Chapter 6
Compassion Organizing for Public–Private Collaboration in Disaster Management

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ABSTRACT

Compassion organizing evokes positive identity in both the public and private sectors, which leads to effective collaboration between the two sectors. Although when some organize they instinctively apply tenets of compassion organizing, there is much more that can be done to yield substantive gains in individual satisfaction and organizational success. Compassion organizing is not another form of emotional intelligence. Rather, compassion organizing builds three organizational capabilities (i.e. cognitive, affective, and structural capability). Furthermore, explicitly utilizing compassion organizing allows, and in fact requires, that organizations and members of those organizations keep positive identities throughout their association. This will maintain the socio-psychological tie of organizational identification that is critical to cooperation between the public and private sector. This chapter explores compassion organizing and the concepts that form the foundation for compassion organizing. Then, this chapter specifically applies compassion organizing to entities engaged in emergency management, particularly those in public-private partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

People in the world are often faced with tragic circumstances in which they suffer, e.g. catastrophic natural disasters (such as floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes), and man-made disasters (such as unfortunate large-scale accidents and murderous acts of terrors). Correspondingly, most communities continue to build an effective disaster or emergency management framework to handle the severe challenges brought on by unexpected and unwelcomed disasters. For example, the United States has constantly adapted its disaster management system to better cope with damages and

suffering caused by calamitous disasters such as the attacks of September 11, 2001 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Poulin, 2010). Although communities have engaged in a variety of emergency management activities through sound principles of mitigation and preparedness, the lack of successful recovery and resilience in the affected areas has become much more salient (Drabek, 1985; Drabek & McEntire, 2003; McCreight, 2010).

In order to successfully endure and recover from natural disasters and man-made disasters, several previous National Research Council reports have agreed that collaboration between the private and public sectors is required. According to the National Research Council (2010), collaboration between the public and private sectors enables a community to anticipate, prepare for, rapidly respond to, and recover from disasters. Developing strong and cooperative collaboration between two sectors is a prerequisite for effective emergency or disaster management since private-public partnership is vital for establishing networks and trust essential to developing and maintaining resilient communities. Despite the growing acknowledgement on the importance of cooperation between private and public organizations, there is currently no explicit framework of how these two sectors work together for disaster management (Dunaway & Shaw, 2010; National Research Council, 2010).

Currently, organizations engaged in providing any of a variety of public services are not as "emotionally sensitive" as they could be, especially, public organizations concerned with disaster preparedness and recovery. These organizations have become so routinized and formulated that they are rigid and bureaucratic in their approaches to emergency management (Drabek, 1986; National Research Council, 2010). However, an often overlooked, yet crucial aspect of the organization's engagement in emergency management is its members' empathy or compassion towards people experiencing hardship from disasters. One measure of effective emergency management should be how much these organizations authentically respond to people's pains and suffering. When members including CEOs, and top management teams in the organizations notice, feel, and respond to human pain in a coordinated way, known as compassion organizing (Dutton et al., 2006), they will have more commitment, and demonstrate 'helping behavior' not only for their extrinsic motivation (i.e., financial, relational or reputational interests), but also for the sake of people's recovery and resilience during and after any sort of disasters.

BACKGROUND

Compassion organizing in response to individuals suffering from unexpected disasters varies by organization. For instance, a variety of organizations reacted very differently to the unexpected devastation (i.e., pain of human loss) in the attacks of September 11. Although prior research has suggested that organizational routines/patterns (Zollo & Winter, 2002) and organizational cultures/values (Bansal, 2003) affect responses to unexpected events or disasters, it does not address how emotions and compassion of the organizational members interrelate to these surprise occurrences. Moreover, managers and practitioners engaged in disaster management have not paid attention to how compassion organizing emerges, and why it is crucial to facilitate effective disaster management. Gittell et al. (2006) argue that both relational and financial reserves determine variances in compassion organizing activities as a result of comparisons among ten airlines' response to the events of September 11. As a result, managers within the organization highlight a dehumanized and mechanical approach to deal with their workload regarding disaster management so organizations start standardizing processes without a proper level of empathy toward people who are suffering intensely.

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