to attending to pain by participating in this program

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 (see Touchstone 7), 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 email to notify the BTUBS community about severe harm or loss to members. At the time of the fire, the full BTUBS community was accustomed to receiving notices of harm related to faculty, staff, or student members or their families. The routine use of email for this purpose increased the speed of sharing information about the fire, spreading attention and emotion and adding legitimacy to the calls for assistance.

Compassion Activation and Networks. Compassion activation was greatly facilitated by people's use of a variety of networks within BTUBS, as well as by the strength of the ties between members of those networks. 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 (see Touchstones 2 and 3). Later in the afternoon, information about the fire traveled across several student network clusters such as Section 3 and the Global Citizenship Club (see Touchstones 7 and 11). The utilization of different network clusters expanded the spread of information about the pain trigger across diverse groups and generated awareness and empathetic concern among different populations who 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 attend to and respond to the calls for help in terms of

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 sub-network that was likely to attend to the call because of an interest in civic engagement. As shown in Table 3, the reach of the networks that were activated within the organization was wide, and members within these clusters were non-redundant, so the pattern of activation was broad and varied from the outset. In addition, chance played a role in activation, as Kellie was the first member to learn of the pain by driving by the scene. This left her with incomplete information about the participants involved in the fire. When she later learned of additional BBA students who had lived in the house this prompted another round of activation (see Touchstone 2), demonstrating the necessity for broad information sharing among network clusters within an organization in order to bolster compassion organizing competence.

In addition to the multiple diverse clusters within the network that people utilized to activate compassion, BTUBS is composed of networks that are rich in strong ties that carry trust and credibility (Uzzi, 1997; Baker, 2000). Credibility and trust in the message sender facilitated people's noticing of the message and responding to it. In addition, the people who sent these messages enjoyed a common identification with BTUBS that signaled credibility and trust (Brewer and Kramer, 1986), and hence there was 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 demonstrated in Touchstones 6, 11, and 15, all of which were offered 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, activation becomes an iterative element in the process of compassion organizing, as suggested in Figure 1. Additional calls for

help continue to reinforce the social reality of the pain trigger over time. In the case of BTUBS, over time word of the fire spread to additional organizational networks outside of BTUBS itself, largely through additional email exchanges as individuals sent appeals to contacts that they thought would have helpful resources. As shown in Table 3, these email messages to secondary organizational networks beyond BTUBS 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.

In sum, several features of the social architecture 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, several 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 of some kind. Thus, the social architecture directly shapes attention, emotion, and legitimacy in the process and also serves as a springboard that is used by people in the organization to improvise in ways that more purposively extract, generate, and coordinate resources to direct toward those in need.

*Compassion Mobilization.* As shown in Figure 1, compassion activation is linked to compassion mobilization, by which we mean the processes involving extracting, generating and coordinating resources to deliver to those in pain. While activation also involved resources (e.g., attention, emotion, trust, and legitimacy), mobilization refers to the coordination of resources involved more centrally with trying to help the persons in pain. While 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.

We propose that whether compassion activation leads to compassion mobilization depends again upon elements of the social architecture and its interaction with the agentic responses of people in the organization. We discuss each of the elements of the social architecture and its role in compassion mobilization below. A summary of these relationships and specific derived propositions about the combination of social architecture and compassion mobilization and its effects on compassion organizing competence are included in Table 3.

Compassion Mobilization and Values. As described in detail above, three values distinguish BTUBS: 1) *People are more than their professional identities*; 2) *People's humanity should be displayed*; and 3) *Members are like family*. In terms of compassion mobilization, many members drew upon these values as they heeded calls for donations to the fire victims and responded in an immediate, caring, and familial manner. For example, the fire victims' student peers showed little concern over demonstrating a professional demeanor, drawing upon 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 responding with significance and meaning, further fueling people's willingness to contribute and stay involved.

Compassion Mobilization and Routines. As described in Table 3, the social architecture at BTUBS featured particular sets of routines that facilitated compassion activation in a variety of ways, and those routines are also important in compassion mobilization. Student services routines facilitated mobilization by providing scripts for efficient action to help students participate in school. Student services staff mobilized to generate resources such as financial aid, replacement identification, and immigration documents as quickly as possible. The civic engagement routines were invaluable in smoothing the way for quick coordination of students into teams who set out to generate resources such as academic books, sets of notes from entire classes, and expressions of care through cards, flowers, and gifts. The frequent and normal use of email to notify the BTUBS community about severe harm or loss to members contributed to a quick and efficient prompting of action. This use of technology also facilitated the cycling between activation and mobilization as described in Touchstone 17, because frequent calls for additional forms of resources served not only to generate additional responses but also to keep attention on the pain trigger. Finally, compassion mobilization was initially hindered by the hospitality routines associated with the Executive Residence at BTUBS. The initial resistance to setting a new precedent and housing the students in the residence, despite calls to activate this as a resource, created an obstacle to mobilization that generated significant negative emotion (see Touchstones 8 and 9), fueling additional mobilization attempts. Once the initial resistance was overcome, however, 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 (see Touchstone 10), greatly expanding the range of resources delivered to the students in need, as shown in Table 3.



Compassion Mobilization and Networks. We propose that compassion mobilization is enhanced when multiple clusters within an organizational network are notified of harm and receive calls for action, as illustrated in Touchstones 3, 4, 7, and 13. As shown in Table 3, mobilization is enhanced in part because members of diverse network clusters have access to different arrays of resources that they can direct toward alleviating suffering. For instance, Touchstone 18 illustrates the variety of resources that Karl, Kellie, Sheryl, and others were able to mobilize when they worked across multiple clusters of student, faculty, and staff networks. Over time word of the fire spread to secondary organizational networks beyond BTUBS itself, aiding mobilization by accessing still more resource pools that were non-existent within BTUBS. For instance, 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.

In sum, features of the social architecture are also important to explaining the frequency, extensiveness, and effectiveness of mobilization processes that contributed to the competence of compassion organizing. The social architecture directly facilitated the extraction 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 foundation that both directly and indirectly enabled mobilization efforts.

*Emergent Features.* By themselves, compassion activation and mobilization are mutually reinforcing and comprise the “engine” for a process of compassion organizing. Competent compassion organizing arises not only from activation and mobilization, however, but also from unique emergent features, both structural and symbolic, which add to the competence of the process. *Emergent structural features* consist of created roles and improvised routines. *Emergent symbolic features* consist of leaders’ actions and caring stories. We propose that emergent features in the process of compassion organizing impact the ongoing pattern of activation and mobilization by re-directing attention and emphasizing moment-to-moment adjustments in resources, ultimately increasing the overall competence of the organizing process. Here we discuss these emergent features and their impact on activation and mobilization at BTUBS. A summary of this discussion, along with derived propositions about emergent features and their relationship to compassion organizing competence is given in Table 4.

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*Created roles* are informal, unofficial roles that emerge during the organizing process and dispel as the process winds down. Three such created roles are demonstrated in Touchstones 9, 11, and 12, which describe the ways that Kellie acted as an expeditor of the response process, Karl stepped in as a coordinator for academic resources, and Dina volunteered to play the role of buffer for the fire victims. These created roles allowed certain individuals to monitor the ongoing process and re-direct it as necessary. We suggest that people who occupy emergent roles often have specialized knowledge or a particular emotional capacity that allows them to respond

in a particularly important manner 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 come up for the fire victims. Her position as a faculty member also provided her with knowledge of available organizational resources. Karl shared an identity of international student with two of the fire victims and drew upon this shared identity in determining that replacing course materials was a pressing need. He also drew on his identity as a busy graduate student 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 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 et al. (1999) identify as a form of ad hoc structuring that facilitates problem solving as people with knowledge self-organize to smooth the organizing process.

*Improvised routines* are normal work routines that are spontaneously modified to address suffering, in a sense "repurposing" well-rehearsed templates of organizational action. For instance, Touchstone 5 describes Heidi's improvisation on her normal work routines in order to process emergency loans—something that had never been done before—by putting common routines such as filling out paperwork, assessing student need, and connecting with the university cashier's office into the service of helping the fire victims. For example, she used ordinary loan forms but filled them out for 0% interest so that they could be processed through the normal university systems. Another example is given by 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 for the students. This improvised routine allowed them to bypass organizational “red tape,” greatly speeding delivery of cash to the fire victims. These improvisations allowed for speedy resource delivery, at the same time that drawing on normal work routines added legitimacy to the process (Feldman and Pentland, 2003).

A second category of emergent features is the symbolic actions and stories that direct attention to pain, spark emotion such as empathetic concern, and activate people to provide support and material resources for the victims. At BTUBS, two symbolic features were particularly important in the collective response to the fire: leaders’ symbolic actions and stories of care. Again we propose that the emergence of these symbolic features was unique to the situation and contributed to the competence of the organizing process by impacting the shape of ongoing activation and mobilization at BTUBS. One important *symbolic leadership action* is described in Touchstone 13, when the Dean acknowledged the pain trigger and described the activation and mobilization efforts at a large formal public event. This symbolic act not only broadened attention to the pain trigger, but 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 goes beyond the person himself (Gardner, 1999; Pfeffer, 1981). Gardner (1999) suggests 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, Dean Smith’s symbolic act of stopping the speech, describing the fire, and writing a

check on the spot helped to greatly spread attention to pain, sparked emotion in the audience, and prompted many additional actions in response to his call for action.

A second form of emergent symbolic features in this case are *stories of care* that circulated around BTUBS, reinforcing activation and mobilization and ultimately enhancing the competence of the compassion organizing process. By stories, we refer to 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). Touchstones 14 and 17 illustrate the kinds of stories of care that circulated at BTUBS. 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 and also increased the number of people who felt empathetic concern for the fire victims and became involved in the response. Another story that became an emergent symbol at BTUBS involved Meg and the students' collection box (described in Touchstone 15), which raised \$1800 within hours of the fire. Several faculty and staff members mentioned feeling inspired and elevated upon hearing the story and the amount of money donated in such a short time period, a feeling that prompted them to accelerate their own giving (Haidt, 2003). These stories began to circulate through the BTUBS electronic mail system accompanied by statements such as Karl's "There are none who beat the BTUBS community!" (see Touchstone 17). These emergent symbols carried positive emotions such as elevation, gratitude, and pride, which are linked with prosocial and helping behavior (Emmons, 2003; Haidt, 2003) that provide further links between activation and mobilization. We propose that when organizational contexts facilitate sharing of emergent symbols such as these stories of care, it is more likely that people

will attend to pain, feel empathetic concern, and involve themselves in responding to pain, which is ultimately likely to increase the overall competence of the compassion organizing process.

### EXPLAINING COMPASSION ORGANIZING COMPETENCE

Our analysis depicts compassion organizing competence 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 (social architecture, agency, and emergent features) provide the skeleton of a theory of compassion organizing. However, the real flesh of the arguments is revealed by the propositions, which contain insight about several core mechanisms at work in creating compassion organizing that has the scale, scope, speed and customization that facilitates recovery from pain. Our propositions suggest that five core mechanisms are particularly central to explaining compassion organizing competence.

First, we see that attention to pain triggers is a necessary pre-condition for any compassion organizing process. Attention to pain triggers is conditioned by organizational values that sensitize people to noticing conditions that are painful for others. Attention is also directed and connected to action through routines that condition the pattern of responding. Attention is directed as well by characteristics of organizational networks that spread and amplify attention to pain. Network characteristics also imbue information with legitimacy and draw upon trust between members, which further expands attention to pain and speeds mobilization. Thus contextual enabling of attention is a core mechanism in compassion organizing competence.

Second, we see how the generation and spread of emotions are central to compassion organizing competence. Emotions prompt and accelerate action, and they allow people to calibrate and fine tune how they are responding over time. Enabled by values, activated and spread by routines, and shared across networks, empathetic concern was a key emotion that facilitated and directed individual and collective action in the course of activation and mobilization. Beyond empathetic concern, we see also how pride and gratitude are emotions that heighten responding to pain, and how anger is an emotion that can facilitate overcoming a roadblock in the process. These emotions were amplified by the emergent features of leader's actions and stories of care. Thus contextual enabling of emotion is a core mechanism in compassion organizing competence.

In responding to pain, people relied upon a significant level of trust among BTUBS members. By trust we refer to an individual's willingness to rely on another person when there is risk of some kind (Zand, 1972). Members trusted one another to respond to the pain trigger, to coordinate quickly, and to act as necessary in the situation. Members also relied upon the legitimacy that was granted to information about pain and attempts to respond, without which activation and mobilization could not have proceeded. By legitimacy we refer to the "perception that actions are desirable, proper, and appropriate in some socially constructed system of norms, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Both trust and legitimacy were endowments of the routines and qualities of the networks that characterized BTUBS before the fire episode. Trust and legitimacy are examples of how compassion organizing competence drew upon social resources that were available from intact contextual features (e.g., the particular routines and the particular network configurations) that were re-purposed to facilitate compassion organizing. Trust and legitimacy served as critical social resources that sped the diffusion of information,

attention, and emotion and endowed actions with additional social weight that increased the competence in the process. Thus, contextual enabling of legitimacy and trust is a third key mechanism in compassion organizing competence.

Fourth, we see how various organizational members drew upon their particular knowledge, position, and relationship with persons in pain in order to improvise roles and routines that add to the competence in the organizing process. Created roles and improvised routines facilitate moment-to-moment, on-the-ground adjustment of attention, emotion, and other resources to meet the changing conditions at hand. These emergent structural features are unique to the situation and they help to regulate the extraction, generation, and coordination of resources. The regulatory function of these emergent structures contributes to the customization of resources to the needs of the persons in pain, heightening the competence of the compassion organizing process. Thus, agents improvising structures is a fourth core mechanism in compassion organizing competence.

Fifth, we see that leaders create symbolic acts and members generate stories that carry meaning and evoke emotion. Leaders' acts and caring stories further spread attention to the pain trigger and emotional responses to it, broadening mobilization efforts across new networks. These symbolic acts draw upon and reaffirm the values that underlie a response to pain and provide legitimacy and importance to members' noticing, feeling, and responding to pain. As symbolic elements heighten the legitimacy of the unfolding response process, they amplify members' sense that it is desirable to act. Stories and images attract attention and carry emotion, becoming themselves forms of symbolic resources that are important in sustaining members' attention,



emotion, and action in relation to the pain trigger. In addition, stories and symbolic acts carry meaning within the process, which may in some cases spark further improvising, ultimately allowing for heightened competence. Thus, the final core mechanism in compassion organizing competence is a symbolic enrichment mechanism that amplifies any one of the previous four mechanisms.

All five mechanisms convey the importance of a variety of human-based resources (e.g., attention, emotion, legitimacy, and trust) to the development of a complex collective competence like compassion organizing. The extraction, generation, and coordination of material and human-based resources happen dynamically and unfold over time to create patterns of collective response that are well-suited to alleviate suffering. In this sense, the resource dynamics underlying compassion organizing competence, which are created through the interplay of social architecture, human agency, and emergent features, create a form of organizational strength and distinctive, repeatable capability that ensures the scale, scope, speed, and customization of compassion is directed toward the needs of the persons in pain.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZING COMPETENCE

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. While theory is based on an “N of 1” (Dukes, 1965), the induced theory speaks to how organizational researchers theorize collective competence in

organizing. Our model holds insights for organizational and strategy researchers interested in the basic puzzle of how competence in collective organizing is achieved.

Our first insight is obvious, and yet difficult to capture in many analytic research methods. By looking at a case study such as this one, it becomes clear that the mechanisms underlying compassion organizing competence are complex and multi-level. Accounts of competence that are anchored in organizing involve explaining how actions taken on the ground in the everyday doing of work (a more micro focus) link to a collective capacity to do something well (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, McGrath et al.'s (1995) study of new initiative selection, and Huy's (2002) study of emotional balancing in strategic change. This study builds on these works to suggest a set of five core mechanisms that are likely to be important to the ways in which the micro practices of members coordinate to produce competence in collective organizing. Our induced theory integrates several mechanisms studied in other contexts, such as Weick and Roberts' focus on attending and Huy's focus on emotion, building a richer and more coherent way to explain the complexity of collective organizing competence.

The five mechanisms that underpin compassion organizing competence open up new considerations for theorizing the dynamics of competence in organizing. First, the enabling of attention as a key mechanism underlines the importance of attention as a vital, constrained, but renewable resource (Ocasio, 1997; Dutton, 1997). Our idea of contextual enabling of attention

fits Ocasio's (1999) idea that individual attention is situated in the context of organizational activities and procedures. However, our idea of the social architecture of an organization as a key enabling mechanism invites consideration of how organizational culture (and in particular, values) works in conjunction with networks and routines to shape the activation, direction, and spread of attention. Our theory suggests distributed attention gets organized into a competent collective pattern of action by values and networks that focus and spread attention, facilitating the coherence of attention-driven action. This same idea is present in Weick and Robert's (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. We build on these ideas about attention in competent collective organizing to suggest that future research must consider cultural values in addition to structures like routines and networks as important in shaping attention. In addition, models of competent collective organizing must show how these elements of an organization's context work together to constrain and enable patterns of attention.

The contextual enabling of emotion as a key mechanism in compassion organizing competence underlines the importance of emotion in organizations and in organizing dynamics (Huy, 2002). Our theory of contextual enabling of emotion offers several important insights into collective organizing competence more generally. One central point is that rather than seeing emotion as something that deters or reduces competence, in this form of collective competence we see emotions as constructive forces that contribute critically to the competence of the process. Emotion (in this case human pain and suffering) disrupts normal work practices, opening an opportunity for members to attend to the change in circumstance that has evoked the emotions.

The contextual features of the organization enable emotion in a variety of ways. Routines that are linked to service and hospitality not only create scripts for action, but also legitimate attention to changes in the emotions of others in ways that inform competent action. Humanistic values are important in opening space to allow people to respond to emotional cues with their own expressions of emotion, such as empathetic concern, which can mobilize action. Networks are critical enablers of emotion because they allow for the spread of not only information, but also various emotions such as empathetic concern, gratitude, and pride. The spread of these emotions through organizational networks 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). And finally, individuals' emotional responses to pain as a disrupting emotional event can prompt improvisational actions, symbols, and stories that further contribute to effective patterning of responses to alleviate pain. Thus, in a myriad of ways, emotions prompt, direct, and reward action patterns that are critical to collective competence in organizing. These insights build on the role of emotion as a constructive force in organizing competence developed by Huy (1999, 2002) in his account of emotional capability as it contributes to competent change processes. Our analysis expands on previous work by inviting researchers to consider how features of an organizational context encourage and enable emotional expression, public emotional displays, and emotion-based responses, all of which can work toward creating collective organizing competence. This invitation necessarily redirects researchers to see emotion as central to the achievement of competence in organizing rather than as something to be minimized or eliminated all together.

The third mechanism, contextual enabling of legitimacy and trust, emphasizes resources that sociologists would see as central to competent social action. Both social resources are critical to compassion organizing because of how they facilitate the extraction and coordination of resources, and because of the way that they facilitate the speed of action and adjustment to changing circumstances. In addition, trust and legitimacy facilitate the expression of emotion, which is critical to compassion organizing competence. Trust and legitimacy have not been considered as central in accounts of competent organizing to date. However, one could easily see how these resources would be critical to facilitate the learning dynamics that many scholars argue are at the root of collective competence (e.g., Zollo and Winter, 2002). Our account suggests that trust and legitimacy may do more than facilitate learning. These social resources help to speed and spread emotion and attention, as well as 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.

The fourth key mechanism in compassion organizing competence, agents improvising structures, underlines the importance of agency in organizations and how members work the context in order to contribute to overall competence in organizing. 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. This form of emergent structure resembles the ad hoc networks that Weick and colleagues (Weick et al., 1999) argue are so helpful in creating resilience in high reliability organizing. This

mechanism helps to achieve a type of flexible expertise (Fletcher, 1998), so that agents who possess expertise that matters in light of the pain trigger are structurally endowed with the capacity to act in ways that are well suited for the challenges at hand. Thus, our theory of compassion organizing competence suggests that future accounts of collective organizing competence 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” in order to get things done (Fligstein, 1997; Dutton et al., 2001; Bansal, 2003), contributing to the organizing competence of the whole system.

The final key mechanism in compassion organizing competence we call symbolic enrichment to underline the variety of cultural forms that are used to create meaning and facilitate action around human pain. Symbols become important because of their ability to stand for and call upon deeper meanings in the organization (Gagliardi, 1990; Kluckhohn, 1942; Strati, 1992). Thus, members can use symbols as a focus of attention and share symbols to illustrate important aspects of the organization (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997). Symbolic enrichment may help build compassion organizing competence when symbols clearly focus attention on pain. In addition to focusing attention, symbols carry and evoke emotions (Gagliardi, 1990; Katz, 1999; Jones, 1993; Rafaeli and Worline, 2000), which enriches compassion organizing competence as they are shared across networks. The symbolic aspects of organizing are often underestimated in their capacity to communicate legitimacy (Gagliardi, 1990; Jones, 1993; Strati, 1992), 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. Our theory suggests that organizational scholars would do well to focus research attention on the ways in which symbols enrich the organizational processes that contribute to collective organizing competence, in particular the capacity of symbols to facilitate organizing processes by focusing attention, evoking emotion, and conveying legitimacy that heightens resource extraction, generation, and coordination.

While the five mechanisms each contribute a piece of the resource dynamic that helps to explain the achievement of organizing competence, another contribution of our theory is its integration of these mechanisms into a coherent processual account of collective organizing competence. Putting the pieces together reveals a theory of resource dynamics underlying organizing competence that goes beyond any single mechanism and suggests several important interrelated ideas: 1) structures (e.g. routines and 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. leader's actions, caring stories); 4) emergent features provide moment-to-moment, fine-grained coordination 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 competence in ways that are much more dynamic and alive than current theories that locate competence solely in routines,

bundles of routines, or knowledge resource dynamics. 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 competence in collective organizing. This theory of compassion organizing breathes life into the depiction of organizing competence by more fully representing the vital, emotional, efficacious actions of individuals and collectives acting in context to produce an extraordinary response to human pain (Dutton, 2003; Sandelands, 1998).

#### BOUNDARY CONDITIONS OF COMPASSION ORGANIZING COMPETENCE

Having generated a grounded theory of compassion organizing competence from a case study opens many questions regarding the conditions under which this processual theory will hold. A first set of boundary conditions focuses on the nature of emotion and emotional expression in context. Given the centrality of genuine emotion display to our theory of compassion organizing competence, our theory may be limited by organizational or institutional norms and values that suppress emotion, or by contexts where emotion is on display for solely instrumental purposes. While Martin et al. (1998) have 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 emotion displays are encouraged. These conditions bound the applicability of our theory.

A second set of boundary conditions has to do with 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 practices. The organization in this case 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 applicability of this model to different institutional fields. For example, contexts that do not feature variable participation or are that are highly focused on rules may not generate competence in the way our theory describes.

In addition, the organization we studied and its general institutional context had sufficient slack resources that may have facilitated the generation and coordination of resources in ways that might not apply in other settings. And finally, the nature of the pain trigger may provide a set of boundary conditions such that different types of pain are less amenable to collective response. For example, if a pain trigger is stigmatized—e.g. a mental illness—it may prevent compassion organizing competence from occurring in the way we have described because it is less publicly discussable or less likely to evoke emotions such as empathetic concern. The nature and dimensions of pain triggers and the ways in which pain triggers bound collective responses are important considerations for future research.

## LIMITATIONS

Our model of compassion organizing competence is obviously limited in generalizability, as it arose from an intensive study of a single incident in a single organization that is situated in a single institutional context. However, like single cases studies in organizational research that have been generative (e.g., Hall, 1976; Bartunek, 1984; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Burgelman, 1994; Martin et al., 1998), our hope is that the insights from the induced theory of compassion organizing competence outweigh the costs of restricted external validity. 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 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. However, these and other issues deserve further attention in future studies of compassion organizing.

Our theory of compassion organizing competence does not lend itself to exact prescriptions about creating compassionate organizations, nor does it suggest how isolated organizational features can create compassionate organizations. Instead, this theory of compassion organizing competence 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 create what one might call a more compassionate organization. Instead of a focus on compassionate organizations, 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 as a collective competence 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 in turn facilitate the creation of a pattern of responding over time that has the appropriate scope, scale, speed and customization to reduce pain or suffering. Such a view also suggests that compassion as organizational competence cannot be achieved by simply having compassionate leaders. Rather, leaders'

actions can contribute to compassion organizing competence 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 competence.

### FUTURE RESEARCH AND IMPACT

More research is needed to exercise and test the theoretical implications from our model. Several opportunities for future research are possible. One logical next step would be a comparative study that predicts the level and form of compassion organizing competence as a function of features of the pain trigger, features of the social architecture, characteristics of the agents, and qualities of the emergent features in the process. Within the same organization, it would be useful to compare compassion organizing competence across different pain triggers. Different incidences of pain in the same organization may unfold processes that vary in their competence because of the features of the trigger (e.g., more or less severe), involvement of different people (i.e., agents), and differing resultant emergent features, even though the social architecture is similar across incidents.

Second, future research could test how additional features of the context modify the process dynamics. For example, the public nature of the pain and the visibility of individual and organizational responses may magnify or depress some of the dynamics we suggest here. In addition, much more work is needed to explore how different values and ideologies contribute to compassion organizing competence. This research singled out three unit-level values as central

enablers primarily through how they facilitated the generation of attention and expression of emotion that contributed to compassion organizing several ways. Wooten and Crane (2004), in their study of an exceptional certified midwife practice, point to the importance of occupational values in enabling the dynamic capability of the unit. The values that matter for compassion organizing competence, and their location (at the unit, organizational, or occupational levels) also require research.

Third, it would be important to delve more deeply into the role of emotion in this process, and to more carefully map how emotional contagion effects (e.g., Barsade, 2002) and the general ebb and flow of emotion over time shapes the patterning of responses in compassion organizing. For example, the process could call forth resistance, jealousy, or fear, which alter the speed and direction of resource extraction and allocation. Future research could also consider how positive and negative emotions interact in shaping patterns of action, helping or hindering organizing competence.

Our focus on competence around compassion organizing also contributes to the burgeoning interest in positive organizational scholarship (e.g., Cameron, Dutton and Quinn, 2003; Cameron and Caza, 2004; Wooten and Crane, 2004). A focus on compassion organizing competence directs attention to how organizational features cultivate the conditions for building and exercising collective organizational strengths (like organizational justice, organizational wisdom, organizational compassion, or organizational integrity). A focus on framing collective organizational strengths in this way highlights the connection between certain organizational

competences and the expression of more enduring collective virtues (e.g., Cameron, 2003, Cameron, Bright and Caza, 2004; Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

A focus on the competence underlying collective virtues opens up consideration of how patterns of organizing create qualities or strengths of a whole system that various philosophers (e.g., Aristotle, Plato, or Confucius) and social theorists (e.g., MacIntire, 1984; Rawls, 1971) argue are good or valuable in and of themselves. This type of effort opens new opportunities for organizational scholarship to have impact by contributing to theoretical and public policy debates about how to remedy disturbing trends around organizational corruption, unfairness, and inhumaneness by offering competence-enhancing remedies, and not by simply eliminating the conditions that cause damaging organizational weaknesses. For example, organizational scholars are uniquely suited to address vexing questions about what is a theory of organizing that would help facilitate and design schools that are capable wise systems, hospitals that are capable caring institutions, or businesses that are fair and of high integrity. Within 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. To deliver on this promise it would be useful to research how the process of compassion organizing relates to other forms of virtuous organizing. For example, work on high reliability organizing (e.g., Weick and Roberts, 1993; Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 1999) can be conceptualized as a theoretical account of how organizations create wisdom or collective mind (Sandelands and Stablein, 1987). Future work could compare how similar or dissimilar are the organizational features that enable the building

of wisdom organizing competence as compared with compassion organizing competence. And finally, as sociologists such as Hochschild (1997) and Putnam (2000) have pointed out, workplaces are becoming the sites of community and social support for their members as civic and family supports dwindle. As such a transformation happens in our society, it becomes ever more important to understand how to create collective competencies that support the workplace as a human community.

## CONCLUSIONS

Organizations are sites of human pain, but they are also sites of human healing (Frost, 1999; Frost, Dutton, Maitlis, Lilius Kanov and Worline, 2006). A focus on compassion organizing competence unpacks the dynamics that create coordinated responses to facilitate the reduction of human pain over time. While our induced model is intended to add to theories of collective organizing competence, our hope is that a compelling example of competent compassion organizing, 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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Figure 1

The Process of Compassion Organizing Competence

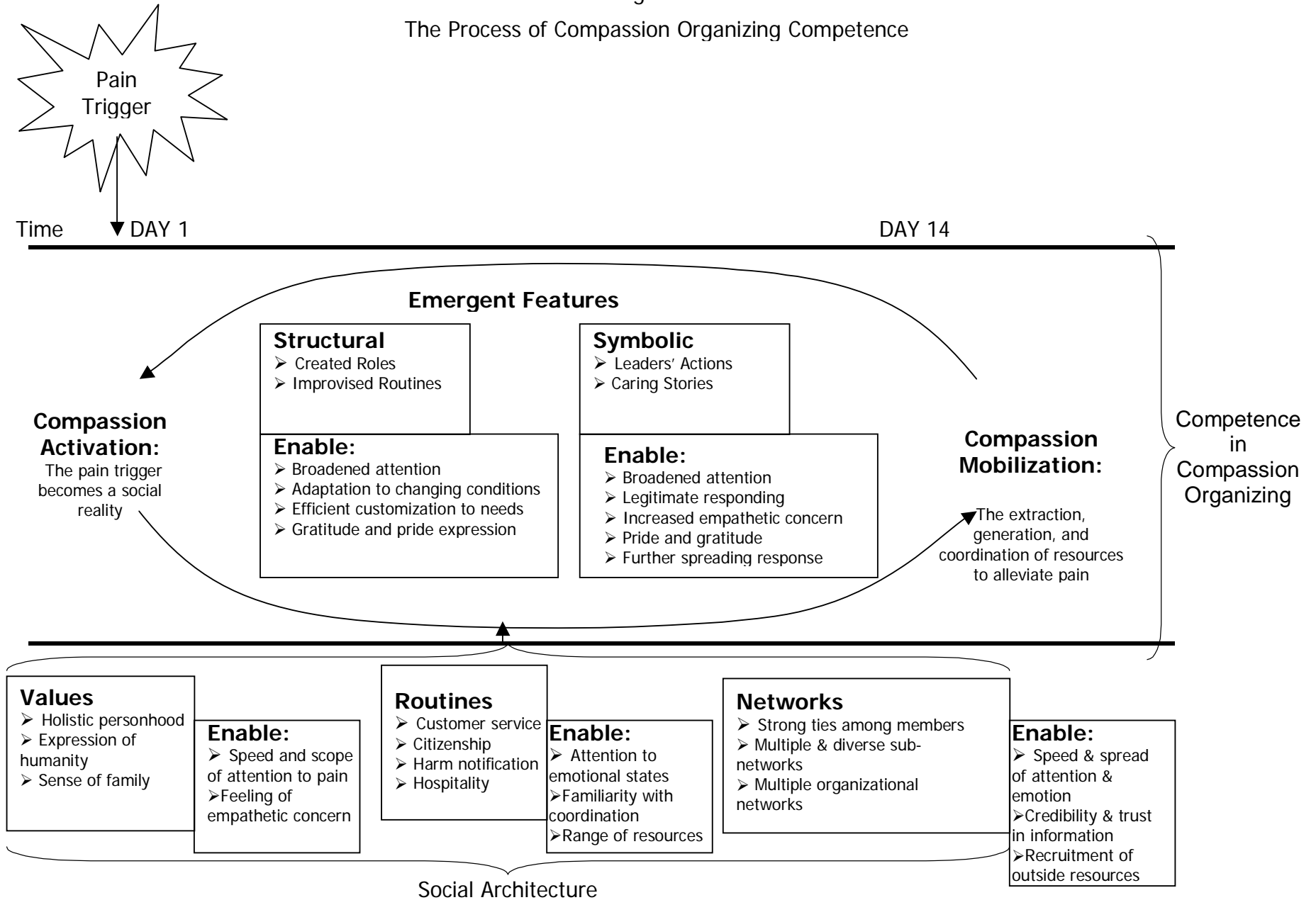




Table 1  
Timeline of Events

**Day 1**

3:00 AM	Fire ignites at 408 Hill Street, in a house near BTUBS
3:15 AM	Three MBA students escape from the fire with nothing but their pajamas. They lose all of their belongings.
8:00 AM	An adjunct faculty member, Kellie, recognizes one of the people at the fire scene as her student, Sara, as she drives by on her way to work. She stops to check on the student and learns that two more MBA students as well as Sara lost everything in the fire.
8:15 AM	Kellie emails several groups, including a women’s faculty group and the student services office, and calls Sheryl (the Senior Executive Secretary in the Dean’s office), notifying them of the fire and asking for help
8:30 AM	Sara, one of the MBA students, arrives on campus in her pajamas to get help. Ves and Heidi, staff members in student services, begin to secure emergency loans.
10:00 AM	Students are driven to the mall to use Red Cross coupons to obtain clothing for the day.
11:00 AM	Sara has an interview with her future employer, which she attends.
12:00 PM	Heidi, BTUBS Financial Aid Officer, expedites university loan processes to get \$3000 interest-free loans for each student, and walks with the students to the university cashier’s office to receive the cash immediately. Heidi also expedites replacement identification for the students, and walks with them to pick it up.
12:05 PM	Dina sends section 3 an email saying 2 students in the section have been in a fire, and urging them to start collecting notes and handouts in classes if relevant
1:00 PM	Sheryl, the Dean’s assistant, secures laptop computers for the students to use on loan from BTUBS
2:00 PM	Karl, in response to the email calls for help, volunteers to coordinate all of the students’ responses to replace course materials. Within two days, Karl coordinated between 30-40 students to finish re-creating the current semester’s materials.
3:00 PM	Kellie speaks face-to-face with Meg, President of the students’ Global Citizenship Club, Meg immediately sends email to the MBA student community asking for help and donations for the students.

- 3:15 PM Kellie works with Jeanne, the Assistant Dean of Student Services, to attempt to secure housing for the students at the BTUBS Executive Residence but is turned down.
- 3:30 PM Kellie approaches the Dean about housing the students in the Executive Residence. The Dean has Sheryl make the call to secure arrangements.
- 3:50 PM Meg forwards an email from Kellie to Karl detailing a specific list of student needs.
- 4:00 PM The Dean's "State of the School" speech is slated to begin. The Dean goes "off line" to announce that three students have lost everything in a fire and to make it clear that BTUBS will respond by offering full room and board until the students are back on their feet. The Dean writes a personal check as a donation and gives it to Meg on the spot. The auditorium begins to buzz.
- 4:45 PM Karl emails section 3 saying he and Dina will coordinate for 2 students in his section. Specifies procedures for donating
- 5:00 PM Meg returns to her computer after the state of the school speech and discovers over 100 emails with offers to help. The students raise over \$1800 in donations by the close of the day
- 5:30 PM Karl sends out email help list detailing clothing sizes, book needs, and thanks students.
- 8:00 PM Karl emails Sara asking if she is being taken care of or needs anything.
- Midnight Karl has received offers for course notes, books, backpacks, finishing group projects, and almost anything needed, along with multiple thanks for acting as coordinator. Students notify Karl of developments—e.g., what the Dean has arranged for student housing.

## **Day 2**

- 7:40 AM Request for help goes to Deloitte Consulting, asking for furniture and appliances.
- 9:50 AM The first day after the fire begins with a global electronic message to the BTUBS community from Sheryl in the Dean's office, notifying people of the arrangements that were made on the previous day and delineating the kinds of help that are needed. In response to the previous day's activities and this global notification:

- The students move into the Executive Residence, receive replacement laptops donated by a partner corporation, and receive replacement course readings for their current courses.
- Students attend classes and receive backpacks stocked with pens, paper, computer disks, a toothbrush, a comb, and mints.
- Clothing and housewares pour into Kellie's office, and she sorts them and delivers them to the students at the Executive Residence.
- People offer places for the students to live.
- Families of MBA students offer to go shopping for the students or run necessary errands.
- Admissions office secures replacement immigration documentation for international students.

Midnight Karl sends update to school, noting students don't have fire insurance. Notes excellent help provided by the School and notifies of help from faculty and staff. Suggests that he will call on them for help with course packs.

### **Day 3**

1:00 AM BBA student emails Karl that 2 male undergrads from BTUBS in fire.

7:45 AM Karl emails Kellie with information about undergraduates in the fire

8:30 AM Kellie emails that she will go to Dean's office to see what they can do

4:45 PM Karl sends email to whole school saying 5 not 3 fire victims and asks people to make checks out to Kellie or Sheryl. Gives options for donating. Expresses thanks.

### **Day 4 – Day 14**

Students notify their future employers of the fire and ask for help, donations for the students expand, including a \$1000 donation from a future employer of a different MBA student. Monetary donations continued to arrive throughout this time and a \$5000 anonymous gift from an alumnus. The donations allow the school to convert the initial emergency loans into grants and providing more than \$6000 of support to each MBA student. 3 MBA students use the additional money to set up emergency fund for students to be used in the future.

In addition:

- Over 50 students cooperate to build copies of course materials to replace the students' materials from their core courses.



- Kellie and Sheryl take turns walking to the bank daily to cash checks so that the students can have access to quick cash
- Housekeepers in the Executive Residence begin to check on the students daily.
- Team members finished papers and projects that had been lost in the fire, allowing students to successfully complete and pass their courses and final exams.
- Clothing donations exceed the ability to store them, and the Dean's wife takes excess donations to a local charity thrift store.
- With help from Dean's office, students find permanent housing.
- 3/6 Dean sends whole student body a message saying he just met again with one of the students and want to pass on a few things: 1) expressed gratitude that she and colleagues are safe; 2) appreciate outpouring of so much help; 3) tells story of this student turning down competitor schools and choosing BTUBS and way BTUBS responded to fire affirms her choice
- 3/26: Karl sends follow-up email, requesting course materials for non-core courses.

Table 2  
Dimensions of Compassion Organizing Competence<sup>3</sup>

Scale of the Response	Amount of resources generated and directed toward persons suffering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 100 people responded to Meg’s initial broad request for help</li> <li>• Over 100 persons donated clothing</li> <li>• Over 50 students participated in reproducing notes</li> <li>• Over \$3000 in emergency loans</li> <li>• Approximately \$3000 in donations per student</li> <li>• Gift of free housing and food service at Executive Residence for as long as needed</li> </ul>		
Scope of the Response	Variety of resources generated and directed toward persons suffering	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <i>Breadth of items</i>            \$ (cash and loans)            Computers            Housing            Clothing            Furniture and household goods            Certification papers            Everyday necessities         </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <i>Breadth of people</i>            Students (day, evening, current)            Parents of students            Employers of students            Staff in B-school and university            Faculty in and out of university            Alumni            Spouses of students         </td> </tr> </table>	<i>Breadth of items</i> \$ (cash and loans) Computers Housing Clothing Furniture and household goods Certification papers Everyday necessities	<i>Breadth of people</i> Students (day, evening, current) Parents of students Employers of students Staff in B-school and university Faculty in and out of university Alumni Spouses of students
<i>Breadth of items</i> \$ (cash and loans) Computers Housing Clothing Furniture and household goods Certification papers Everyday necessities	<i>Breadth of people</i> Students (day, evening, current) Parents of students Employers of students Staff in B-school and university Faculty in and out of university Alumni Spouses of students			
Speed of Response	Amount of time taken to initiate and complete the response to persons suffering	<p>A flurry of compassion organizing activity occurred within 48 hours following the fire. Specifically, time that passed between the time Kellie first becomes aware of the fire and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Various networks notified (15 minutes)</li> <li>○ Processing of securing emergency loans begins (30 minutes)</li> <li>○ Students are driven to the mall to buy replacement clothes (2 hours)</li> <li>○ \$3000 in interest free loans are secured and processed for each student (4 hours)</li> <li>○ Identification is replaced (4 hours)</li> <li>○ Loaned laptop computers are secured (5 hours)</li> <li>○ A fellow student begins efforts to coordinate course material replacement (6 hours)</li> <li>○ Accommodations at the Executive Residence are secured (7.5 hours)</li> </ul>		

<sup>3</sup> This documentation is conservative, as we only state a response when it was explicitly noted or documented in emails or interviews. However the three students involved in the fire made general comments about a broad range of smaller acts of comfort (e.g., cheer up emails, handwritten notes of concerns, hugs, etc.), which they mentioned were important indicators that peoples cared.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dean announces the student’ plight, and the school’s response, at the State of the School speech (8 hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student donations reach \$1800 (9 hours)</li> <li>▪ Another \$7200 is donated by students, alumni, and corporations in the days following this speech, including an anonymous \$5000 donation from an alumnus</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ A detailed email request for specific donations is sent to fire victims’ MBA section (9.5 hours)</li> <li>○ A global message is 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, and offers of places to live received (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>○ Awareness and response to the fact that 2 BBA students were also involved in the fire (48 hours)</li> </ul> <p>Additional compassion organizing occurred in approximately 2 weeks following the fire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Donations of money, clothes, and furniture continue</li> <li>○ Students continue efforts to rebuild course materials from previous semesters</li> <li>○ Sheryl helps the fire victims find permanent housing</li> </ul> <p>Although the response is considered to be complete after this two week period, Karl re-mobilizes the response five weeks following the fire to coordinate the duplication of course materials for non-core courses.</p>
Customization of Response	Efficient patterning and shaping of resources to meet the particular needs of those who are suffering.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attention toward non-duplication of efforts or resources reflected in the emails and interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Email 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>○ Email from Karl to Meg: “I am currently compiling an email to ensure that we do not duplicate efforts”</li> <li>○ Email 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</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<p>we can't do anything with"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explicit seeking of information around the particular needs of the fire victims results in:<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 replacement to each student's course history</li><li>○ New clothes quickly delivered to accommodate job interview</li><li>○ Donations of appropriately sized clothing</li></ul></li></ul>
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Table 3: Linking Elements of the Social Architecture to Activation and Mobilization and Derived Propositions

	<b>Activation</b>	<b>Mobilization</b>	<b>Derived Propositions</b>
<p><b>Values</b></p> <p>Defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedded assumptions about what is “good”</li> <li>• Embedded expectations about how to act in different situations</li> <li>• Embedded emotions associated with what is valued, good, and worthy of “strategies of action”</li> </ul> <p><b>Value 1:</b> People are more than their professional identities</p> <p><b>Value 2:</b> People’s humanity should be displayed</p> <p><b>Value 3:</b> Members are like family</p>	<p>Kellie drew upon Value 1, “people are more than their professional identities,” when she deemed it important to stop at the fire scene after identifying a student at the scene and in using her information as an impetus to notify different members of the BTUBS community and activate a response.</p> <p>Sara drew upon Value 2, “people’s humanity should be displayed,” when she deemed it appropriate to walk to school in her smoke-filled pajamas, coat, and boots to ask the student services staff for assistance.</p>	<p>Many people drew upon Value 3 “members are like family” when they heeded the calls for response to the plight of the students and donated money or clothing, expressed emotional support, and sent cards, emails, and gifts in an immediate caring and giving manner.</p> <p>Dean Smith drew upon Values 1, 2, and 3 in a particularly salient manner when he interrupted the State of the School speech to refer to the fire. This was a vivid reminder that he thought of students as more than their professional identities. Dean Smith referred to the organization’s values in his speech, but he also visibly enacted them in an immediate way by displaying his own humanity and speaking as a person affected by the plight of others and by his on-the-spot monetary donation, as he was publicly and symbolically giving to the students as he might give to his own family members had they been affected by an event like this.</p>	<p><b>Proposition 1:</b> Organizational values that emphasize holistic personhood, allow for the expression of humanity, and encourage a sense of family are associated with attending to pain and the emotion of empathetic concern, which increases the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p>

<p><b>Routines</b></p> <p>Defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grooved patterns of action created through sustained or repeated interaction</li> <li>• Patterns of action that require relatively little thought</li> </ul> <p><b>Routine bundle 1:</b> Student service provision routines</p> <p><b>Routine bundle 2:</b> Civic engagement routines, called Global Citizenship at BTUBS</p> <p><b>Routine bundle 3:</b> Regular routine use of email as a system of notification of harm to BTUBS members</p> <p><b>Routine bundle 4:</b> Hospitality routines associated with the Executive Residence</p>	<p>Upon noticing Sara’s pain, Ves engages routine bundle 1, her student service provision routines, and calls upon others involved in student services, such as Heidi, to do the same.</p> <p>Meg engages routine bundle 2, the global citizenship routines for civic engagement, in order to notify students of the harm and call for immediate responses such as donations</p> <p>After the process of compassion organizing is underway, Sheryl engages routine bundle 3 by composing and sending a community-wide email to all BTUBS members conveying information about the students’ situation and the ongoing response</p>	<p>Several people try to engage routine bundle 4, housing the students at the Executive Residence. Because the hospitality routines do not include housing students, the attempts at activation meet initial resistance. However, the Dean’s request overrides this initial resistance and allows members of the Executive Residence staff to fully engage routine bundle 4 and provide hospitality, including housing, cleaning services, and unlimited food service, to the students.</p> <p>As part of the ongoing mobilization, Karl and the student body engage routine bundle 2, the Global Citizenship routines, to assemble into teams for producing various kinds of resources.</p>	<p><b>Proposition 2a:</b> The existence of service routines increases attention to changes in the emotional state of customers, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p> <p><b>Proposition 2b:</b> The existence of civic engagement routines increases attention to pain and familiarity with coordinating to alleviate pain, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p> <p><b>Proposition 2c:</b> The existence of routines that provide regular notification of harm increases the speed and legitimacy of information sharing about member pain, increasing the likelihood of compassion</p>
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			<p>organizing competence.</p> <p><b>Proposition 2d:</b> The existence of hospitality routines increases the range of resources available to alleviate member pain, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p>
<p><b>Networks</b></p> <p>Defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The structure of interpersonal connections within an organization and between members of different organizations, including both the global pattern of ties between people and the patterns of sub-networks or clusters that are embedded in the overall structure</li> <li>• The quality of ties between people who are linked in interaction, reflected in the degree to which ties are characterized by trust and credibility</li> </ul>	<p>Kellie’s utilization of multiple network clusters to notify BTUBS members of harm facilitated activation of compassion organizing. In this case she utilized two different clusters within the overall BTUBS network—the “neighbors” women faculty group, and the student services group—which are composed of people who are likely to attend to the notification of harm and call for help for different reasons. For example, members of the student services network cluster may attend and respond because it is within their work domain; members of the career services cluster because Sara</p>	<p>The strength of ties within the network prompts people to take notifications of harm seriously. In the case of BTUBS, members of various network clusters responded to Kellie and Meg and Sheryl’s messages by beginning the quick extraction and coordination of resources.</p> <p>BTUBS members have access to multiple organizational networks, such as former employer and future employer organizations, which they utilized to mobilize additional resources beyond the scope of what was possible internally.</p>	<p><b>Proposition 3a:</b> The existence of multiple and diverse network clusters within the larger organizational network increases the spread of information about members’ pain and the responses to pain to multiple groups within the organization, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p> <p><b>Proposition 3b:</b> The existence of multiple strong network ties increases the credibility of calls to action around pain and</p>

<p><b>Network Feature 1:</b> Small, diverse clusters of dense connections embedded in an overall organizational network</p> <p><b>Network Feature 2:</b> Existence of multiple strong ties</p> <p><b>Network Feature 3:</b> Accessibility of multiple organizational networks</p>	<p>had an interview the day of the fire; member of the neighbors cluster because the students who needed help were all women; and members of the global citizenship cluster because the interest group is founded on the idea of attending to pain, caring and helping to alleviate it.</p>		<p>trust in the information source, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence</p> <p><b>Proposition 3c:</b> The accessibility of multiple organizational networks allows the spread of calls for help to alleviate members' pain beyond one dense organizational network, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p>
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Table 4 Linking Elements of Emergent Features to Activation and Mobilization and Derived Propositions

<b>Emergent Features</b>	<b>Activation</b>	<b>Mobilization</b>	<b>Derived Propositions</b>
<b>Structural</b>			
<p><b>Created Roles</b></p> <p>Defined as:</p> <p>Informal, unofficial roles that are created during the organizing process to allow certain individuals to monitor and direct the unfolding process</p>	<p>In her role as expeditor, Kellie activates the compassion organizing process by notifying a broad range of groups of the fire.</p> <p>In his role as coordinator, Karl is informed that there were also two BBA students involved in the fire. He in turn communicates this information to Kellie and later sends a message updating the whole school about the change in circumstances and needed resources.</p>	<p>In her role as expeditor, Kellie discerns and communicates the particular needs of the fire victims, thus expediting delivery of resources (e.g., a pair of eyeglasses for one of the fire victims; appropriately sized clothing; housing and food service at the Executive Residence for as long as needed) that were customized to and met the needs of the fire victims.</p> <p>In his role as coordinator, Karl mobilizes the re-creation of the student’s coursework and MBA program notes without generating unnecessary resources contributing to the competence of the process by ensuring that the effort was customized to existing needs and appropriate in scale.</p> <p>In his role as coordinator, Karl is in a position to provide the community with updates of the compassion response, as well as to express gratitude for people’s help and pride in the community, thus fueling further mobilization.</p> <p>In her role as buffer, Dina communicated her knowledge of what her friends needed and their sense of discomfort with the generosity they were experiencing, thus recalibrating the speed and scale of resources.</p>	<p><b>Proposition 4a:</b> When roles are created, they expand attention to pain, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p> <p><b>Proposition 4b:</b> When roles are created, they facilitate adaptation to changing conditions, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p> <p><b>Proposition 4c:</b> When roles are created that bring expert knowledge about the form of pain or about the people in pain, it facilitates efficient customization of resource extraction, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p> <p><b>Proposition 4d:</b> When roles are created, they legitimate widespread emotional expressions of gratitude and pride in organizational actions, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p>

<p><b>Improvised Routines</b></p> <p>Defined as:</p> <p>Normal work routines that are spontaneously modified or repurposed</p>	<p>The Dean uses the routine of his annual State of the School speech in a new way when he addressed the audience about the fire, thus broadening and legitimating attention to the pain.</p>	<p>Heidi uses her knowledge of the standard financial aid routines as a template upon which to improvise in order to quickly gain access to emergency cash for the fire victims. Sheryl uses her normal routines for coordinating with students and faculty around Global Citizenship projects as a template upon which to improvise securing additional resources such as laptop computers.</p>	<p><b>Proposition 4e:</b></p> <p>When existing routines are repurposed to facilitate speedy resource extraction, the likelihood of competent compassion organizing increases.</p>
<p><b>Symbolic Leaders' Actions</b></p> <p>Defined as:</p> <p>Leaders' actions that stand for ways in which the leader would like the followers to act; that is actions intended to influence a behavior or course of action for followers that extends beyond the leader him- or herself</p>	<p>The Dean created an emergent symbol when he interrupted his State of the School speech to talk about the fire and wrote a check for the fund on the spot. His model became a symbol of the kind of action that was desired and broadened attention to pain.</p>	<p>The emergent symbol of the Dean's model validated the response of the system, mobilizing people to take action and giving validation to those who were working to coordinate resources of various kinds.</p>	<p><b>Proposition 5a:</b></p> <p>When leaders create public symbols, it broadens attention, evokes emotions such as pride and gratitude and legitimates responding to pain, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p>

<p><b>Caring Stories</b></p> <p>Defined as:</p> <p>Oral or written narratives about caring acts that encapsulate action, feeling, and thought in a particular time within a three-part structure (beginning, middle, and end), and can be socially shared</p>	<p>The Dean’s action at the State of the School Speech became an emergent story of the care the system was providing. The story traveled quickly among members, and upon hearing the story, people responded with empathetic concern and were prompted to act.</p>	<p>The story of the email from the president of the Global Citizenship Club and the ensuing donations of \$1800 in just a few hours became an emergent symbol that mobilized faculty, staff, and others with more stable sources of income to donate additional money.</p>	<p><b>Proposition 5b:</b></p> <p>When stories, text, or images related to pain are generated, attention spreads, empathetic concern increases, and people increase responding, increasing the likelihood of compassion organizing competence.</p>
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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.”

  - i. Follow-up on what people did and how they felt
  - ii. 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?

Appendix B  
Summary of Touchstones and their Theoretical Significance

<b>Touchstone</b>	<b>Referent event</b>	<b>Theoretical Significance</b>
Touchstone 1	The loss of all belongings in a fire	This is what we identify as the pain trigger. This pain trigger, though moderate, was large enough to gain attention, generate empathetic concern, and spark action. Hence we claim that BTUBS and its members enacted compassion in response to this pain trigger.
Touchstone 2	Kellie drives by the fire scene and recognizes MBA student	This touchstone is important in revealing the role of attention in compassion activation. Kellie learned of the pain trigger by chance, and this left her with incomplete information about all of the students involved. Hence, the activation process initially included calls for help only for the 3 MBA students involved in the fire. When Karl and Kellie later discovered that BBA students were also affected, a new round of activation began.
Touchstone 3	Kellie immediately sends messages to three different people / groups upon her arrival at BTUBS	Kellie's agentic moves are prompted by her empathetic concern for the students' situation, and are one important means by which compassion organizing became activated. Kellie's calls for help prompted three different sub-networks in BTUBS to begin issuing their own notifications about the fire, changing the event from simply one person's compassion into a social reality shared by others. Because Kellie activated three different sub-networks, the social reality of the pain trigger began to be shared more widely, greatly contributing to the scope and scale of the response.
Touchstone 4	Sara's arrival in the student services office in her smoke filled pajamas, overcoat, and winter boots	Sara's arrival was another source of compassion activation because her physical presence made the pain trigger vivid and highly salient and enhanced the reality of the suffering. In response to Sara's arrival, Ves used her repertoire of student services routines to begin to respond to the suffering. As part of the social architecture of BTUBS, these routines added speed to the response of the student services office, as they have practiced ways of meeting a variety of student needs. In addition, routines imbue activity with legitimacy, and Ves's use of her regular student services routines made it seem legitimate for herself and for others to respond to the suffering of the fire victims.
Touchstone 5	Heidi's delivery of emergency cash and ID cards	As the BTUBS financial aid officer, Heidi knew how to improvise some of her normal work routines to meet the students' needs for emergency cash and identification. Heidi's empathetic concern for the suffering of the students was a

		spark for her improvisation. . Heidi’s improvised routines became an emergent feature of the compassion organizing process, patterning the resources to meet the specific needs of the students – in this case a need for access to cash and new identification as quickly as possible.
Touchstone 6	Sheryl’s immediate action 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, the extraction of resources to help alleviate suffering. Sheryl’s empathetic concern for the students combined with her knowledge of the networks and the availability of slack resources in the BTUBS system facilitated her ability to secure resources quickly. The transition from activation to mobilization depends on agentic moves like that illustrated by Sheryl, in which people who encounter the spreading social reality of the pain trigger feel empathetic concern and act to draw upon whatever resources they have in order to alleviate suffering.
Touchstone 7	Meg’s message to the MBA community alerting them to the fire and the needs of their fellow students	Meg’s message is another example of BTUBS members using their regular routines as a basis for improvised responses to the pain trigger. Meg, in her capacity as leader of the Global Citizenship Club, was responsible for alerting networks within the student community to public service opportunities, but using the network to address within-community harm was an improvisation that was critical because it activated another large network of students, many of whom were likely to feel empathetic concern and add to the growing mobilization.
Touchstone 8	The Director of the Executive Residence refuses to house the MBA students, citing lack of precedent	While the description of a compassion organizing process can make resource coordination and extraction look easy, obstacles to organizing inevitably arise. In this case, the fire was a “gray zone” event, and the suffering of the students was not clearly within the mandate of the Executive Residence. The Director’s wariness to establish a precedent of housing students whenever a need arises is part of his regular work routines, which involve protecting the availability, tranquility, and high quality service of the hotel for its executive patrons. Because this objection is legitimate and falls well within the regular routines of doing the work of the Director, this obstacle could easily have hampered the scale and scope of resources offered to the students.
Touchstone 9	Kellie appeals to the Dean on behalf of housing the students at the Executive Residence	While much of the activation and mobilization of compassion is sparked by empathetic concern for the plight of the victims, other emotions come into play as the process unfolds. In this case, Kellie’s anger at slack resources that were

		highly valuable to alleviate suffering but weren't being called into use was the impetus for her plea to the Dean, the one person who could remove the obstacle. In this way, specific emotions other than the feelings of empathetic concern can be important in generating the emergent structural and symbolic features that add unique shape and pattern to the resources extracted from the system.
Touchstone 10	Students are admitted to the Executive Residence and staff go out of their way to make them feel welcome	The social architecture of BTUBS included hospitality routines associated with having a full-service executive hotel attached to the school. Because of these hospitality routines, staff of the Executive Residence could use their established work practices to respond to suffering, greatly amplifying the scale of the compassion organizing response with relatively little additional effort.
Touchstone 11	Karl's offer to coordinate all of the incoming offers of help from students	Karl created a role as a resource coordinator, spurred in part by his strong feeling of identification and empathetic concern for the international students involved in the fire, as well as concern over potential resource duplication and inefficiencies in the response. Karl's coordination efforts greatly increased the customization of the resources offered to the students. In addition, Karl's regular communication with the BTUBS community allowed for the acceleration and deceleration of donations, the broadening and narrowing of the scope of resources as necessary, and the constriction of scale when resources were no longer required.
Touchstone 12	Dina's created role as buffer for the fire victims	Dina's empathetic concern for the fire victims, combined with her unique knowledge and position as a good friend of one of them, prompted her to create a role as buffer, keeping offers of help and the ongoing organizing process from consuming the fire victims. Without a role such as that created by Dina, the organizing process could have inadvertently caused more stress or amplified the pain of the loss.
Touchstone 13	The Dean's interruption of the "State of the School" speech	The Dean's interruption of a formal event, along with his symbolic action of writing a check and handing it to Meg, are symbols that add to the competence of the compassion organizing process by reinforcing the shared values in the community and the appropriateness of action to relieve suffering. In addition, the Dean's action took place in a highly visible public forum, adding to a new wave of activation by reinforcing the shared social reality of the fire and triggering additional mobilization, as people who learned of the situation in this forum acted to draw out additional resources to address the suffering.



Touchstone 14	Meg's receipt of the check at the Dean's State of the School speech and her stunned reaction	Each person interviewed mentioned the importance of the Dean's action at the State of the School speech. While the action itself became an emergent symbol that shaped the pattern of the response, the action also became an element in stories of care that began to circulate through the organization. Even people who were not present at the speech heard about the action and were impressed by the array of resources that the school was providing in response to the students' need. As these stories of the Dean's action and the school's responses spread, they too became emergent symbolic features of the process, reinforcing activation and mobilization and adding to the scope and scale of the resources provided for the students.
Touchstone 15	The end of Day 1	The fire broke out at 3:00am on Day 1. Within 5 hours, multiple networks all across BTUBS had been alerted to the fire and the students' needs. Within 7 hours, donations rolled in and offers of help filled mailboxes around the school. Within 9 hours, the students had received emergency loans and new identification. In less than 24 hours, the students had received new computers, room and board, countless expressions of concern, and a variety of donated goods. The speed of this organizing process, along with its scope and scale in just one day, are measures of its competence.
Touchstone 16	Kellie's sharing of the most appropriate and useful sizes of clothing donations	A competent compassion organizing process is one in which scale is not expanded beyond the needs of those suffering, nor is scope broadened beyond resources that are useful. A marker of the unique patterning of resources that adds to the overall competence is Kellie's discreet sharing of information about the sizes of clothing and the types of household goods that would be most useful to the students. In this way, the scope of donations is narrowed to what is most useful and the scale is reduced to what can be best utilized, as well as customizing resources to the needs of individuals. Without emergent roles such as those occupied by Kellie and Karl, who regularly used their roles to notify others of needs and shape the incoming flow of resources, this level of competence in the process could not be sustained.
Touchstone 17	Karl's message at the end of Day 2, reminding people of what had been done and what was still needed	By expressing gratitude and general positive emotion, Karl's messages (as well as the Dean's message and students' messages later) facilitated continued mobilization and reinforced the social reality of the fire.

Touchstone 18	Resources delivered to the fire victims	This list of resources is broad in scope – encompassing everything from emotional resources of care to attentional resources of slack to physical resources such as money, food, shelter, and clothing. In addition, it is large in scale – the amount of money, clothing, expense on food and shelter, and well wishing is substantial. And finally, it is highly customized – clothing of the right size, household goods that are useful, books and notes for the correct classes, eyeglasses with the correct prescriptions, immigration papers, and so on. All of these resources were generated, shaped, and delivered in a 2-week timeframe, and many of them within a few days of the fire, making the response fast and timely as well. Together, these four dimensions provide a way of gauging the response magnitude of the process.
Touchstone 19	The Dean’s letter to students after talking with a fire victim	The Dean’s continued leadership actions serve as additional emergent symbols that spark emotion and reaffirm the social architecture of the organization. The Dean’s closing memo expresses general positive emotion and pride in being a member of BTUBS. His message also affirms the values of the community and applauds the actions taken in line with those values. We refer to symbols such as this one as “symbolic enrichment” because the Dean’s message has the effect of amplifying the response of the organization, in this case elevating the community as a whole and reflecting back to them the significance of what they had done in meeting the needs of fellow members by spreading pride in membership and re-infusing the community with a sense of positive emotion
Touchstone 20	The fire victims letter thanking the community	Ultimately the process of compassion organizing is about alleviating the suffering of those in pain. Competent compassion organizing is a process in which people notice and respond to pain of organizational members with resources that are genuinely useful and impactful. At BTUBS the overall competence of the compassion organizing process in reducing suffering is evidenced by the heartfelt letter from the fire victims back to the community that rallied around them and responded to their pain.