

Organizing Compassionate Communication:
Pragmatic Fieldwork with Nonprofits and Homeless Young Adults

by

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to understand and improve interactions between homeless young adults and the nonprofit organizations that serve them, I engaged in a long-term, qualitative, participatory action project. My project involved input from homeless young adults, nonprofit organizations, volunteers/staff, and communication scholarship. While taking a community-engaged, participatory, and qualitative approach, I focused on the interactions between youth and the organizations. Particularly, I drew on homeless young adult experiences to inform services and illuminate compassion within the context of the nonprofit organizations. In the end, this project extends the individual model of compassion to include presence, identifies potential ruptures in the process of compassion, and models compassionate dynamics in organizations. It also articulates a method I call pragmatic fieldwork, a qualitative and pragmatic approach to participatory action research. Each of these outcomes speaks to varied community interests, from theoretically nuancing scholarly models of compassion to informing policy in the interest of more effectively and compassionately serving homeless youth.

DEDICATION

For those who live without homes.

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Chapter 1

FORWARD

Sunday, June 8, 2012

When I pull up to the StandUp For Kids youth house, I am five minutes early and about half a dozen youth are already waiting. They sit on the porch to shield themselves from the sun, but at 4:25 in the evening it provides less and less shade. Robbie, a youth I haven't seen in about a month, stands behind and apart from the group. He seems stoic, with his back against the wall of the house, tall and skinny, his long black hair framing his face like a helm.

I ask Erica how she is doing as I open the door of the house. "Hot," she replies dryly.

It is hot. A few days earlier it had been cloudy, which had broken the unrelenting Arizona heat. But whatever respite the clouds had provided is officially gone. We have returned to the oven state. I tell her we recently fixed the evaporative cooler. She seems only nominally consoled.

I walk around the house, turning on the one AC window unit and fans. Harry, a young adult who is as much staff as he is client because of his tenure with the organization, brings the unscrewed basement door to my attention, saying that it must have been open since yesterday. I go into the basement and cover the AC units in the basement with blankets. Someone breaking into the basement is bad, but someone stealing the recently donated ACs before they get installed would be about as tragic as it gets.

When I go back inside, Robbie says he's not doing well and that his body is all messed up. Up close, I can see he has dark circles under his eyes, and there are subtle stains from food or vomit on his shirt. I ask what's wrong. He laughs a hollow laugh.

"I got the herpes. I thought you should know, you know, just in case I can't come here anymore."

It takes me a second to realize that he means that we might kick him out for having an STD.

"Um, no. You are welcome here. You are always welcome here. I'm going to give you two rules: no having sex with people against their will," I say, trying to make a joke in poor taste, "and don't bleed in the food. Can you abide by those restrictions?"

"Yeah, man," he says smiling. "I think I can handle that." He goes on to tell me that he hasn't been keeping his food down. I consider easily digested calories and ask if he wants some lemonade. "Sure," he takes the lemonade. About five minutes later Robbie asks if he can talk to me. I say yes. He asks if it can be in the office or outside.

"Let's go to the office."

"It can be an oven in there."

"It should be better with the cooler working."

I enter. It is hot, but not bad. I hurriedly turn the fan on as he enters, and I sit him in front of the fan. It helps.

"Life has sucked recently," he says. He reaches in his pocket and produces four items: a pen, a folded scrap of paper, a pocket knife, and some ID card. "This is all I have to show for the 20 years of my life. This is it." He then launches into a tragic and comprehensive litany of sufferings. Over the last few months, Robbie was out of where

he was staying, dumped by his significant other, stopped taking his schizophrenia medicine, started experiencing daily visual and tactile hallucinations, started smoking spice and weed, can't manage to keep food down, had several seizures, contracted herpes, and nearly killed himself twice. He says his body "is on the edge of quitting."

A bit overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of his issues, I pull out a blank piece of paper and I ask him to list off for me the ten things he would like to see change or improve in his life. He lists about three things, before asking,

"Is the purpose of this activity to see the things that can be changed and the things that can't?"

"Sorta. There are things that SUFK can help with, and things that we can't. I'm just trying to break that down."

Robbie motions for the pen, leaning over and using the empty space at the bottom of the page. It takes me a second to realize that he is writing a sentence, not adding to the list. He calmly puts the pen down and leaves the office, saying softly, "I'm going to get something to eat." The note reads:

Where there is no desire,

There is only peace.

Tao Te Ching, #251

I let him go, not sure that pushing him at this moment will be productive. Besides, he's going to eat, which is something in the right direction.

I chat with Richard a bit in the clothing room. I have known Richard a few years. He riffs a little on the guitar, playing me the latest things he's written and learned. He is getting really good. I tell him as much. He says he's been practicing. I chat with the other

volunteers in the kitchen about life. One of the volunteers, Dalila, finally brought her grad school packet I'm going to look at. I see Robbie sitting in the main room on the leather chair with a plate of pasta salad on his lap. I sit on the couch next to the chair.

“So...” I start, though I have no idea what I am going to say next, “...you're eating.”

“Yeah, I'll probably just vomit it up in a few hours.”

“But you'll digest some in the meantime!” I say, trying to sound optimistic.

Our conversation quickly goes back to his suffering. He seems to be despondent about the break up, which was “Definitely not my idea.” He's also been kicked out of where he was staying because some kids in the family needed a place to stay. He voluntarily left because he is older and more capable. As for his hallucinations, they are varied “demons” he calls them, noting that they aren't actually demons, but that there isn't a better word for them. More troubling are the black slugs that crawl out of everywhere, crawl up his body, attach themselves to his left hand, burrow into his flesh, and diffuse into his veins. This is apparently quite painful, like a searing sensation. He also recounts a story about having several seizures while he was walking recently. He says it is hard to say, but that he's given up. At some point I make eye contact with Richard, and we share a look. I have no clue what he is thinking, but I can imagine that he can hear some of what is being said.

I tell Robbie that I think of people as physical, social, mental, and spiritual beings. He says that he is near death physically, mentally broken, socially outcast, and teetering on the brink as far as spirituality. “While there is empirical fucking evidence for the existence of god, right now I'm pissed as fuck at the man. How the fuck do you let

something like this happen? So I'd call that on the brink." I tell him that if all this suffering had to happen to one person, that I was grateful that it happened to someone strong enough to handle it. He says that while generally he has a very high tolerance for physical pain, his emotional threshold is "like a child." We return to the subject of the break up but end up on the physical health thing. I ask him if he's thought about going to the hospital. He says if he goes to the hospital they will arrest him, because he is on court ordered treatment for his severe mental illness (SMI) and that he has blown off his case manager. I tell him I see two options, hospitalization or getting back on his meds. He doesn't seem excited about being on his meds either. At this point, I decide to leave, in part to talk to the other youth, but also to not press this point.

I do a few dishes. Needs to be done. Helps me think.

I end up back in the clothing room with Richard, bullshitting about something. Five minutes later Robbie sticks his head in, participates in our conversation for about 30 seconds, then shifts the subject to why he hates being in the hospital. "It's like being a pharmaceutical guinea pig. That's what we call it. 'Here, why don't you try this medicine?'" He says in an alternate voice, low in tone and bobbing his head back and forth. "One week later I'm like 'I'm a little less anxious, but I've been scratching the skin on my neck until I bleed.' 'How bout *this* one?' 'Gee, my depression is almost gone when I'm on it, but if I miss one dose I'm ready to kill myself!'" I refrain from commenting on how psychiatry is a difficult science. He clearly doesn't want back on his meds. He also tells a story about being in ASH (Arizona State Hospital), how his court ordered medication was the result of being unkempt in appearance, irritable, and out of it. He explains that he got woken up early in the morning to talk with a guy in the hallway and

that it was before he showered or was really awake. “That’s what he put in his report. ‘Unkempt, out of it.’ Skipped the ‘Right out of bed’ part.”

In the kitchen, I tell Dalila to get her grad school packet so we can go over it. We retreat to the office to flip through the materials and discuss what it takes to apply. During this time, Robbie comes in and asks if he can use the computer. He stares at it for some time as we discuss how to frame Dalila’s 2.5 GPA in a way that will get her in. Robbie puts in an opinion about how to frame the death of an uncle as not a negative that interrupted school, but as a positive that made her better at school. After she leaves he asks if his advice was ok. I tell him it was wise.

We discuss the troubles of his life a bit more. He says that the one good thing about his state is that he doesn’t get angry. His body just won’t put up the energy. He also says that he can’t manage to cry, that there is some kind of block. He then tells me that he’s decided to call Reach Out. My heart soars. Reach Out is an emergency mental health hotline, and while I have no opinion about how he gets help, medicated or otherwise, I am painfully aware that I am incapable of helping him deal with what appears to me as schizophrenia. I pull up the number while he gets a plate of food. That’s two plates of food, a glass of lemonade, a glass of milk, and on to the second glass of lemonade. This is progress. I get the number, call on my phone, and ask Robbie if he can answer the questions himself. He holds his hand out for the phone.

I’m amazed at the sudden change in his demeanor. He’s not happy talking to me, nor is he lively, but he’s human, with minor animations, some variance in facial expression, and a slightly slouched posture. But within 30 seconds of having the phone, he is slumped, more or less motionless, and begins the conversation in a softer voice than

he was talking to me. He sounds like a ghost. I don't know if the sudden transformation is a performance, a kind of "admit me into your program" script that he knows he has to run in order to be taken seriously. But why, then, the body language? Perhaps Robbie is in an emotional/personal state that he has no social continuity, that he acts exactly as he feels at that moment. Whatever the reason, it's a dramatic shift.

Robbie runs through his litany of suffering for the Reach Out worker. He gives personal information, answers questions, and tells symptoms. He says he has a knife in his pocket and that he's been thinking about stabbing himself in the jugular.

"I hear it takes about two minutes to bleed out from a stabbed jugular. But if you get one there's a chance someone could stop the bleeding. So if I could manage, I'd open the other one up to make it a done deal. It would also probably end things in 60 seconds flat." Without even a pause he asks the Reach Out worker, "How do you deal with this depressing shit all day?"

There is a brief pause, then Robbie laughs. "Well said. That's about the truest thing I've heard all day." Robbie's responses start concerning drugs, so I assume Reach Out's questions have turned to drug use.

"Do you smoke weed?" Robbie interrupts.

"Well, if you ever happen upon {some type of weed}, you should try that stuff."

He hangs up the phone.

"That guy was so full of shit."

"How do you know he was full of shit?"

“Well, for one, he didn’t care. And secondly, he says he used to smoke weed, but that he doesn’t anymore, which is bullshit. He smokes.” Wanting to kill time until Reach Out comes, but also wanting to hear his view of compassion, I ask,

“How do you know when someone doesn’t care?”

“It’s this thing I have. I’ve always been able to do it. You know how Sherlock Holmes has his art of deduction. It’s actually induction. Induction is taking a bunch of things and figuring out other things from them. It’s nonstop in my head, always making connections and trying to sort out what is going on.”

“Like hyper associative inference?”

“Something like that. Lemme draw it out for you,” I hand him a small pad of yellow paper and a pen.

“See, on the phone you got two things, tone and verbiage,” Robbie is speaking quickly, in a free associative way. “With tone, I hear lazy, I hear tired, I hear uninterested.”

My phone rings. It’s Reach Out, asking for Robbie. I hand him the phone. I don’t know the questions they are asking, so it makes the conversation hard to follow. But Robbie seems to be getting a little annoyed, responding with no nonsense answers that are often morbid, cheeky, or both. He hangs up the phone and hands it back.

Thirty seconds later, the phone rings again. It’s Reach Out, apologetically asking for Robbie. Do they have some policy for talking to the client until the outreach team gets there? If so, why is the conversation ending?

The conversation doesn’t last long. He says, “You wanna hear me hang up fast,” and slaps my phone shut.

“I don’t wanna talk to that guy. He’s not sincere. I mean, I imagine he cares in a general human way, like he would think it sucked if he found out I died and would rather that I not die. But it wouldn’t mess with his day. Because he doesn’t have anything invested personally.”

“How do you know if someone is sincere?”

“He’s an ass kisser, says things with sugar.”

“Is saying things with sugar just being nice? Do I ‘say things with sugar?’”

“Naw, man, you seem like you genuinely care. Like you actually showed up today. Like you are supposed to be here.”

At this particular moment, I don’t point out that I didn’t want to come today. I’m covering for one of the other leads, and I had to push back a game night with my friends in order to come. I’m always glad *retrospectively* I have gone to the youth house, but my initial excitement had been pretty low. I decide to not share this reflection. Instead, I point to the “Verbiage” section of his sheet.

“What is the verbiage of someone who doesn’t care?”

“He said, ‘Yeah...’ like he had no idea what he was going to say. He also was beating around the bush the whole time. So here’s how it works. How many things could be true by just knowing that? Lemme see the paper.”

He grabs a pen.

“Lazy. Do we really know that? Could be, could not. Anything under 50% we’ll put a question mark by it. Tired, for sure,” he circles it, continuing, “Uninterested, for sure. Trying to control aggravation, definitely. So, what do we know about him. He’s got low, what do you call it, the ability to feel with someone?”

“Empathy?” I propose.

“Right. Empathy.”

Tiffany sticks her head in the office. She looks surprised.

“Did you call someone?”

“Yes, Robbie called Reach Out for a pick up.”

“Well, there are officers here.”

I stand, stepping through the outreach room, leaning to move around the clothing bins. Looking down the hall, it is filled by the large, blue, clean, armed, and armored bodies of police officers.

“Hello,” I say, trying to be pleasant, while I am trying to figure out what is going on.

“Hi. Someone called us about someone who is going to hurt himself.”

Reach Out. Must have been. Mention your pocket knife, discuss suicide, and hang up the phone. Recipe for getting the cops called.

“I don’t think we are in any danger at the moment, but you are welcome to speak to him,” I gesture to the back.

As the officers and I step into the room, Robbie says,

“Nice. {pause} Fuck you.”

His tone is definitive. No hesitation here. Gone is the forlorn and earnest young man I’ve been talking to. Gone is the moping and ironic persona on the phone with Reach Out. Replaced by an indignant spite.

“Do you have a knife?” the officer asks.

Robbie produces the one and a half inch pocket knife and puts it on the table. The second officer in the doorway takes it. The police officer in the room is a tall man, with strong features and hands. He has a boyish look despite early creases in his face and grey in his hair. He is fit, confident, and calm. In another context, he would be a charming, attractive man. Right now he is an intruder. The second cop stands at the door, dark haired and silent.

“Someone called us because they thought you were a threat to yourself.”

“Fuck you.”

The cops look at each other. I look at them. Things had been going relatively well. They now have the potential to get very sour very quickly.

“Do you have an ID?”

“Do you have the twelve bucks to buy me one?”

“No, I don’t”

“There’s your answer.”

“Does your middle name happen to be Francis?”

“Yes.”

“Thought so. I just got off the phone with your case manager. She says you disappeared.”

“Here I am! Congratulations.” Robbie says ironically. Aware of his missed sessions and lack of meds, I know he is at legal risk at the moment.

“That’s why he called Reach Out. He wants to get back on the wagon,” I intercede. Robbie isn’t doing himself any favors.

“Well, they aren’t equipped to deal with people who are armed. They often call us in emergency situations. How can we help?”

“Did I call you?”

“No.”

“Then I don’t want your fucking help. If it’s all the same, I’d like to leave so I can hunt around for a place to sleep where you and your buddies can’t find me and stomp on my head while I’m sleeping.”

The cops share another look. They do not move. “I don’t think you leaving is gonna happen. We are going to take you to a place that gives you treatment. We’d just rather you came voluntarily.” Hidden in his claim is a threat. I suppose there is also a hidden contradiction. There is no choice. He’s going. His only choice is whether or not he will get roughed up first.

Robbie expresses his preference. “You are going to have to knock my ass out before I go anywhere with you fucks.”

“Why are you upset with us?” The cop asks, “We are just here to help.”

Robbie says nothing. He then produces a middle finger, looking down and letting his long hair cover much of his face.

“I think he’d prefer to go with Reach Out. You have the knife, and I don’t think Robbie is going to hurt anyone. Are they coming?”

“My partner is finding that out.”

We stand there for a silent minute. I’m painfully aware that we are stuffed into this room, blocked off by the cops. I almost suggest we go into another room, but then I decide having witnesses is its own kind of drama. Robbie and the officer get into it again,

Robbie quite angry, the officer calm and defensive. The differences in their tones are strange to me. The cop spends most of his time playing the innocuous card, saying, “We are just here to help you, why do you have a problem with me?”

Finally, I’m sick of both the conversation and what I have decided is a disingenuous, self defense.

“If I may, I think it’s worth pointing out that Robbie has reasons to be upset. It was only after some deliberation that he called Reach Out at all. When he showed up today he was ready to give up. So I’m proud that he called at all. But then he called Reach Out, and got cops. You are here to help, but you also have guns. And that matters. I should also point out that Robbie, like many of the homeless youth in Phoenix, he has had many negative interactions with police officers. He isn’t the first person who was upset with you just because you are a cop, is he? I wouldn’t take it personally.”

“You have no idea. I get it all the time. I get it every day. I don’t take it personally.”

“Then don’t ask him ‘What’s your problem with me?’ because it isn’t a problem with you.” I’m freaking out just a little, as I am in effect chastising a man with a gun. But he seems to be unoffended, so I try to relax. “Is Reach Out coming?” I ask him.

“No,” puts in the other officer. Fuck.

“I think we are going to take you down to {some acronym I don’t know},” says the officer.

“You might as well shoot me. Cuz I’ll die if I go there,” Robbie says with certainty.

“Is there somewhere else you’d rather go?” I ask him.

“I was kinda hoping I could go to Community Crossroads. Though I might have worn out my welcome there, too.”

I turn to the officers. “Is taking him to Community Crossroads an option at this point?”

Again, they share a look. “That’s an option.”

Why the fuck didn’t you ask him then? I think to myself. What an amazing voluntary solution the crazy youth was capable of formulating within .5 seconds of being asked.

I call Community Crossroads. I give them Robbie’s name. While I’m on the phone, the cops talk amongst themselves. Community Crossroads asks for Robbie’s social security number. He writes it on the brainstorming pad so the cops can’t hear. I step out of the room, leaning to get around the cops. Out of earshot I read the Community Crossroads staff the number. While I’m out in the main room, I explain to the rest of the volunteers what the situation is, and I ask Tiffany if she can stay for a while even though the house is now officially closed. She says, “No problem.”

Back in the room with Robbie and the police officers, the woman I am on the phone with asks me about the drugs Robbie is on. Not wanting to out him in front of cops I tell her that I’m not sure. She then asks if this is a substance abuse or mental health referral. Mental health. She says she’s going to have to start the process over. She asks again for his SSN, and I sit there, wondering how fishy it will be if I keep sneaking out of the room. So I sit in silence for a few moments, until she says, “Oh, I can pull it up here.” At one point she suggests I take him to Avondale, which is considerably farther away, but

then asks, "Is this an emergency situation?" I tell her it's borderline emergency, and she tells me just to take him to the Phoenix location. I get off the phone.

"They say you are welcome," I tell Robbie. I turn to the officers. "I'm going to take him to Community Crossroads if that is ok with you."

"Do you feel comfortable with that?"

"I do."

"Well, he seems to be fine with you." The other officer says to Robbie,

"We are going to confiscate your knife, ok?" Robbie doesn't respond. They leave, saying to me, "Thanks for taking the time to make this work."

"You're welcome." I try to say graciously. The antiauthoritarian in me wants to add, 'No thanks to you.'

After they are gone, Robbie rants.

"That was fucked up. That was the worst fucking thing that could happen right now. The worst thing. That pocket knife was a gift. A fucking gift." I don't blame the cop for taking the knife. Taking a knife from a suicidal schizophrenic seems wise. There are, however, only three things in Robbie's possession now. The knife constituted 1/4th of his belongings and likely the one with the highest value. He now only has a pen, a folded piece of paper, and a Human Resource Center ID.

He sits despondently, unable to move.

"Why can't I cry?" he asks.

"Dunno, man." A bit selfishly, I'm concerned about the time. It's after seven, and I have friends coming over to my house at eight to play games. Not a very mature reason to leave a suffering person, but there it is. "How 'bout you finish your plate, then I'll take

you to Crossroads.” I get him a new fork, because he dropped the other on the floor. When I come back with the clean fork, he points out a bit of wood or something that got on his plate. I myself would have eaten it, but people are allowed to not eat food off the floor. He apologizes, and thanks me for what I’m doing, keeping the house open late, all that. While I’m dumping the food, I apprise Tiffany of the situation, letting her know that she can go.

When I walk back into the office, Robbie is slumped forward, head down, with his hands up to his neck. It takes me a few seconds to realize that he is holding an open pair of scissors and is pressing them against his throat.

“No no no no no no no,” I’m not really thinking symbolically as I rush up to him, kneeling in front of him on the floor. I put my hands firmly on his hands. I can feel the strength in his body curling down and his arms, braced on his knees, pushing up.

“Take the scissors away from your neck,” I hear myself say softly, in a tone one might tell a sick child to put the thermometer under his or her tongue. I’m holding his hands firmly, and start pulling down. He doesn’t fight me. As the twin blades slowly descend, I look up at him anxiously to see if he is hurt. To my horror I see a dark, glistening, horizontal line across the right side of his throat. As I stare in disbelief, I succeed at disbelieving. It isn’t a cut, but rather a strand of his dark hair stuck to his sweaty skin. I pull the scissors out of his hands as I am realizing he isn’t hurt. I sigh, put the scissors down, and give him a hug. His forward lean bears down heavily on me from above, and he bursts into tears. There is no explanation or justification in his wails. It’s just sorrow. I hug him tightly. His back heaves with each sob. I can feel that his shirt is soaked with sweat and I can smell sweat, though some is likely mine, also. I also smell

something metallic (maybe that's sweat, too), and something earthy, reminding me of wet leaves. I reposition once to make sure my shoulder isn't smashing his windpipe. After perhaps a minute of crying, Robbie stops suddenly.

“And just like that...” he says, shaking his head. “I can't believe it. I'm twenty years old, and this is all I have to show for it. I'm no good to anybody.” He hangs his head dejectedly. I try to tell him that he has value, worth, and that his life is important, but not much seems to be getting through. He keeps returning to “I'm useless to society.” It is then an absurd notion occurs to me.

“I'll tell you who you have a use to.”

He looks up at me.

“Me.” I start telling him about my dissertation, how I'm doing a research study on interaction with homeless youth, how I want to improve how nonprofits organize. I tell him his experiences can serve as an analytical tool that can transform the workings of things like Reach Out and CASS and SUFK. As I'm laying it out, he interjects,

“You've got to have a purpose...”

I take it as a sign that I'm getting somewhere. I tell him that I'll visit him and that he can tell me about every organization he's ever been in. I tell him we can unleash his hyperassociative inference to create theories to describe and improve the experiences other homeless young adults have. As I start describing creative democracy and participatory action research, I have a moment of doubt. Research methods seem so distant from Robbie's suffering. Projects and data and paradigms seem trite and feeble. Can him sharing his stories really be an anecdote for his despair? Perhaps not. But frankly I've tried just about everything else, so I just go for it.

Robbie tells me that he thinks it would be awesome if his struggles could help improve social systems. I tell him I wouldn't have it any other way.

“So take my hand, look me in the eye, say, ‘We’ve got this,’ and I’m gonna drive you to Community Connections.”

He takes my hand, looks me in the eye, and says,

“We got this.”

I believe him.

I take him out to the car, locking up the youth house behind us. He walks slowly, but steadily. In my car, the Mumford and Sons in my CD player prompts a brief discussion of music. After about a minute, Robbie asks, “Can we do the first interview? I’d like to start telling my story.” I say yes, and he starts in. Never met his dad. Mom locked him in the basement for days, putting food under the door. When he was four, his mom abandoned him. Was taken in by the foster system. Some angels, some demons. Gets kicked out at 18, and ends up on the streets. By this point we are at Community Connections. As we get out of the car, Robbie says, “Thanks for this. This shouldn’t be part of your job.”

“You know I’m a volunteer?”

“Yeah.”

“So this isn’t my job, it’s my life. You aren’t part of my job, you are part of my life. And that’s the way it’s gonna stay.”

We walk to the facility, past the smokers, and into the chalk full waiting room.

“What happens now?” I ask him.

“I’m pretty sure I’m last in line.”

Chapter 2

INTRODUCTION

Being homeless is difficult for unpredictable reasons. For instance, not many people who have showers ever learn the painful and itchy truth that soap is an allergen. Showers, as they cascade gallons of water, mask the fact that soap left on the body causes nasty rashes. Take away the house, and so too goes the shower. Suddenly options are limited to public showers with unsavory ex-cons, bumming favors from increasingly annoyed friends, and finding a hidden location and trying to get the soap off the body with the contents of a water bottle. Not fun. Usually not successful. And so the itching begins.

I do not like feeling itchy. Most people I have met also dislike it. This dissertation is part of my effort to help itchy people take better showers. Of course, there are other concerns. Being homeless increases the likelihood of many hardships, from violence to drug use and mental illness to unemployment, as well as having unmet health needs concerning nutrition, oral health, sexual activity, interpersonal violence, and chronic illnesses (Millstein, Petersen, & Nightingale, 1993). Homeless people face death from accidental injury, homicides, and suicides (Rew, 1996). While I hesitate to advocate for the end of homelessness (as I consider homelessness to be a legitimate lifestyle), I am unwaveringly committed to serving the poor and loving the stigmatized. To this end, I have donated my time and money; why would I not also donate my dissertation?

For the project at hand, I endeavored to improve, describe, and explain organized service to homeless young adults in Maricopa County. By using qualitative and participatory action methodologies, I drew together the following communities: homeless

young adults, homeless service organizations, the volunteers and staff within those organizations, and the academy (both scholars at ASU and the larger scholarly community).

Improving Organized Service to Homeless Young Adults

Homeless young adults face various material and social hardships. Although nonprofit human service organizations (HSOs) exist to attend to these hardships, such organizations can have limited impact. Sometimes limited impact is the result of organizational capacity not adequately meeting the scope of the social need. But even when there are enough of the right types of services, there can be communicative ruptures that prevent organizational effectiveness. Young adults abandon organizations because they feel like “no one gives a shit.” Inversely, homeless young adults can get kicked out of HSOs as a result of contentious interactions with staff. Either way, an organizational interaction can disrupt the ability for the young adults’ needs to be met. In light of these challenges, I was, and continue to be, driven by the following research problem: How can we improve the service homeless young adults receive from nonprofit organizations?

This research problem rests on a social justice fiat: it is good and right to labor for the sake of the suffering and outcast. It is also an applied project, as it seeks to improve organizational practices. There are various disciplines that provide valuable approaches to the betterment of nonprofit outreach services (social work, health, and public administration to name a few), but communication is well suited to be a key voice in that discourse. Organizations not only serve as the major service deliverers to homeless persons, but they also provide a context for many interactions. Since organizations, in a

very real way, *are* communicative processes, improving communication improves organizations.

Describing Organized Service to Homeless Young Adults

Michel de Certeau (1986) calls ethics the distance between the is and the ought. As such, the problem of “what should be” means little (morally, practically, and theoretically) without an articulate understanding of “what is.” Therefore, solving my research problem required attention to the following empirical question: How do homeless young adults interact with nonprofit human service organizations?

I seek to describe organizational interactions for two reasons. First, most nonprofit HSOs have a distributed staffing model, which means young adults rarely have a single person of contact. Second, it helps illuminate how communicative phenomena most often understood as individual performances also manifest as organizational dynamics.

Explaining Organized Service to Homeless Young Adults

Drawing on my prior immersion in homeless service organizations, I find compassion and compassion fatigue useful constructs for explaining organized life in the context of homeless service provision. Nonprofit organizations, operated by volunteers and socially-minded staff, usually espouse missions relating to service, provision, and/or charity. Workers are drawn into the organizations by a desire to make a meaningful, caring contribution. Compassion, it seems, plays out both as a motive for and a means of interacting.

However, compassion is most often conceptualized in our discipline from the perspective of the individual provider of the compassion. Way and Tracy (2012) call for

the complementary perspective; they suggest a study of compassion from the perspective of the receiver. Inspired by prior compassion scholarship, my initial question for this project was “What does the experience of homeless young adults reveal about compassion in organizations?”

Studying the compassion receiver as opposed to the compassion provider creates three opportunities. First, since homeless young adults usually interact with various representatives of an organization, they can see compassionate dynamics in an organization. Second, taking a receiver approach helped problematize compassionate displays by investigating the dynamics between care, pity, assistance, and negative enablement. Finally, by virtue of the prior two opportunities, privileging the interpretation of the homeless young adults allowed for useful critique that speaks to the original research problem, “How can we improve the service homeless young adults receive from nonprofit organizations?”

Why Homelessness?

In addition to the ethical imperative of serving the suffering, we have much to learn by attending to homelessness. Conquergood (1991) encourages critical ethnographers to heed the boundaries and borderlands within a culture. Conquergood’s advice echoes the wisdom of standpoint theory, that the margin has much to say to the center. Lives of homeless persons are often lived out in the margins in a very literal sense. They sleep in vague terrain, including unused postindustrial districts, abandoned and foreclosed houses, and unnoticed nooks and crannies left by urban building/use practices. In Phoenix, the homeless overflow shelter is a nearly condemned warehouse

and adjoining parking lot across the street from a graveyard. They occupy material boundary spaces.

Homelessness also occupies symbolic, discursive, and cultural boundary space. It represents the complicated intersection of space, bodies, community, markets, responsibility, productivity, trust, safety, religion, politics, poverty, family, addiction, and mental health. These varying conversations converge in this space, each offering a partial picture of the issue. Conversely, homelessness speaks to each of these discourses, constituting either a foundation or a counterpoint. Because of this, the experiences of homeless persons serve as insightful critiques of social practices for those with ears to hear them. Homeless people occupy the margin that standpoint theory suggests grants communicative insight (Swigonski, 1994). Attending the knowledge of the impoverished is not an innovation on my behalf. Liberation theology clearly articulates that if one wants to know the true nature of the world (and of Christ), one must live in solidarity with the poor (Berryman, 1987).

For these reasons, I believe communication scholars, and other social scientists and humanities scholars, have much to learn from close attention to the issues surrounding homelessness. Homelessness demonstrates parts of society we isolate, dismiss, and throw away. Also, the conditions of homelessness aid in the critical project, in that it helps disrupt our sense of the way social worlds play out, which helps reveal the underlying assumptions that structure our social worlds. While I study homelessness and seek to understand issues of altruism, compassion, social action, and community, I believe many scholars could learn from using homelessness as a point of reference for their inquiry.

Project Summary

I engaged in a long-term, qualitative, participatory action project to generate communication theory and social action. As a researcher, I took the position of fully engaged actor and advocate by volunteering, networking, and organizing for the sake of homeless young adults. Through this process, I learned rules of appropriateness, became acquainted with members of the homeless and nonprofit communities, performed interviews, and did observations. I was thoroughly involved in StandUp For Kids Phoenix and also created relationships with several other young adult serving human service organizations. In what follows, I preview the dissertation chapters herein.

Chapter One – Forward

The forward from this project is drawn directly from my fieldnotes. I did not choose the interaction with Robbie because it is a typical day at SUFK. The average day usually involves cooking, the card game Uno, and informal chats about life or nothing at all. Perhaps once or twice a month there is some form of verbal argument, and rarely anything as dramatic as a fight. However, I chose to narrate the situation with Robbie because it highlights various nuances that undergird the project of compassion.

Chapter Two – Introduction

The one you are reading now.

You know, the one introducing the project and summarizing the other chapters.

Chapter Three – Context

Chapter three outlines the project's topical, disciplinary, theoretical, and paradigmatic framework. It starts with a discussion of issues facing homeless young adults. It goes on to review literature related to the subject of nonprofit organizations,

particularly as they relate to homelessness, but also regarding communication. Third, the chapter lays out the history and trends in the study of compassion in organizations.

Finally, chapter three sets the stage for the rest of the project by outlining my paradigmatic and philosophical commitments.

Chapter Four – Methods

Chapter four describes the procedures I used to undertake this project. I render the research methods I used to generate and analyze the project's data. This includes my sites of investigation, which consisted of two organizations and two nonorganizational settings. I lay out my observation and interview techniques. Finally, I discuss my analytic process, including coding strategies.

Chapter Five – Individual Compassion in Organizations

The first of my findings chapters, chapter five, calls attention to presence as an important subcomponent of compassion. Drawing on young adults' reflections on compassionate interactions in nonprofit service agencies, I identify the dynamics of presence in its fullest sense, which includes not only being there, but also what I term "embodied aboutness." Embodied aboutness can either manifest as nonverbal immediacy or acts of service. I then articulate how presence can extend current theory about compassion in organizations.

Chapter Six – Ruptures in Compassion

Chapter six delves into the various ways that compassionate communication fails. By privileging the experience of the homeless young adults, I was able to analyze how a particular message or action, which may be intended as compassion by the sender, can be perceived as noncompassionate by the receiver. I conceptualize these failures as ruptures,

moments where presence, recognizing, relating, and (re)acting happen, but have outcomes that the young adults consider noncompassionate. I order these interactions using an analysis of prepositions and ultimately argue that the concept of interpellation helps explain the potentially problematic aspects of compassionate communication.

Chapter Seven – Compassionate Dynamics in Organizations

Chapter seven offers an analysis of dynamics of compassion in organizations as opposed to modeling the actions of the compassionate individual. First, I offer a model for compassionate dynamics that draws on wellbeing, healing/growth, care, shared humanness, and community building. I argue that wellbeing is best conceptualized as both social and material processes. Ultimately, I suggest that dynamics of compassionate communication in organizations is a form of sociomaterial constitution. Said differently, organizations can be made from the compassionate combination of social and physical worlds.

Chapter Eight – Pragmatic Fieldwork

In addition to suggesting theoretical extensions of compassion and organizing, I outline how this project adds richness to methods for socially active research. First, I offer a project narrative that traces the turning points in my path through the project. The narrative contextualizes the broader path of my journey regarding homelessness and intellectual/moral life. Following this account, I outline the workings of the method I call pragmatic fieldwork. Pragmatic fieldwork is a method for creating community, research, and social change that draws on qualitative research methods, pragmatic philosophy, and participatory action research.

Chapter Nine – Implications and discussions

Chapter nine explores the theoretical, practical, and methodological implications of the prior chapters. It considers how the theoretic models I propose impact the way we think about compassion and organizing. It also lays out how each model can be used by staff and managers inside organizations. In addition to the implications of the theories forwarded by this dissertation, I discuss the methodological contribution. I then outline how pragmatic fieldwork can be used by nonprofit practitioners and clients of nonprofit organizations to promote wellbeing in organizational life. While I present pragmatic fieldwork in chapter four as a model for performing academic research, I argue that it can be used as a tool for community development that is not exclusive to academics. More relevant to scholarship, I go on to discuss how pragmatic fieldwork helps create courageous and dedicated knowledge and serves as a form of relational epistemology. Finally, chapter eight examines the limitations of this project and future directions of study.

Chapter Ten – Conclusion

The end.

Or perhaps a brief summary of this project that reveals we have only just begun.

Chapter 3

CONTEXT

I drew on various thinkers and traditions in my efforts to improve the lives of homeless young adults. What follows is a discussion of those varied threads of scholarship. Primarily, I will outline issues surrounding homeless young adults, nonprofit organizations that serve them, compassion in organizations, and the foundations of my scholarly perspective.

Topical Context: Youth Homelessness

The scope of young adult homelessness and the struggles youth face are important parts of my project's framework. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homelessness as a lack of "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (2011). "Fixed" means not a tent, lean-to, or other form of temporary structure. "Regular" means not couch surfing or in a temporary homeless shelter. And "adequate" means not in a parking garage or under a bridge. This definition is designed to be relatively broad and takes into account that most homeless people seek some form of refuge. Homeless youth often sleep in campgrounds, abandoned buildings, or on the couches of people they know (National Center for Homeless Education, 2011), and while all of those are better than sleeping out in the rain, they lack the permanence, safety, and reliability afforded by a home. While certainly a standard in the government sector, HUD's definition of homelessness is not the only one. "Rooflessness" is another term, which refers to the literal lack of overhead shelter (Mallett, Rosenthal, Keys, & Averill, 2010). Alternatively, one can take a person-focused account and identify

homelessness as the subjective experience of feeling like one doesn't have a home (Mallett et al., 2010).

Young adults, age 18 to 24, are a significant part of the homeless population. There is a range from 750,000 to 2 million young adults living homelessly each year (Kraybill, 2002). A large part of young adults who experience homelessness are coming out of the foster system. Nearly one quarter of youth leaving foster care become homeless two to four years after leaving (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004). Young adults can find it difficult to fully participate in the workforce because they may be expected to be furthering their educations (Arnett, 2000). Youth-serving communities extend the age to above 18 because they are not fully served by other structures (Mallett et al., 2010).

Maricopa County, the area in which this project took place, has a particularly high rate of young adult homelessness. Phoenix has the highest rate of disconnected youth in major metropolitan areas in the United States (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012). Nationwide, one in seven youth lack employment and are not going to school. However, Phoenix sees a rate of 18.8%, close to one in five, of youth who are neither in school nor have employment (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012). A disconnected youth with family support may avoid homelessness, but one without family support is very likely to become homeless.

Struggles of Being Homeless

Young adults face various difficulties while living homelessly. Homeless youth suffer from a higher incidence of health issues that range from asthma to tuberculosis and diabetes to hepatitis (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2010). They are more likely to suffer from various mental illnesses. Youth also face pressures to

engage in survival sex – trading sexual favors for food, shelter, and clothing (Rew, 1996). There are also educational challenges, with less than one out of four homeless youth receiving high school diplomas (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2010). Homeless young adults face legal difficulties, family troubles, suicide attempts, and substance abuse (Votta & Manion, 2003). In addition to physical hardship, they can become socially withdrawn or disengaged (Votta & Manion, 2003, Kidd & Carroll, 2007). Eight out of ten homeless youth are victims of crime each year (Gaetz, 2004), which is far higher than their housed peers. Finally, they have a higher likelihood of drug abuse (USICH, 2010).

While reviewing the challenges homeless youth and young adults face, it is important to keep such data in context. Homeless youth are not completely bereft of coping skills. Ennett and Federman (1999) find that youth with social networks are less likely to avoid risky behavior. Similarly, youth who do not use avoidance or social withdrawal to cope are less likely to commit suicide. Those who “believe in a better tomorrow” are more able to cope (Kidd & Carroll, 2007). Finally, while some homeless people are indeed addicted to drugs and mentally ill, this is only a subsection of a population that has a much wider set of issues. In fact, the perception of mentally ill and alcoholic homeless persons is much more a product of media coverage than objective assessment of the population (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2006, Min, 1999). In response to the health, education, legal, and relational difficulties homeless youth face, communities organize.

Organizations provide varied services, network to meet client needs, and advocate for client interests (Miller, Scott, Stage, & Birkholt, 1995). Specific to homeless youth,

drop-in centers are run as central hubs that connect homeless youth with other services (De Rosa, Montgomery, Kipke, Iverson, & Unger, 1999). Networking between these other organizations allows broad needs to be met. However, interorganizational capacity building is both difficult and promising (Peressini & Engeland, 2004), and half of all interorganizational relationships with regard to homelessness fail (Malone, Laubacher, & Morton, 2003). Drawing together various organizations is all but mandatory, as helping youth requires a holistic approach that includes family, friends, community, and healthcare professionals (Rew, 1996).

(Sub)disciplinary Context: Communication, Nonprofits, and Social Justice

Understanding the struggles and strengths of homeless young adults is only part of the puzzle. It is also necessary to understand the communication that goes on within nonprofit organizations that are striving for more just social conditions for the people they serve.

Communication modes impact provider-client interactions in homeless service organizations. While the services being provided matter greatly and can have a powerful impact in the lives of homeless people, the interactions that contextualize those services are meaningful, as well. Three scholarly perspectives relevant to this conversation include works of social justice communication scholars (Frey, Pearce, Pollack, Artz, & Murphy, 1996, Papa, Papa, Kandath, Worrell, & Muthuswamy, 2005), social work and healthcare scholars (De Rosa et al., 1999, de Winter & Noom, 2003), and nonprofit organization scholars (Baines, 2010, Ganesh & McAllum, 2011). This body of scholarship lays out the context of interaction, likely problems with interaction, and possible directions for better interaction.

Most relevant to my project is the ethnographic work of Papa et al. (2005) in a homeless service organization called Helping Hands. Among its other services, the organization has weekly community dinner prepared and coordinated by staff, volunteers, homeless, and ex-homeless clients. The authors identify and describe how a similar service can have different communicative character. Soup kitchens “may work in emergency situations, but they make the poor feel worthless, as if they are not capable of helping themselves. By creating a structure in which the poor work alongside their more financially stable neighbors, they develop a sense of dignity” (p. 253).

Papa et al. (2005) go on to argue explicitly that “for social justice to be promoted, a particular type of communication needs to occur between the oppressed and those offering assistance.” Similar arguments connecting communication and social justice have also been made by Frey et al. (1996) who argue that communication is capable of “challenging the norms, practices, relations, and structures that underwrite inequality and injustice” through “engagement with and advocacy for those in our society who are economically, socially, politically, and/or culturally under-resourced” (p. 110). Both Papa et al. (2005) and Frey et al. (1996) demonstrate communication’s role in attending to social injustice by arguing that communication has transformative power. I have found their claim to be true in my own work. Communication can reconfigure interactions and relationships to promote social justice. In short, communication can humanize those who have been dehumanized. Of course, this is precisely because communication is how people are dehumanized to begin with.

The disciplines of social work and healthcare provide a more detailed account of the negative impacts of problematic communication on homeless youth. Youth without a

social network are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drug use and survival sex (Ennett & Federman, 1999). Despite the fact that most homeless youth networks have one or more heavy drug or alcohol user, youth with a network are less likely to abuse drugs (Ennett & Federman, 1999). Social withdrawal is correlated with higher levels of suicidality, while belief in a better future (which can be the product of prosocial interaction) reduces suicidal ideation (Kidd & Carroll, 2007). Ultimately, the strongest indicators of suicidal thoughts Kidd and Carroll found are abuse (a form of negative interaction) and neglect (no interaction). This echoes prior work and draws a connection between disengaged coping and depressive symptoms (Votta & Manion, 2003). Lack of interaction and negative interaction contribute to negative youth choices, like dangerous sexual activity, drug use, and suicide (Votta & Manion, 2003). Being excluded from social interaction increases their chance of being victims of crimes (Gaetz, 2004). Gaetz found that 81% of homeless youth are the target of criminal activity each year (91% for women). The percent of those who were victims of multiple crimes each year was almost as high. Gaetz highlights practices like “moving youth on” from public spaces (like malls or transit centers) as contributing to youth victimization, since it limits their ability to choose who they interact with, forces them to inhabit places with low levels of visibility (increasing likelihood of victimization), and damages their relationship with police and security (reducing youth willingness to report crimes). Common to each of these accounts of youth homelessness is the general argument that poor and limited interaction with youth has negative outcomes.

Nonprofit human service organizations seem to be well positioned to remedy these ills in that, through providing service, relationships can be formed. Unfortunately,

some social work research finds that human service organizations have communicative barriers between staff and clients, including restrictive rules, confidentiality and reporting problems, and negative interactions with staff members (De Rosa et al., 1999). In De Rosa et al.'s study, youth accounts of shelter rules included descriptions like "degrading," "frustrating," and "infantile." Youth also said that they were less likely to use an organization's services when they had negative interactions with service providers. The youth characterize negative interactions as disrespectful or when staff members have uncaring attitudes (De Rosa et al., 1999). Youth also cited poor staff retention/high turnover as disrupting the effectiveness of services (De Rosa et al., 1999). Delving deeper into the interactive dynamics between staff and client, de Winter and Noom (2003) argue that youth most want "Someone who treats you as an ordinary human being" (p. 336).

While seemingly straightforward, de Winter and Noom go on to highlight tensions between independence and support. Homeless youth have an "allergy to paternalism," while simultaneously desiring genuine care and support (p. 332). The youth also made a call for moving beyond professional care to interaction that includes personal contact, humor, and emotional support. This professionalization was mirrored by both youth and staff. Youth were unsatisfied with the staff's degree of personal interest and complained about red tape. On the other hand, social workers say that organizational policies prevent lasting relationships. Ultimately, de Winter and Noom make the case that services provided depend on improvement of communication between the social worker and the adolescent, since better communication is the basis for greater trust. de Winter and Noom call for dialogue as a solution to these problems, which is a remedy communication scholars are well positioned to formulate. In conclusion, previous studies

have articulated the following as particular traits of interaction that youth find positive: mutuality, low power distance, immediacy, staff being personal (as opposed to overly professional), and low relational distance.

While the fundamental units of analysis in this study will be interactions and how homeless youth experience those interactions, such interaction is inherently situated within broader societal movements. Baines (2010) argues that recent neoliberal restructuration limits meaningful personal relationships within nonprofit organizations. According to Baines, the last few decades have seen economic and political changes that limited the ability of service workers to treat clients as humans, a reality echoed in Smith and Lipsky's (1995) analysis of state-hired nonprofits replacing the dismantled welfare state. Ganesh and McAllum (2011) argue that "even when volunteers do connect with the people they serve, larger pressures to professionalize nonprofit practice affect how interaction unfolds with community 'clients,' sometimes with problematic and even anti-democratic consequences" (p. 6). Professionalization is the movement of nonprofits toward paid, transactional labor and away from the model in which nonprofits are primarily staffed by intrinsically motivated volunteers engaged in transformational citizenship behavior. Professionalization bureaucratizes once interpersonal processes, and scholars argue that assigning volunteers to routine tasks can lower their feeling of autonomy within and commitment to an organization (Kelley, Lune, & Murphy, 2005, Kreutzer & Jäger, 2010). Others argue professionalization limits volunteers' ability to engage broad and meaningful social issues (Zakour & Gillespie, 1998). Another impact of professionalization is the rise of technologically mediated interaction with clients, which can increase the relational distance between the providers and receivers of service

(Woolford & Curran, 2011). Ultimately, Ganesh and McAllum (2011) highlight the fractured relationship between professionalism and volunteering and make a call for future research to look at how professional volunteers accept and contest these identities and how the identities are taken up. Overly mercantile procedures diminish the democratic contribution of nonprofit organizing (Eikenberry, 2009). Instead of modeling nonprofit human service organizations on government or business structures, some make the case that nonprofits need to develop a strategy that emphasizes the unique, value-driven dimension of their programs (Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000). The discussion of professionalization provides a broad frame for understanding communication dynamics in modern nonprofits.

In review, social justice communication scholars identify community and dialogic ideals for achieving better service to the poor (Papa et al., 2005, Frey et al., 1996). Social work, nursing, and other health and human service scholars clearly articulate the negative outcomes poor communication creates (De Rosa et al., 1999, de Winter & Noom, 2003). Finally, nonprofit organizational scholars identify broader trends that contextualize individual interactions within the movements of neoliberal restructuring and professionalization (Baines, 2010, Ganesh & McAllum, 2011).

Guided by the interactions and outcomes identified by social work and health scholars, the context provided by nonprofit organization scholars, and the in-depth conceptualization of what life-enhancing interaction looks like done by social justice communication scholars, I seek to create a full and detailed picture of the ongoing relationships between youth and human service organizations with an eye to both

enabling and constraining practices. Thus, the guiding research question of this project is this: How do homeless young adults interact with nonprofit human service organizations?

Theoretical Frame: Compassion in Organizations

As part of my project, I did preliminary pilot interviews with homeless young adults about their interactions with human service agencies. One of the important questions I asked was, “What challenges do you experience inside nonprofit organizations?” The most common answer pointed to disruptions in service because of negative interaction with staff. Upon analysis, these negative interactions seemed to be related to a failure of compassion. The youth often had some kind of need or struggle, and the staff or volunteer did not see it or saw it as an illegitimate need.

Compassion has seen an upsurge of scholarly attention in literature of late, particularly in the collaboration of Jacob Lilius, Monica Worline, Jane Dutton, Peter Frost, Sally Maitlis, and Jason Kanov on various projects (Frost, Dutton, Worline, & Wilson, 2000, Kanov, Maitlis, Worline, Dutton, Frost, & Lilius, 2004, Lilius, Worline, Dutton, Kanov, & Maitlis, 2011). However, questions of care in organized life have a longer history. In this section, I will first address why compassion was chosen as the theoretic frame. Then I will discuss the study of communicated caring interactions in organizations, starting with burnout and compassion fatigue and moving to more recent trends in positive organizational scholarship.

Compassion as a Theoretic Frame

Understanding compassion as a conceptual and practical process is important to appropriately analyzing the interactions between homeless young adults and the organizations that serve them. De Rosa et al. (1999) and de Winter and Noom (2003)

argue that lack of care negatively impacts service delivery. In my own pilot interviews with homeless young adults, they reported often choosing to leave an organization that failed to demonstrate compassion. I also knew, based on a prior study concerning volunteer commitments, that compassion for youth suffering was both an initial draw and an ongoing factor in volunteer involvement (Huffman, unpublished, 2010). It is for these reasons I suspected compassion and its organizational manifestations would be a fruitful theoretical and explanatory resource for the current study.

I also surmised that burnout and compassion fatigue would detract from homeless young adults' satisfaction with organizations. Both burnout and compassion fatigue are common occurrences within nonprofit HSOs (Miller et al., 1995). An observation of high volunteer and staff turnover hinted at this. I can also attest to the emotional difficulties associated with serving homeless youth. Some frustration comes from limited organizational capacity. I also see staff and volunteers become frustrated when youth make poor use of opportunities designed to help them. Finally, I have found the multidimensionality of homelessness to be fatiguing at times. Homelessness is often only a single part of broader issues, which can include family abuse, behavioral issues, drug use, educational deficit, legal problems, and mental health components.

Emotional Labor, Burnout, and Compassion Fatigue

When theorizing emotional exhaustion, three concepts serve as a foundation: emotional labor, burnout, and compassion fatigue. Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labor as when laborers' emotions are exploited by employers in a way that puts employees at psychological risk. Maslach (1982) lays out three components of burnout: emotional fatigue, depersonalization of clients, and decreased perception of

accomplishment. Finally, Figley (2002) outlines compassion fatigue as the consequence of the concerned being exposed to suffering over a prolonged period of time. Kinnick, Krugman, and Cameron (1996) demonstrate that while compassion fatigue is often conceptualized as a workplace phenomenon, people also experience compassion fatigue with regard to social issues. Compassion fatigue is not simply bad for the mission of organizations, it is linked with negative health outcomes (Abendroth & Flannery, 2006, Frost, Dutton, Maitlis, Lilius, Kanov, & Worline, 2005).

There are also variations on these themes. Frost et al. (2000) discuss “compassion labor,” defining it as the organizational appropriation of compassion work. I find value in Bolton’s (2000) proposal that compassion/emotion work should not be conceived of as either appropriated or not appropriated. Instead, he proposes four types of emotion management that complicate the public-private distinction. The four types of emotion management include: presentational, prescriptive, pecuniary, and philanthropic. Presentational emotion management involves following basic social rules. Prescriptive emotions occur when following specific organizational rules. Emotion management for the sake of commercial gain is defined as pecuniary. Finally, philanthropic emotion management is when emotions are given as a gift.

Waldron (1994) argues that the treatment of workplace emotion literature highlights emotions constrained by organizational norms to achieve managerial goals. In Waldron’s view, this trend is limited in that it highlights the inauthentic components of emotions in the workplace when in fact a broader set of emotional realities are in play. For instance, Miller, Stiff, and Ellis (1988) make the case that emotional contagion and emotional concern are different. They argue that contagion will lead to burnout but

concern will not. Rather, emotional concern allows for communicative responsiveness. Later, Miller et al. (1988) argue that job involvement, role in the organization, and attitude toward clients all complicate how burnout occurs. But the lesson is clear: not all emotions in organizations are negative.

Table 3.1 Reconceptualization of Compassion Processes – Drawn from Way & Tracy (2012)		
Kanov et al. (2004)	Miller (2007)	Way & Tracy (2012)
Noticing Paying attention to others' emotions and reading subtle cues	Noticing Noticing not only the need for compassion, but also details about another's life so that the response can be the most appropriate	Recognizing Understanding and applying meaning to others' verbal and nonverbal communicative cues, including the timing and context of these cues and the cracks between or absences of messages
Feeling Feeling compassion for another's suffering (affective)	Connecting Connecting with others (relational)	Relating Identifying with, feeling for, and communicatively connecting with another to enable sharing of emotions, values, and decisions
Responding Any action or display that occurs in response to another's pain— <i>must be</i> accompanied by noticing & feeling.	Responding Actually behaving or communicating in ways that could be seen as compassionate.	(Re)acting Engaging in behaviors or communicating in ways that are seen, or could be seen, as compassionate by the provider, the recipient and/or another individual

Compassion in Organizations

Much has changed since Waldron (1994) offered the critique that much of the emotional scholarship is overly focused on inauthenticity. For instance, Miller's work on organizational compassion (2007) identifies three subcomponents of compassion: noticing, connecting, and responding. This model of compassion helps visualize Davis

and Kraus' (1997) differentiation of empathy and compassion. Empathy can be characterized by engaging the first two steps – noticing and connecting – while compassion involves the additional subcomponent of responding. Compassion always involves some active component (Frost et al., 2000). From psychology to communication, and from the individual to organizational, the subprocesses of compassion are most often articulated as noticing, connecting, and responding or some variation therein. Others with similar findings include Reich (1989), Batson (1994), Solomon (1998), and the varied works of Kanov, Lilius, Dutton, and company.

An important variation includes the recent work of Way and Tracy (2012). In their study of hospice nurses, they demonstrate that compassionate communication does not necessarily result in burnout. Many care providers, particularly hospice workers, actually do care and keep on caring through loss and difficulty. Way and Tracy revise Miller's (2007) linear model of noticing, connecting, and responding to a circuitous model of recognizing, relating and (re)acting. They are not alone in identifying the rejuvenating capacity of compassion. Boyatzis, Smith, and Blaize (2006) argue that compassion can help reduce the stress of leaders. In articulating the power of compassion, Way and Tracy (2012) are participating in a larger movement known as positive organizational scholarship (POS). POS scholars focus their attention on the genuine, the vivid, and the good inside organized life.

Organizational science is predominantly based on a deficit model of organizations in which problems are identified and corrected. Its emphasis has been on how negative or neutral phenomena affect a narrow set of desirable outcomes. Far less attention has focused on overtly positive processes and variables, and the potential

range of desirable outcomes has not been fully explored. We believe that the traditional approach and POS paint a more complete picture of organizational life when taken together. (Caza & Caza, 2008, p. 3)

Examples of POS that have the potential to inform my work on homeless service organizations include work on gratitude (Emmons, 2003), positive emotions and upward spirals (Fredrickson, 2003), performance of virtue in organizations (Park & Peterson, 2003), resilience (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003), courageous principled action (Worline & Quinn, 2003), positive emotions in the workplace (Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, & Fletcher, 2011), and positive emotions' ability to broaden and build skills and abilities (Fredrickson, 2007). Along these lines, Frost (1999) argues that compassion is a central aspect to organizing, one often under-emphasized by organizational scholars. Similarly, Dutton and Heaphy (2003) makes the case that scholars often oversimplify organizational life and remove the dynamics of emotion.

In response to these considerations, scholars such as Kanov et al. (2004) and Lilius et al. (2011) conceptualize compassion at the organizational level. To date, compassion is most often modeled as an individual process, but it can also be understood as a collective phenomenon. Kanov et al. (2004) argue that compassion is a dynamic, relational process that can be found in individuals and relationships. They draw on Clark's (1997) breakdown of compassionate subprocesses (noticing, feeling, and responding, not unrelated to the subcomponents of Miller (2007) or Tracy and Way (2012)) and make the case that collective compassion exists when it is "legitimated within an organizational context and propagated among organizational members" (Kanov et al., 2004, p. 810).

Kanov et al. (2004) do not argue that organizations have feelings in the same ways humans do. Rather, an organization's capacity for collective compassion is not unlike its capacity for collective mind. Just as Weick and Roberts (1993) lay out how heedful interrelating creates collective mind, Kanov et al. (2004) suggest that collective compassion may also hinge on conscientious interactions (dare I say care-full interaction?). They offer propagation, legitimation, and coordination as three potential subprocesses of collective compassion, but call for research on how organizations create collective compassion in practice. Propagation is processes of compassion chaining out. Legitimation is processes of the organization that validate compassionate communication. Finally, coordination is how the organization orchestrates compassionate action.

Expanding on Noticing, Connecting, and Responding

Not all compassion work follows the same pattern. Lilius et al.'s (2011) empirical study of compassion in organizations lays out the relational-, cultural-, and leadership-based conditions that foster spontaneous organizational compassion. Their analysis also reveals new dynamics that extend the model of noticing, connecting, and responding. They highlight two relational requirements: high quality connections and dynamic boundary permeability. They define high quality connections using positive regard (Rogers, 1951), mutuality (Miller & Stiver, 1997) and tensility, or the ability to "bend and withstand strain" (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003, p. 266). Lilius et al. (2011) demonstrate that high quality connections are created by the following practices: acknowledging, celebrating, bounded playing, orienting, help-offering, collective decision making, and addressing problems.

Dynamic boundary permeability is the second relational characteristic that contributes to compassionate capacity. Boundary permeability is when work and non-work realities come together. Lilius et al. (2011) recognize that the boundary permeability in the compassionate work environment they study is not static, but rather a dynamic process, as workers are able to maintain and overcome said boundaries as situations require. The practices of celebrating, bounded playing, and directly addressing problems all contribute to dynamic boundary permeability. Lilius et al. (2011) ultimately argue that these two relational characteristics develop the compassionate capacity of the organization. They create the opportunity for sharing, providing support, knowing, and caring about each other.

Ethics and Care

In addition to being an interactive dynamic between individuals and within organizations, compassion can also be seen as a form of ethical action. Various religions and philosophers hold compassion as a guiding, if not principle, aspect to living an ethical life. In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, compassion and wisdom are thought to be the two highest human virtues. The Bodhisattvas are transcendent compassionate beings who refuse to release themselves completely from suffering so as to help others transcend suffering (Conze, 1997). Christianity also lionizes compassion by worshiping an incarnate god who suffers with its creation (Davis, 1997). Christian teachings on compassion for the poor serve as a philosophical underpinning for rich traditions of social justice and liberation (Massaro, 2011). Jainism refers to itself as the religion of compassion and roots its essential non-violent teachings in radical compassion (Basham, 1997).

Beyond the religious context, compassionate action also undergirds more recent movements in feminist ethics known as the ethics of care. Noddings (1984) illustrates how care can be a situationally enacted ethical framework. She describes the care as an interaction between the one-caring and the cared-for. Noddings (1984) argues that care flows out of a natural disposition of care and also from memories of being cared for. Held (2006) argues that care is both a clustered set of values and a set of practices. The subcomponents of care ethics have similarities to the subprocesses of compassion. Tronto (1994) lays out four components of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. She argues that these are simultaneously the virtues of care, the goals of care, and the stages of care. These four components bear some similarity to the notice, connect, and respond schema used by organizational communication scholars to describe compassion. This similarity between care ethics and compassion echoes the religious sensibilities that compassion concerns moral action in addition to emotional or organizational dynamics.

Conceptualizing Compassion

In the sections above, I outline scholarship that presents compassion as a form of emotional labor, an individual emotional experience, an organizational dynamic, and an ethical framework. In this final subsection focused on compassion, I will focus on the various ways it can be defined. Perhaps the most common account relies on its etymological root, com-passion, to suffer with. As such, various scholars focus on compassion in response to pain (Lilius et al., 2011, Lilius et al., 2008, Dutton et al., 2006). However, this is by no means the only version. Sorrell (1991) argues that compassion is not handwringing, but rather an “innate respect and fondness for the other

person” (p. 149). Others focus not on how one feels about the other, but rather shared humanity. For Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, (2003), compassion connects people to the vitality of organized life. Similarly, compassion can also be conceptualized relationally as fostering “feelings of connectedness,” which in turn “builds and shapes the communities in which we live and work” (Kanov et al., 2004). Still other scholars see compassion with regard to the self and argue that “acting in accordance with one’s authentic self-concept is crucial for expressing genuine care and compassion” (Peus, 2011, p. 958, Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Frost et al. (2005) argue that compassion can be thought of as an interpersonal phenomenon, but can also be seen as a form of organizing. Finally, Kanov et al. (2004) say that compassion is one of the foundational parts of being human.

For this project, I drew broadly on these definitions. As a qualitative scholar, I subscribe to the notion of requisite variety (Weick, 1985) and that being open to various ways the scene unfolds is more valuable than stringently operationalizing variables. I also follow a general sensibility of keeping the ordinary use of a term. In fact, the true value of qualitative inquiry is that it helps reveal how the participants in the research project understand and define terms. That said, having a rich understanding of various scholarly definitions provides interpretive opportunities and helps direct inquiry.

Compassion in the sense of shared suffering is also very relevant to organizing that relates to homeless people. However, I tried to keep a broad understanding of suffering. Pain can certainly cause suffering. However, physical and emotional pain do not automatically cause suffering. Scraping a knee while playing soccer with friends may

cause moderate pain, but little suffering. Watching a powerful performance may cause emotional pain, but little suffering.

Inversely, to suffer need not include pain. A person can sustain a loss and be troubled in non-painful ways. A person can feel anxiety, frustration, confusion, hopelessness, outrage, and indignation for prolonged periods and can truly suffer from them, but not experience pain precisely. A homeless young adult can suffer by being infuriated by a complex and unresponsive organizational bureaucracy and not be in pain. Similarly, a malignant apathy about any chance of a better life can be a profound form of suffering, but not have a moment of physical pain. In fact, such an experience may be devoid of any sharp negative emotion and be marked instead by an inner void. Suffering includes a wide variety of afflictions, only one of which is pain. During my study, I kept a wide sense of what compassion meant, as many of the afflictions homeless youth face are not strictly pain.

I also looked for compassion both from the perspective of “compassionate acts by individuals in organizations,” as well as “compassionate dynamics in organizations.” This split attention bears out in my findings. Chapters five and six focus more on the relational aspects of compassion, while chapter seven conceptualizes it as a form of organizing. By asking youth about their experiences of compassion in organizations, I was able to identify particular interactive components, as well as broader organizational processes.

Summary of Theoretical Context

According to prior work on compassion fatigue and burnout, participation in nonprofit service agencies and social issues can lead to emotional exhaustion (Miller et al., 1995, Kinnick et al., 1996). But even in the face of these struggles, compassion

operates as well (Miller, 2007, Way and Tracy, 2012). Framed by recent work in POS and in response to Frost (1999), this project endeavors to explain the movements of compassion in organized life, particularly from the perspective of the receiver (as called for by Way and Tracy, 2012) and at the level of the organization (as conceptualized by Kanov et al. 2004, Lilius et al. 2011).

Research Problem: How can we improve service to homeless young adults?

Guiding Question: How do homeless young adults interact with nonprofit human service organizations?

Research Question: What do the experiences of homeless young adults reveal about compassion in organizations?

Conceptual Context

In the prior three sections, I discussed the context of homelessness, the (sub)disciplinary context of nonprofit organizations, and the theoretical context of compassion in organizations. I now turn to the final relevant conceptual context needed to frame my work. I came to my academic worldview late – after my coursework – in part because my beliefs did not wholly fit into (post)positivist, interpretivist, or critical scholarship.

Charmaz (2011) articulates the various paradigmatic stances with which one can perform social justice scholarship and highlights objectivist, postpositivist, and constructionist approaches. She goes on to identify constructionist grounded theory as particularly appropriate. Constructionist grounded theory is fit for improving social conditions because it is mutable, innovative, self-positioned, polyvocal, nuanced, and therefore critically sensitive (Charmaz, 2011). While I agree with Charmaz's articulation

of constructionist grounded theory and its ability to identify and promote justice, I find it more apt to characterize my use of grounded theory as pragmatic, phronetic, participatory, and positive.

Paradigmatic Background

I'm deeply committed to the wellbeing of homeless people, and part of that wellbeing is rooted in the real and material aspects of everyday life. Real material struggles threaten their real bodies. On the ontological front, postpositivist attention to the real is more than merely consonant with my study, it is an essential component. Actual people may actually die if we don't actually help them. Bodies matter, as do the things that make them live and die. So, yes, there is a physical world. Epistemologically speaking, I'm not opposed to classical, postpositivist science either. Theoretical models that outline correlative (and potentially causative) linkages are extraordinarily helpful when coordinating action.

However, for my purposes in this project (and perhaps my life), the postpositivist paradigm fails to satisfy on other fronts. For starters, any pretention that knowledge is apolitical is dangerous. The process of knowing should be intricately interwoven with questions of ethical and just society. Also, while I believe there is a real and a true, I also believe that there are various "reals" and various "truths." The connection between the real and the true is dubious at best. Most importantly, I cannot perform value-free research because my deep commitment to equity and dignity undergirds, informs, and moves throughout my inquiry.

Not quite a postpositivist, it stands to reason that I am perhaps more in line with interpretive scholarship. I align with interpretive inquiry on various ontological grounds.

I think that social worlds are born of human relationships and that human action is often a product of social realities as opposed to the inscrutable objective one(s) (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Similarly, I celebrate the situatedness of human knowing and find narratives powerful organizers.

And yet, I am not wholly satisfied with interpretive approaches for this study. Homeless people do not freeze because discourse says they will. I also find it very difficult to dispose of my ethical commitments, even if it means bringing external frameworks into a social situation. Finally, I find it hard to leave a place or a people after I have learned their lives. I get invested and try to be a helpful member of that community and make what impact I can. Yes, much of the world is socially constructed, so let us take it upon ourselves to construct it better.

So perhaps I am a critical scholar. Critical scholars reveal the often hidden or underlying movements of a social issue. In doing so, they critique problems of power and articulate possibilities for more just social arrangements. This often involves a close attention to speech and practice, as well as a reflexive eye to their own interpretive process.

And yet, critical scholarship does not perfectly describe my work either. I find Rorty (1979) persuasive when he argues that it is not the role of philosophers to hold tribunals of culture. While there are certainly unjust social relations that occur in the world, I find it more useful to bring communities into collaboration as opposed to sitting as judge over social processes. Also, direct social action is not an option, but a central part of my methodology.

So what am I? Beyond categorization? I find that answer unsatisfying. More to the point, as a scholar I have a commitment to being clear about where I stand. For a time, I was frustrated by my inability to articulate a specific position. However, in part due to happenstance (or providence), I discovered that my position has a coherent core and that I am not merely being picky or trying to have it every which way.

When I paid close attention to the reasons I espoused or eschewed a paradigmatic position, I saw that it hinged on *action*. Various components of each paradigm are useful for action. We need real worlds to act in and to figure out the most effective ways to act. We need to interpret and deeply understand social realities before we can act in them. We need to reflexively critique actions and ideas, both our own and of others, in order to think and act rightly. This unifying theme, action, is the guiding heuristic by which I employ or critique a paradigmatic perspective. And this tendency is itself a paradigm, one best articulated by the American philosophical tradition known as pragmatism.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is the philosophy of action (James, 1896). The pragmatist's project of knowing is about enabling people to act. This perspective disassembles and reconfigures various philosophical dilemmas, as it highlights the social and human components in the project of knowing. It also alters the criteria for knowledge worth having. For a pragmatist, knowledge passes muster when it motivates, enables, and coordinates human action, particularly when that action moves the social world toward a fuller and richer life.

Peirce (1905), pragmatism's founder, argues that beliefs should be measured in terms of the actions they indicate. Said another way, ideas are only meaningfully

different if they move people to act differently. James (1896) makes the case that hypotheses are living or dead (rather than true or false) based on their ability to be enacted by the people who hold them. Dewey (1917) argues that science should spend less time discussing questions of knowledge and spend more time solving human problems. Finally, Rorty (1979), drawing on Quine's (1953) attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction and Sellers' (1963) attack on the myth of the given, posits that there are no privileged positions from which any claim can be argued. Therefore, the project of epistemology should not focus on questions of ultimate reality, but rather more on how communities come to know and act together.

Pragmatism has various offerings as a productive frame for enacting qualitative research. Rorty (1979) criticizes the notion that knowledge can mirror nature, which delegitimizes "official" representations of reality and promotes polyvocality. Also, Rorty's (1979) articulation of "behavioral epistemology" (people know what their knowledge peers let them get away with) provides a justification for research methods attentive to indexicality/context (Schwandt, 2003). Peirce and James' movement toward action as an evaluative heuristic (and away from meaning as accurate reference) resituates embodied, contemporaneous human life as epistemologically relevant. Finally, Dewey (1939) envisages a science that moves optimistically, systematically, and modestly toward an ever more just society, which is in a way a democratic version of the constant comparative method. I use the deconstructive pragmatism of Rorty to counterbalance the re-constructive pragmatism of Dewey (1939). Rorty's critique of representation legitimizes subaltern voices while Dewey calls those voices to creatively and equitably seek ordered richness.

In practice, pragmatism bears similarities to other interpretive and critical approaches. For instance, pragmatism invites polyvocality, which manifests in the research design as including various groups of participants. Pragmatism's behavioral epistemology suggests particular attention to member checking. Action as the metric for the quality of a belief suggests close attention to embodied participant action. The above techniques, multiple types of participants, member checking, and attention to embodied action, are common to both critical and interpretive forms of qualitative research.

What makes pragmatic qualitative research distinct is its imperative for action within the research project. A pragmatist approach denies the theory/practice distinction and calls the research project to create living hypotheses that improve the quality of participants' lives. This active component of pragmatism is found in my research both in its means and its ends. I seek overall to improve homeless young adults' living conditions, and my method of data collection involves the daily service of homeless young adults. Creswell and Clark (2007) summarize pragmatism as consisting of the following tendencies.

- Not tied to a single worldview.
- More concerned with what works than an ultimate truth.
- Attuned to social, historical, and political context in which that research happens.
- Both realist and idealist (the world is both external and "lodged in the mind") (p. 42).

Another core concept within pragmatism that guides my work is Dewey's (1941) warranted assertability. A warranted assertion is a claim that is imbedded in the social process of inquiry. Dewey (1941) suggests that thinkers focus more on the ongoing

nature of knowing as opposed to freestanding knowledge. This diverges from the classic picture of knowledge. For example in Plato's Five Dialogues (2002), Socrates and Theaetetus discuss how knowledge is justified, true belief. Dewey (1941), however, argues that there is no objective justification. Rather, knowledge should have warranted assertability. Boyles (2006) explains:

Warranted assertions replace justification in the traditional syllogism while at the same time imploding the syllogism itself. Where justification served a correspondence theory of truth in the traditional account of knowledge, warranted assertions merge truth and inquiry together in such a way that correspondence to an external world is no longer the point. The point, instead, is the interdependency of truths and the processes of inquiry: the temporal satisfaction of solved problems in a world that is not set apart from the knower's use(s) of the world or place(s) in that world. (p. 7)

In classic philosophy, we say someone really knows something when they 1) believe something that is true and 2) believe it for a justifiable reason. But some folks (like Dewey) say that knowledge is less about justification and more about warranted assertion. A particular idea is warranted through the dynamic, ongoing, and social process of inquiry. It seems like a simple move, but it has profound implications on the way we think about epistemology. When one holds that truth is a work in progress, knowledge becomes less important and instead the processes and activities of *knowing* become key. Knowing, as opposed to knowledge, involves the active, human, and living parts of how we come to know. That process is ultimately more interesting than determining if a particular idea matches up with a particular part of the world. Dewey is,

of course, not unique in moving away from a correspondence notion of truth. However, he does so in an inspiring fashion that is not skeptical of knowing or dismissive of other paradigms.

One outcome of the pragmatic approach to knowledge is that truth becomes inextricably bound to the process of inquiry. There is no free-floating knowledge separate from knowing. Questions do not have final answers. Instead, the process of knowing is a quest through landscapes of truth. I think this is a compelling notion and believe it is a more realistic rendering of how knowing actually unfolds. I think this move also should alter the way we think about research methods. The goal should not be to perform a justified research method, create knowledge, and then hand the free-floating knowledge to someone else. Rather, methods are ways of knowing, and we should try to engage people through different processes of knowing. For example, I do not hold that a written or spoken representation is the end point of a study. It is, instead, a moment in a broader process of knowing. Another paradigm might consider a “finding” as a piece of knowledge, while the pragmatist sees a finding as a belief worth sharing. We do not represent ideas when we are sure they are knowledge. Instead, we share ideas when we wish to draw others into the process of inquiry.

I should note that one need not call oneself a pragmatist in order to engage community members’ lived experience with an attention to power in order to improve social conditions. For instance, there are confluences between pragmatism and feminism (Seigfried, 2001). As such, it is more accurate to say that I would call anyone who engages communities’ lived experience, attends to power, and improves social conditions a pragmatist, or at the very least, I’d say they were engaging in pragmatic practice.

Phronesis

Another way of framing my work is from the perspective of phronesis. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that social scientists need be more responsive to social issues as a way of making social science matter. As Flyvbjerg reports, Aristotle lays out three types of knowing: *episteme* (theoretic), *techne* (applied), and *phronesis* (practical wisdom).

Episteme and techne characterize the academic and the practitioner, reflexively.

Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that a phronetic approach to knowledge draws on the richness of social science while incorporating critical understandings of practice, wisdom, and power to prudently and creatively act in the world.

In the case of youth, homelessness is influenced by systematic responsiveness and failure. For homeless adults there are often substance abuses or personal histories that lead to homelessness. For youth, however, they are often homeless because of familial or organizational failure. Also, there are significant issues that youth face by going into shelters (being recruited into crime, drug sales, and prostitution). As such, homeless youth service organizations are eager to find a better, safer, and faster model of intervention. A phronetic study of youth homelessness will help reveal evidence-based practices for youth homeless service organizations.

Phronesis informs my research in various ways. Tracy (2007) lays out four activities that enable problem-based, phronetic research and that are consistent with the approach I have taken in this project:

- (1) engage and immerse oneself in a context, leaving oneself open to emergent dilemmas;
- (2) iteratively analyze data through prospective conjecture and become comfortable with the often ineffable process of grounded research;
- (3) be attuned

to power relations that camouflage subordinated knowledge (that may provide opportunities for action) and reinscribe extant powerful discourses (that may impede problem solving); and (4) develop research products that are engaging, accessible and able to be evaluated by a variety of audiences (p. 110).

Specifically, my three-year immersion in the homeless youth community contributes to the phronetic quality of my work. By active engagement, much as Tracy (2007) suggests, I have seen issues and areas of transformation that this project explores in more depth.

Positive Organizational Scholarship

Another movement contextualizing my scholarship is positive organizational scholarship (POS). POS strives to both understand and promote the uplifting, and ennobling parts of human organizing. It asserts a bias toward “exceptional, virtuous, life-giving, and flourishing phenomena” (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003, p. 5). Positive organizational scholars have focused on subjects like resilience, virtue, gratitude, positive networks, and compassion. POS impacts my research in three ways. It asks me to attend to the positive phenomena in organizations in addition to the negative. In so doing, it invites me to remain open to theoretical explanations that capture what is admirable about the human. Finally, positive organizational scholarship provides me with theoretical resources for those who seek to improve the conditions of organized life.

Before moving forward, I should note that my methodological commitments differ from many positive organizational scholars. Fineman (2006) aptly identifies that much work done within the growing POS tradition has positivist foundations. This is not entirely surprising, as POS borrows heavily from Gillham and Seligman’s (1999) call for psychology to engage the study of the positive. Since the discipline of psychology is

solidly positivist, it stands to reason that the organizational crossover also has realist, empiricist roots. That said, there is nothing essentially positivist about the POS project. Various methodological and paradigmatic stances are compatible with the idea that positive organizational phenomena happen and can be theorized about and worked toward.

POS informs my pragmatic, qualitative methods in the following ways. First, I seek both an explanation for the positive and negative organizational phenomena (compassion and burnout, respectively). I also hold theories from positive organizational scholars as sensitizing concepts, including work done on the sub-processes of compassion (Way & Tracy, 2012, Miller, 2007), the broadening and building traits of positive emotion (Fredrickson, 2003), and compassion at the organizational level (Kanov et al. 2004, Lilius et al. 2011). Theoretical sensitivity allows the researcher to see subtleties in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Finally, and perhaps without saying, I share POS's commitment to improving organized life.

Pragmatism, Phronesis, and POS in Participatory Action Research

Consistent with Dewey's (1939) creative democracy and an engaged phronetic approach to social science, participatory action research (PAR) aims to be morally good and methodologically sound. PAR sheds light on an issue by bringing many ways of knowing into active engagement with an issue (hence "participatory"). Just as important is PAR's commitment to making change (hence "action"). Eisenberg, Baglia, and Pynes (2006) argue that participation in organizations enables better access to communicatively constructed realities.

I hold a position of ontological immediacy, which is to say that all histories and futures pale in comparison to the vivid, liminal unfolding of the present. Much of what reality has to offer is available in the present, and it is only in the present that histories and futures are made real. Action, perhaps even impatient action, follows naturally from this conception of the real. I cannot wait to have perfect certainty before I act. Rather, I hasten forth with warranted assertability (à la Dewey, 1941) and perfect my understanding of an issue in action. Besides, Rorty (1979) argues that the justification of knowledge happens within knowledge communities. If I want to know something, how better to know it than to vividly immerse myself inside a community?

Theoretically, I conceptualize PAR as an embodiment of pragmatism, both in process and in product. Rorty's (1979) neopragmatist rejection of privileged representation ultimately argues that no account of the world can be justified over another. While some might take this as a crisis or an attack on representation, I take it as an invitation. Rorty is not arguing that representation is impossible and therefore that we cannot say things about the world. Rather, Rorty is creating a space where all forms of representation, all explanations of the world, can be brought to the table. In this way, pragmatism serves as the theoretical rationale for inclusion of multiple stakeholders in a research project.

Pragmatism provides PAR with an operant epistemology, one of epistemic behaviorism. Rorty (1979) argues that the justification of knowledge is an enacted and social phenomena and that it has more to do with the relationships between knowledge peers than it does with the relationship between the knower and the known. This distinctly communicative, relational, and organizational approach to knowledge provides

both theoretic and practical rationale for using an active, participative model. The researcher will have better knowledge when the community has better knowledge, and the community will have better knowledge when it can justly and equitably coordinate its action.

James' (1896) account of the enacted, social epistemology of pragmatism captures the spirit of PAR. Pragmatism is not about being practical, James (1896) says, but it is the limbering of our theories. Philosophy in action, knowing in doing. Conceived of thusly, PAR is not simply a research project with a community service project tacked on the end. The enacted, embodied component of a participatory approach to research is an intrinsic component of the research project.

Perhaps most compelling is Dewey's (1939) account of creative democracy. According to Dewey, creative democracy draws on past experience in order to create the conditions for future experience and grow in ordered richness. This process is ongoing, continually imagining and reimagining new and more just forms of being. As Dewey (1939) identifies, it is not material resources that lay unused in modern times, but human resources. Children are not given the education they need. Adults are not allowed to participate in the social order. PAR draws broadly across otherwise ignored experiences to improve the democratic process so we all can grow in ordered richness.

The ongoing nature of creative democracy is found in Kemmis and McTaggart's (2000) guide for PAR, a cyclical model of (1) plan, (2) act/observe, and (3) reflect, repeat. The goal is to help the participants make their own lives more rational, coherent, satisfying, and just through an ongoing, collaborative social process. Having studied and acted in the homeless youth community from organizational, cultural, and rhetorical

perspectives, I would describe myself as several cycles into this project in terms of Kemmis and McTaggart’s model. Each prior cycle sheds light on my dissertation proposal, which is itself a plan that lays out observation/action and sets the groundwork for further reflection.

While I am guided by criteria for qualitative inquiry, PAR also comes with markers of quality. Good community-embedded research is democratic, equitable, liberating, and life enhancing (Stringer, 2007). I conceptualize these four criteria as the intersection between PAR’s methodological form and its axiological commitments. PAR has two major traits of its methodology: action and participation. PAR also has two virtues it strives for: freedom and positivity. Taken together, it creates the following four part grid.

Table 3.2		
Criteria of Good Participatory Action Research		
	Freedom	Positive
Participative	Democratic	Equitable
Action	Liberating	Life-enhancing

But who participates in the democracy? Who are we liberating? Exactly whose lives do I hope to enhance? Ultimately, I espouse a scholarship of mutual stakeholders. I bring to the table volunteers/staff, organizational leadership, and homeless youth clients, while I draw on the work of communication scholars. While my research focus is youth experience, I hope to engage these various stakeholders in the production, interpretation, and realization of my research project. For example, my research questions were developed by talking with homeless young adults about their experiences, working alongside volunteers, networking with leaders of homeless service nonprofits about

projects, policies, and potential collaborations, and discussing with fellow academics about potential for theoretical contributions. Moving forward, I plan to include multiple stakeholders in the interpretation of data and the application of any actionable findings.

Conclusion

In this section, I have reviewed various contexts, including topical, disciplinary, theoretical, and paradigmatic. Each of these contexts position my work inside broader traditions, which not only pays homage to my intellectual inspirations but also sheds light on why the project unfolded in the ways it did. I now turn to a discussion of the methods I used in the process of my project.

Chapter 4

METHODS

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

To address the questions of interaction and compassion as they are experienced by homeless young adults, I took a qualitative, phronetic (Flyvbjerg, 2012), participatory action, and pragmatic approach. My two forms of data collection included participant observation and in-depth interviews. My data analysis was guided by grounded theory and an iterative approach to research and analysis (Charmaz, 2006, Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Qualitative research reconstructs and probes the “situated form, content, and experience of social action” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 18). Attention to the situatedness of social life is important, because communication has an indexical inclination, which is to say that it tends to draw meaning from context (Schwandt, 2003). The goal of qualitative work is to produce understanding from “densely textured facts” (Geertz, 1973, p. 28) constructed to preserve intersubjective reality (Schwandt, 2003). In this project, I sought to generate rich qualitative data through participant observations (written into fieldnotes), interviews with homeless youth, and full participation in the scene.

Observation and Fieldnotes

I took scratchnotes when it was appropriate and feasible. Since my work in the field was regularly interactive and physical, I often did not have free hands or free moments to take notes. In these situations, I created headnotes. Upon returning home, I wrote up complete fieldnotes based on my field experiences.

The focus of my observations was interactional; I looked to the ways homeless youth interacted with nonprofit human service organizations. These observations were sometimes from “within” the organization as a volunteer, and other times observations were done in the urban space used by homeless people. Data collected by observation helped me do the following: (1) describe and conceptualize interactions; (2) corroborate and problematize interview data; and (3) fully engage the embodied component of organized life. My observations yielded 140 single-spaced pages, based on 42 field experiences over a year. Most field experiences were two to three hours long, totaling 100 hours of observations.

In the course of this study, there were four primary research sites, including the SUFK Youth Center, Mill Avenue, Tumbleweed Tempe Youth Resource Center, and the region around the Phoenix shelters, which some call “The Zone.” SUFK and Tumbleweed were chosen because their clients are predominantly homeless young adults. Also, the organizations are structured differently: SUFK is run by volunteers and funded by donations while Tumbleweed receives government grants in addition to donations and primarily has employed staff.

I was heavily involved with SUFK through the course of this project. Being involved SUFK helped this project in three basic ways. Since I was interested in how experiences of homeless young adults could extend theories of organized compassion, fostering relationships with them and performing interviews was key. Secondly, participation allowed me to be a part of and observe the interactions between the young adults and the staff/volunteers, which allowed me to witness the activities and events the

youth reported on. Finally, participation in SUFK allowed me to act in ways to improve the lives of the young adults.

The urban areas of Mill Avenue and The Zone were chosen because they are hubs for homeless populations because there are opportunities to ask for money, services are provided in those spaces, and there are other homeless people to socialize with. I wanted to do some interviews in nonorganizational settings to reduce any pressure the young adults might feel to pander to the organization in whose building they were currently sitting. Also, doing observations in urban space helped me compare interactions with the public to interactions with staff and volunteers.

SUFK Youth Center.

The StandUp For Kids drop-in center sits on the corner of a residential drive and a busy avenue in Phoenix, Arizona. It isn't really a "center" in the architectural sense. It is a four-bedroom house being used for an organizational purpose. It isn't really any different in form than any of the other residential houses on the block. Only its function makes it noteworthy. Cars whiz by on the busy avenue. Periodically cars pull off the avenue to turn around, but the only reason anyone stops is for the Circle K a block north and the McDonalds a few blocks south. The house was strategically picked because of its convenient proximity to the shelters and homeless service campus. Since the shelters and campus were strategically located in a place where housed people do not go, people merely drive past.

Inside the house, things are in a general state of disrepair. It is embarrassing to write, but if it can be broken, it probably is. Most door frames have been splintered by fights or break ins. Piles of donated computer detritus collectively yield two fully

functional work stations. Items are dirty, disorganized, and barely work. Its rooms have varied purpose. One room is for the applesauce, ravioli, fruit, and granola bars, all individually wrapped, that we give out on outreach. Another room resembles a disorderly thrift store, with a long wall of hanging shirts and various shelves with folded clothing. And yet, for all its foibles, it feels like home to me, shared with a small cadre of volunteers and the youth we serve.

SUFK outreach goes into the streets and shelters with food, water, clothing, and hygiene supplies. We ask the youth what they need and give them what we have. We also promote the drop-in center to the youth we find on outreach. The youth house allows kids to shower, wash their clothing, eat a hot meal, access the clothing donations, use the computer, watch a movie, and socialize in a relaxed, non-institutional environment. After a youth gets his or her apartment, apartment support fills their pantry and donates furniture, dishes, cleaning supplies, and whatever else is needed to get them started if we have it. The local branch of SUFK I volunteer with serves 1,800 homeless youth each year, which is approximately 40% of the homeless youth in our city.

Mill Avenue (“The Ave”).

Mill Avenue is the main drag in Tempe – destination for college students, drinkers, and other seekers of night life. It is an eight-block section that sports restaurants, bars, knickknack shops, and ice creameries. It is a “happening” place, which is a carefully crafted reality cultivated to sell more alcohol and food. It is also a transportation hub, within one block of both a major light rail stop and the Tempe transportation center. The avenue is home to dining patrons, drunken college kids, evangelizing Christians, bicycle cops, and homeless people. There is a strong contingent

of homeless youth and young adults. Some are travelers asking for spare change to buy their next bus ticket. Others are residents of Tempe, staying in the craggy parks or along the irrigation canals.

Tumbleweed Youth Resource Center.

The Tumbleweed Youth Resource Center (TYRC) is located on a side street within 100 meters from Mill Avenue. Also a white painted home, the TYRC is more of a center than is the SUFK house, with a check-in table in the front and more official organizational signage. It makes efficient use of bins to organize its various offerings. Its main room has inviting foodstuffs available for people who have just arrived. Bagels. Chocolate covered croissants. Meals are self serve. Beyond the main room are the bathroom, the kitchen, the study room, and case manager's office.

Phoenix shelters (“The Zone”).

About eight blocks south of SUFK is the final location of this study: The Zone. The Zone is the area around the downtown homeless shelters and the Human Services Campus. It is my understanding that this nickname was first used by law enforcement as a derogatory term. However, it has been co-opted by the homeless residents as an ironic self description. There are more than a dozen organizations that are housed within or clustered around the walled Human Resources Campus. Apart from homeless people, human service workers, police officers, and the occasional outreach group, there is nothing here. There are no fast food restaurants, no gas stations, no grocery stores, and no residents. There are a few unused city buildings, a few uninhabited houses, and a few graveyards. As reflected on by one of our outreach workers, this is where we put the homeless while we wait for them to die. Because of the complete lack of passerbys, the

homeless residents use the streets freely for walking and congregating. The campus itself is a well-guarded facility, complete with a 12-foot wall, a massive gate, and green-shirted security guards. Little seems to thrive; even the grass is AstroTurf. The homeless persons vary in degree of sociality and energy. Some are clustered in animated groups while others lay despondent on the edge of the street with their belongings piled on top and around them.

Interviews

I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to construct accounts of the experiences homeless young adults have inside nonprofit service organizations. I performed 23 interviews, which averaged 30 minutes and ranged from 13 minutes to 70 minutes. The duration of the interviews was contextual, as interviews conducted in nonorganizational urban spaces tended to be shorter. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcription of the interviews resulted in 275 pages of single-spaced, typewritten data.

I also performed naturalistic, ethnographic interviews with the young adults while I was engaged in organizational activities and participant observations. These informal interactions were brief, usually two to 10 minutes in length. However, naturalistic interviews were helpful in gaining real-time sensemaking about organizational events (Patton, 2001). I endeavored to find situationally appropriate contexts for these interviews (González, 2000). The youth reflections from these interviews were documented in my fieldnotes versus being recorded and transcribed.

The goal of my in-depth interviews was to tap into the experience of homeless youth and invite them into academic and organizational discourses on compassion,

emotion, and program effectiveness. To do this, I asked various questions regarding their experience inside organizations. The interview had five basic sections, which included describing organizations that had served them, describing interactions they had had inside said organizations, identifying particularly positive, negative, helpful, and unhelpful interactions, identifying and reflecting on compassionate organizations and staff, and suggesting things organizations could do to improve services. Probes were used to uncover underlying ideologies (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Youth accounts of nonprofit homeless service organizations revealed a nuanced understanding of compassion as it manifests at an organizational level, as well as what it feels like to be served by compassionate or burned out staff. Interviews with youth also provided interpretive frames to perform further participant observation.

Participation

My role in the scene was as a complete member researcher as defined by Adler and Adler (1987). During the time of this research, I served as a volunteer at SUFK in their youth house and on outreach. I also regularly visited other organizations and worked on projects for the organization as part of my weekly routine. The first six months involved a commitment of approximately two hours a week (totaling 50 hours). Between May 2010 and May 2011, I volunteered approximately eight hours a week (totaling 400 hours). In the time between May 2011 and May 2012, I volunteered approximately 12 hours a week (totaling 1,225 hours). About 60% of these hours were direct client interaction hours, and the other 40% were volunteer coordination, networking, and general organizing. My total time volunteering is approximately 1,675 hours, with about 1,000 direct client interaction. I have also spent 10 days (and six nights) living on the

streets during semiannual street retreats. In short, I have tried to share my life with the volunteers and young adults of SUFK's community.

Being directly involved in the life of the organizations and youth I study is both intrinsically and extrinsically valuable. Eisenberg et al. (2006) argue that participation in the organized life of the studied group increases the transformative potential of the project. According to Conquergood (1991), co-temporality, or coeval, is also an important part of sharing in the humanity of others, and Frey et al. (1996) argue that communication scholars have an obligation to pursuing justice in the ways they are capable. I will discuss the positive dynamics between active participation and the research process later in this chapter. For now, I turn to laying out my data analysis procedures.

Data Analysis

My data analysis was guided by an iterative approach to grounded theory. An iterative approach involves analyzing data while continuing to collect data (Charmaz, 2006). Rather than saving all analysis for after data collection, the researcher engages in early interpretation that guides further data collection.

I coded and theorized using grounded theory. I engaged in grounded theory's three coding procedures: open coding (fracturing data into categories), axial coding (identifying relationships between categories), and selective coding (finding key concepts that help explain the other concepts) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each coding regimen requires creating analytic memos designed to track and deepen analysis. I also followed Charmaz's suggestion in coding for gerunds (2011) to focus on action. I generated a codebook as a product of open coding, used diagrams to identify context and

intervening/causal conditions via axial coding, and identified the core category and storyline via selective coding. I also engaged in theoretical sampling, performed negative case analysis, and used conditional matrixes to build broad and nuanced theorization that lives up to grounded theory's criteria of fit, understanding, generality, and control/application.

For instance, when I was open coding one of the interviews, the statement, "They wouldn't be there if they didn't give a shit," stood out to me. So I made a note, writing, "Being there." Later, other references such as, "They keep showing up don't they darn it!" sharpened my attention to the fact that the young adults see presence as indicating compassion. And so the code "Presence" was born. Using NVivo, I coded my interview and fieldnotes with "Presence" as a category, drew together all the instances of presence, reread them, and wrote about the set. As I wrote, I began to see that presence was separate from, but related to the subprocesses of compassion identified by Miller (2007) and Way and Tracy (2012). This analytic memo served as the foundation for chapter five, which outlines how homeless young adults' experience of presence extends theories of compassion.

Qualitative Analysis and Reasoning

In addition to using coding practices laid out by grounded theory, I also found that my analytic technique followed the forms of thinking laid out by deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning. Qualitative research is often known for inductive processes; however, deduction and abduction played an equal part in my work.

I used inductive reasoning to structure my data and identify thematic emergence. Since an inductive case is made stronger by multiple instances, identifying the

reoccurrence of themes is important for making strong claims. For instance, I found many instances of humor, which makes the indicative case that humor is an important phenomenon. Induction can also make a case for causation in fieldwork. I found that presence preceded noticing, connecting, and responding often, which made the case that presence is a necessary condition for other compassionate subprocesses. Of course, inductive assessments are not iron clad, and I supplemented inductive conclusions with negative case analysis.

I also used deductive reasoning to order my definitional/category work. Deciding to put a piece of data into a larger code is the result of a deductive evaluation. For instance, I defined the code “Bodies” as data relating to bodily needs, physical space, and corporal acts of service. So if a piece of data relates to bodily needs, I put it in code “Bodies.”

Finally, abductive reasoning provides possible explanations for events (Kelle, 1995, Richardson & Kramer, 2006). Charles Sanders Peirce (1903), the father of pragmatism, is also responsible for outlining the abductive form:

The surprising fact, C, is observed;

But if A were true, C would be a matter of course.

Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true. (p. 151)

Abduction is used to posit possible explanations for events. It involves identifying conditions that are sufficient (but not necessary) for following outcomes (Richardson & Kramer, 2006). As an analytic form, abduction is invaluable. In levels of certainty, abduction is similar to induction in that its conclusions are not certainly true if the premises are true. However, abduction is more similar to deduction in form. Deduction

affirms the antecedent, which entails the consequent (If A, then B. A is the case, therefore B). Abduction looks at the consequent and guesses at the antecedent that might have entailed it (B is the case, so what “If A, then B” events would make that unsurprising?) (Peirce, 1903). For instance, if a homeless young adult says they left an organization because the staff “didn’t give a shit,” what does staff “giving a shit” do for youth engagement to make this unsurprising? Methodologically, being clear about abductive reasoning is an important part of reflexivity. It helps make clear what explanatory leaps have been taken to identify the structure of thinking. In analysis, abduction plays an important role when creating theoretical explanations for events.

Ultimately, my data analysis follows the pragmatic maxim. As Peirce (1903) articulates, the pragmatic maxim states that conceptions about the world mean what their practical outcomes are. Said another way, since direct correspondence with the world is likely to be problematic (for reasons outlined by Quine (1953) and Sellars (1963) and unified by Rorty (1979)), the value of a theory rests more in its ability to enliven human action to seek flourishing. A theory means what it gets us to do. This maxim guides data analysis by focusing on the living, active parts of social worlds and guides theory creation by highlighting traits like usability, mnemonic power, and inspiration.

I should also mention that part of my data analytic techniques included embodied analysis. Being in the field with my body also became a technique that generated and critiqued theorizing about these issues (Conquergood, 1991). While qualitative research often takes a textual, or at times a visual, approach to conceiving data, it is important to recognize that nontextual, but rather visceral, direct experience can also serve as the foundation for knowing. Data, information, and knowing need not be abstract, purely

cognitive constructs. A lived experience can lead to knowing. A surge of adrenaline is information. A habituated awareness is a kind of knowing. Aches are data. Acquired bodily responses are knowing. Approaching knowledge in this way requires a primordial empiricism – a raw plunging into the frantic vividness of humans *be-ing*.

Specific to this project, I took an embodied approach by inscribing issues of homelessness into my body, my mind, and my life as best I could. Doing so provided extra-textual sites of analysis, since carrying the concerns of homeless people as I moved through my daily life enabled me to make connections between contexts. Also, taking an embodied approach helped address pragmatic concerns – if a way of thinking failed to move me to action, it may have limited pragmatic value. An embodied approach also meant treating myself as test case one, doing what I could to experiment with the heuristic and transformative aspects of a particular concept.

IRB Approval

My study was approved through my university as exempt after review based on federal regulations 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2). Because of potentially damaging information, I was prohibited from sharing data in an identifiable way beyond the process of research. Information letters were given to all interviewees, but signed consent letters were not required. My original research proposal included youth under the age of 18, however it was deemed that the participatory nature of the research study would make it difficult for youth to disentangle my role as a researcher and my role as a service provider. This restriction posed little problem, since the majority of homeless youth served by Tumbleweed and SUFK are 18 or older. One 17-year-old was excluded from the process of interviews because of this decision.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reported this project's methodological turns, including the people, places, techniques and strategies involved. I attempted to be clear about the technical and methodological traditions on which I drew. As a note, chapter eight continues the conversation about methods by outlining a practice I call pragmatic fieldwork, of which this project is an example. However, I now turn to the three theoretical findings of this project, which concern presence, ruptures, and dynamics of compassion.

Chapter 5

INDIVIDUAL COMPASSION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Tim: Can you tell me a story about a time that a nonprofit organization displayed compassion to you?

Jacob: I would say Homebase. It was when, it was about 2004. My grandma ended up passing away. I was the only – it was me and my mom. My mom just was breaking down in tears everyday and I ended up – I was the chore boy for a while. I kept on bottling things up. My feelings were just bottled. Like I didn't want to show it. One day, one of the people [at Homebase]... I forgot their name, but they ended up looking at my face and was like "Is something wrong." I didn't want to say what it was because it was personal. It was like yeah, my own family. I'm just like, "You know what, I'm having troubles. And just trying to get over what I'm having." And they're like, "If you need to talk, we're there for you." But I will honestly say that I didn't really talk to anybody about that because it was need to know. But they did ask. They did see.

Tim: So they asked if you wanted to talk about something, and you said no.

Jacob: I said no only because it was like, I didn't want to hear it. I didn't want to think about it. At that point, I lost the greatest thing I could ever have.

Tim: It was still compassion that they asked? You remember that?

Jacob: Yeah they showed that they actually did give a shit. They asked what's wrong. They saw, they caught the sign. And you know what, if they catch signs like that, you know what? That just goes to show that they are one more step up than what they – like what everybody thinks they are. If they can see that off of a person's

face and actually give them some sign of that person caring saying, you know what – is there anything you want to talk about. But, it was just knowing that they were out there if I needed them.

Tim: When they asked you the question, do you remember how they were acting? Do you remember the interaction pretty well?

Jacob: They looked at my face and... [He looks me in the eye.]

Tim: Made eye contact...

Jacob: Yeah they saw, they're all like wait a minute "Is there something wrong?" And they gave like a facial expression I can't describe. [Pantomiming, he turns his head slightly to the side and furrows his brow a little.]

Tim: Sure. Like a little turn to the side and... [Mirroring his expression back, but making it more dramatic, I turn my head to the right and lean a little forward, look directly at him, and furrowing my brow.]

Jacob: Yeah! Like "What's wrong?" It shows that that person does – that person does care. No matter who you are. For whatever reason. That person did stop. That person did show that. They're only asking to help. And you know what, if there's people like that, you know what, that's the best thing to know. That there are people out there willing to be there and ask those questions.

The above recollection highlights the power of compassion in organizations. I met Jacob, a 23-year-old, in a place where many homeless young adults gather on Mill Avenue in Tempe. Jacob is recalling a conversation with a staff member from a youth serving organization, a three-turn conversation that amounted to: "Is something wrong?"

“I’m having troubles.” “If you need to talk, we’re here for you.” Despite the conversation’s extreme simplicity, Jacob remembers the exchange eight years later. What’s more, he derives from the experience a truth he calls, “the best thing to know,” which is that there are people in the world who care.

Jacob’s stories, and many others like it, speak to the extraordinary potential of compassion in organized life. Compassion rejuvenates, mends, and inspires. I find stories like Jacob’s incredibly humbling. There is a good chance the staff member doesn’t remember that three-turn conversation at all. He or she may not even remember Jacob. But the simple act of having concern for his suffering now figures into how he thinks about humanity nearly a decade later. Jacob, and the other youth interviewed, provide detailed accounts of the conversational, nonverbal, and interpersonal dynamics of compassion.

The experiences homeless young adults have in nonprofits speak directly and saliently to dynamics of organizational communication. As clients of human service agencies, they are organizational participants, but positive transformation in their lives is also the product of these organizations. This makes them both member and output. Their perspectives on organizing are well informed, as they must navigate complex interorganizational realities in order to meet their basic needs. Also, homeless young adults often have a compelling understanding of social life, as they occupy and travel discursive and material boundary lands. Despite their valuable insight, homeless young adults are not always well represented in organizational life. It is likely that their suggestions will be taken as unfeasible, and their critiques will be written off as mere complaints. As such, there is real value, both practically and intellectually, in countering

this trend and recognizing homeless young adults as valuable contributors to processes of organizing and theorizing. The following chapter offers an answer to the following question: What do the experiences of homeless young adults tell us about compassion in organizations?

Their reflections speak to two threads of study: social justice studies regarding the homeless and compassion in organizations. Social justice studies articulate the transformative power of communicative processes (Papa et al., 2005, Frey et al., 1996). These scholars argue that communication can reconfigure social relations into more just forms. Communication can humanize the dehumanized. Specific to the context of homeless youth, de Winter and Noom (2003) articulate the following as particular traits of interaction that youth find positive: mutuality, low power distance, immediacy, staff being personal (as opposed to overly professional), and low relational distance. The findings in this chapter speak to and extend this scholarly thread.

The youth also contribute to our understanding of compassion. As reviewed in chapter three, compassion is empathy plus action. There are, of course, various models that articulate the parts of compassion. A psychological approach (Clark, 1997) names the three subcomponents as noticing, feeling, and responding. More communicative focused accounts list noticing, connecting, and responding (Miller, 2007) or recognize, relate, and (re)act (Way & Tracy, 2012). These models demonstrate compassion as perceptual, emotional, and active (with varying degrees of communication running through those practices). Some lay out a linear process, but recent work suggests they move circuitously. However, each of these accounts misses an aspect of compassion that the homeless young adults see very clearly: presence.

Presence

Youth identify presence as an important component of compassion. While the youth articulate recognizing/noticing, relating/connecting, and responding/reacting as part of compassionate exchange, they tell stories and offer analysis that point to presence as a necessary precondition and a powerful supplement to the other parts of the compassionate process. They often speak of presence in its most basic sense: being there. They also describe interactive and communicative behaviors where presence is enacted.

Below I recount several ways presence plays out in compassionate communication within organizations. First I discuss what youth identify as the basic relationship between presence and compassion, namely, that presence indicates care. Following, I highlight various reflections from the youth that illustrate that while presence may be necessary for compassion, it is by no means sufficient. The youth recount anecdotes about nonprofit staff who are present, at least in the most basic sense of co-occupying space, but are decidedly not compassionate.

I will then offer a narrative account of a moment that pushed my analysis forward on this issue. The moment took place during a time when I was deep in my data analysis and happened to be in Disney World, an organization decidedly different than homeless youth-serving nonprofits. However, it provides a valuable counterbalance when considering the youth's reflections on present but uncompassionate staff.

Inspired by the Disney juxtaposition, I return to the youth reflections on positive staff interactions and make a case that nonverbal immediacy improves the communication of compassion. Said another way, compassionate presence, in the fullest sense, involves both co-occupying space and a focus of the other in the present. The

communication of immediacy is often nonverbal, and I include the specific staff communication behaviors the youth consider positive that relate to immediacy.

Following, I will discuss a form of compassionate presence in addition to nonverbal immediacy, namely, physical acts of service. After reviewing these behaviors, I propose that nonverbal immediacy and physical acts of service are two forms of embodied aboutness. Ultimately, I will contend that presence plus some form of embodied aboutness combine to form a salient indicator of shared concern.

Drawing on the prior meditations on presence and embodied aboutness, I will use these findings to offer theoretical extensions to two models of individual compassion in organization. I will argue that if taking a step-by-step approach, as forwarded by Miller (2007), presence becomes “Step 0,” a necessary precondition for noticing, connecting, and responding to take place. Presence also overlays Way and Tracy’s (2012) heart model, which illustrates a circuitous dynamic between recognizing, relating, and (re)acting. In their model, presence serves as the embodying context the other activities operate in, as well as an embodied outcome. In chapter nine, I will discuss how these theoretic extensions of compassion inform philosophical and practical approaches to social justice organizing. Currently, I turn to the most basic dynamic of presence in compassionate communication.

The Basic Relationship: Presence Indicates Care

Homeless young adults often read presence as an indicator of deeply held care. While some of their interview responses could be accounted for using the three-part models, other renderings of compassion did not regard a particular need that the staff or volunteer had seen, connected with, or acted on. Instead, they often spoke of a staff’s

willingness to “be there.” Consider the following reflection from Elliot, a 19-year-old young man whose homelessness was ended by Crossroads, a drug rehabilitation community. When I asked him about an organization that demonstrated compassion, he told me about Crossroads’ staff, all of whom were prior drug addicts. He described them as having “been through it themselves,” and simply had “more time under their belts.” He found this organizational form empowering. When asked why, he elaborated:

There’s a whole room full of people, and even though I was a worthless drug addict, or at least I pictured myself as such, they thought I could be something better than that. And they wouldn’t waste their time if they didn’t think that. They could find other jobs. They might have felonies and that kind of thing. But they can find other jobs than fucking \$200 a week for fucking babysitting 80 drug addicts. That is a shitty job. But they are there because they want to be there.

Elliot reads presence as indicative of an authentic, genuine desire to help him. Elsewhere, he recounts this notion more succinctly: “They wouldn’t be there if they didn’t give a shit.”

Elliot is not the only one. Harry, a 21-year-old who I have known for several years through SUFK, had accessed various homeless youth serving organizations. Harry says that volunteers with SUFK are “legitimately coming out because they wanna do it.” Harry says that he knows this in part because of SUFK staff’s volunteer, unpaid status, but also because of their support and positivity. Similar to Elliot’s reporting of being empowered, Harry says that being surrounded by compassionate volunteers motivates him and gives him something to look forward to.

Amber, a homeless young woman I met and interviewed in Tumbleweed, makes a similar point. When I asked her how she could tell compassion was important to an organization, the 20-year-old who became homeless after moving to California and failing to get a job, said that she knew because of continued presence.

They keep showing up don't they darn it! They come here, they work here. If they keep showing up, they care. And that's what counts to me. Seriously. If they keep showing up. They could quit, they don't have to do this stuff for us. They're just good people.

A close read of Amber's interpretation of presence also reveals the responding/(re)acting subcomponent, as she mentions "doing stuff for us." However, the actual service provided takes a secondary role to the mere act of ongoing presence. The choice to show up, apparently, bears semiotic weight.

Elliot, Harry, and Amber each argue that choosing to be present is indicative of a genuine compassionate way of being. They can, of course, be wrong. A paid staff member could simply be very good at emotional labor and actually care relatively little about any particular client he or she served. However, it is useful in crafting theory and practice to be reminded that the co-occupation of space and time is seen as a significant indicator of compassion. This relates to Conquergood's (1991) conceptualization of coeval. He attests to the transformative power sharing space can have on the way people think about the world, because the body and knowing are closely related. Simply sharing space with another has profound power. Elliot describes sharing time and space with the staff of his rehabilitation organization.

We talk about whatever. We crack jokes. We smile. We laugh. We enjoy each other's company. Like even Big Jake, he was an asshole. But every day I would still go out and smoke a cigarette with him. Sit on the porch. See how he was doing. Show him that I was there. That I wanted to be there.

Despite prior conflicts, despite liking, and perhaps even despite respect, sharing time and space, in this case while smoking, communicates a basic willingness to be part of the other's life.

This relationship between compassion and presence runs through the youth's reflections. The connection holds up to logical consideration, too. How can someone notice the suffering of someone they cannot see? How can a person relate to someone they are not with? And finally, how does one act to address a need held by a person who is nowhere to be found? One cannot recognize, respond, or react without some form of presence. Presence, it seems, is a necessary condition for other functions of compassion to move forward.

Necessary, but Not Sufficient

Presence is needed for compassionate communication. But is presence alone enough to constitute compassion? Can a person demonstrate compassion by being there without engaging in the perceptual, connective, or active aspects highlighted by Miller, Way, and Tracy? Interrogating a few reflections on negative interactions provides some clarity. CJ, a 23-year-old I met through SUFK, describes the terrible workers from one particular nonprofit.

Tim: What makes a worker terrible?

CJ: Not being involved with the youth. I mean, [members of that organization] would just be there and honestly just be there. They were there because they had to be. Sometimes they had attitudes. But [staff in other organizations] they actually like sat down and talked with the youth. And made things better for them, you know?

In this case, the workers are certainly present. They are there, but they lack some interactive component that indicates care. They do not seem to engage in connecting or responding behaviors articulated by Miller (2007). In another part of the interview, CJ talks about how the staff stares at their computers, which suggests that they fail to notice as well. In CJ's account the staff do not notice, connect, or respond, so it stands to reason that CJ sees them as not being compassionate. With regard to the question of sufficiency, mere presence is not enough to constitute compassion.

This reality is reflected by other youth, as well. David, a 21-year-old I met on Mill who had spent only about a month homeless before landing a job at a mechanic shop, is more specific about what an uncaring attitude looks like.

Tim: How can you tell that someone cares?

David: By the way they act. You've got someone whose like [in a grunting voice]

“Yeh, yeh. Here you go, here you go.” Its either just repetition, or just they're there for the paycheck.

Tim: If they behave repetitively, that's a sign?

David: They're just there to be there. But then there are the people who've got a smile on their face and remember everyone's names even though they don't have to. I've had people remember me that hadn't seen me in years.

In this case, the nonverbal repetitiveness indicates a lack of care. Note the phrase, “They’re just there to be there.” This suggests that presence alone does not indicate compassion. For David, compassion can be communicated by a smile (a positive nonverbal) or remembering names (proactive engagement). It is clear that presence serves as a necessary but not sufficient condition for compassionate communication in the eyes of homeless young adults. These reflections by the youth about merely being there raise a very important question: what turns “being there” into compassionate presence?

A Critical Juxtaposition – Human Service Agencies and Disney World

I was aided in answering the above question by an accidental analytic moment in Disney World. As argued in chapter four, my method of analysis is not only text-based coding, but also involves iterative movement between the activities of pragmatic fieldwork. In this case, I found myself presenting on issues facing homeless youth at the National Communication Association Annual Conference, which that year was held on the Disney World resort. Presenting on issues facing the disenfranchised in a place so focused on attending to the needs of the overenfranchised brought questions of organizational dynamics into sharp relief. I was also in the midst of data analysis.

I was sitting in The Fountain Restaurant at the Dolphin hotel in Disney World. I felt trapped. Just one week prior, I had been part of a street retreat, a community building event that involved volunteers and homeless young adults teaching each other and living in community on the streets. I love those retreats, mostly because they blur the distinctions between volunteers and youth and between leaders and members. For a few short days, it doesn’t matter that some have and some don’t. We just live.

That weekend was the first time that we were told to leave one of our sleeping spots by the cops. The cops were actually quite nice to us. It was only at the insistence of the security guard that the cops ousted us. He was less kind, although not outright cruel either. I suspect if we had been alone or without the protected status of being part of a nonprofit organization, the interaction would have been more negative. But we had to move. Under threat of rain, we left the shelter of the bridge and walked to our back-up location, the alley by SUFK's youth house. Luckily there was no one else staying there, because we try to never displace anyone. Because we were in a less well-lit place, one of the recently ex-homeless young adults changed his plans and stayed with us (even though he had an apartment nearby) just so that he could look after us.

Frankly, it wasn't that bad. But it harkened me back to my own stints with homelessness. The intimidation of police officers became an ever present fear. Being surrounded. Treated with contempt. Bullied. Interrogated. Forced to stare into headlights so I would be night blind and couldn't resist. Even when I wasn't breaking the law by sleeping in public places, I became paranoid of the gaze of cops. My own brushes with the law were tame compared to the beatings I have heard about. Youth get awoken in their sleep by physical assaults by police and suffer constant diaspora. It all culminates in a violence of space, a denial of the basic ability to be a person in a place.

On the Disney World property, 10 miles from anything not owned and operated by Disney, the complete lack of homeless people bothered me. The social processes that make a place empty of homeless people are violent ones. So the whole resort had a lingering, latent violence that I could not shake. It was in the bushes, off poorly lit walkways. It was patrolling the roads, in security cameras, and in the watchful eyes of

every worker. It was the happiest place on earth. For those who can pay. And so I felt the stranger. I felt apart from my community, like a hand cut off from its body.

Even buying food made me uncomfortable, because the food was exorbitantly expensive. I had brought some of my own, mostly granola bars and ramen I made in the coffee maker. I had purchased some cheese bread for dinner the night before. In part, I am a very frugal person. But I was also aware of how much better spent my money would have been on outreach food. So on Saturday night, I briefly considered trying to get by on ramen for another night, but gave up. I needed real food.

And so it is that I found myself sitting at the Fountain Restaurant in the Dolphin hotel at Disney World. After a day of being on and being social, I sat and drank in the moment of introversion almost as thirstily as I consumed the cold water I drank while I waited for my veggie burger. As I waited, I brainstormed a few ideas on a scrap sheet of paper, comparing the dialectics of collaboration Marshall Scott Poole had just presented to the dialectics of homeless youth-serving organizations.

As I wrote, a woman walked up to my right. I was a party of one, so I sat at the bar. She stood at the bar, leaned slightly forward, her hair hanging long and straight. The waiter walked over quickly and took her to-go order. He asked what she needed and made unbroken eye contact while she articulated her order. He nodded and affirmed each of her requests. He had a small smile on his face, not a grin, but enough positivity to give the overall interaction a care-filled feeling. When she finished ordering, he asked her if she needed something to drink while she waited. Water. He rushed off to place her order with the cooks and acquire her food. It was a perfectly ordinary interaction.

Except to me. In that place of violence, I almost expected its workers to be jaded denizens of capitalism. But he wasn't. He was the perfect visage of hospitality. Of service. Even of compassion.

And then it hit me. His manner. His voice. His eye contact. His responses. The way he turned his body. Each and every part of his communication was exactly what the homeless youth in my interviews hint at when they identify a compassionate staff in an organization. Inversely, he lacked all those traits they identify as jaded or uncaring. I scribbled down some notes, trying to capture the manner of his communication. I started by listing individual parts. How he turned his body. The readiness of his pen. The focus of his listening. The follow-up questions. The smile. But as I moved through the particulars, I realized that more broadly, it was in his initiative and proactivity that he demonstrated his care. His unquestioning assertion that he was going to attend to her needs.

And so I wrote on my scrap of paper: "To what extent does proactivity constitute social justice communication?" Waiters come to us, look us in the eye, and ask us what we need. It is totally normal to us with money. So long as they will eventually get our money, we are used to walking into places and being treated quite well. Waiters feed people. Waiters rush about. They carry our food. They burn their calories so we can consume ours. They make their bodies about our bodies, for a time.

Now, of course, we pay them for it. Perhaps it is because of the direct tipping process that waiters develop such interpersonal immediacy. There is no intermediary. The directness of the market exchange may prompt the directness of the interaction. But even with that caveat, what can this waiter at Disney World teach us about serving homeless

people? Can embodying proactive aboutness demonstrate transformative compassion and ameliorate isolation and insult? Is there a “readiness” that can be found alongside recognizing, responding, and reacting that moves a communication enterprise from merely polite or perfunctory to truly compassionate? Turning toward the other enables recognition, but even prior to recognition of need, it involves reception and openness to the other. And proactive reception involves anticipation that precedes interaction and says “I’ve been waiting for you.”

For an isolated, invisible people, the realization that someone is waiting for them, thinking about them, and keeping them in their thoughts may very well extend their existence. Perhaps in the same way that law enforcement intimidation can seep into and permeate a person’s imagined social world, such that even in their absence there is presence, so too may compassion fill our lives with love. And so it was that I came to more fully understand that presence in its fullest sense is not only about a there-ness of a body, but also an aboutness of a body. Proactive, immediate communication conveys compassion. Compassion can be understood as a form of radical hospitality, which Ahn (2010) defines as the act of forgiving the invisible debt created when one is hospitable to another. Radical hospitality is marked by its excessiveness, or madness, in the service of the other.

Immediacy – Initiating and Welcoming Presence

Immediacy is a well-studied interpersonal phenomenon. It is comprised by readiness, attentiveness, and a focus on the present interaction. Anderson, Anderson, and Jenson (1979) define immediacy as communicative behaviors that: signal availability/attentiveness, increase overall sensory stimulation, and reduce psychological

distance (p. 153). Despite it being a well-established interpersonal variable, apart from a brief mention of immediacy in a patient-clinician piece on compassionate silence (Back, Bauer-Wu, Rushton, & Halifax, 2009), I can find no scholarly articulation of the connection between immediacy and compassion. However, the young adults I interviewed were quick to see the connection.

Danny, a 21-year-old who had been left in Phoenix when his family moved away and became homeless when he lost his job, expressed the value of initiating presence. “Compassion to homeless youth is the organization simply driving out during the day or evening looking for them at places that they preferably shouldn’t be, such as CASS shelter or even just anywhere in that parking lot.” [“That parking lot” is a reference to an overflow shelter in The Zone in Phoenix, where half the clients are “housed” in a parking lot.] He conceptualizes compassion as going out and initiating presence. Later in the interview, he explains further:

Most of the time, all over some blocks on the east and west side of Central, there are pamphlets nailed and stapled onto telephone poles making offers and requests for people who are 25 or younger and homeless. Instead of them constantly doing that, [compassion is] more shown when they actually drive out to the locations that are more popular with the homeless youth.

Danny goes on to say that by going out, by initiating presence, it saves various embarrassments about asking for services. What he is describing is proactive initiation of presence.

A corollary to going out to initiating presence is being welcoming, which involves openness to someone coming in. When asked what makes a good organization, Amber

said, “Very welcoming. If they can be welcoming, that’s the bomb diggidy.” Going out to find someone and being welcoming when they come in are both forms of organizational immediacy. Immediacy can be thought of as energetic attention to the other. Immediacy is the positive remedy to disengaged, repetitive, and distant communication styles that the youth find so unappealing. Immediacy is in part a function of organizational practices, namely providing outreach or having inviting intake procedures. It is also a function of nonverbal activity.

The nonverbal behavior youth identify as immediate involves turning toward the other, with one’s eyes, face, and body. Recall Jacob’s recollection of his compassionate interaction eight years prior. He said, “[the staff] ended up looking at my face and was like ‘Is something wrong?’” An example of this is manifest in the various complaints about staff on computers. CJ complains about an organization that runs a youth center by saying, “And they just open it and that’s it. They just open it.” When pressed as to what they do that is so frustrating, he says that they just sit and look at the computer. He admits that he does not know what they are doing on the computer, but doubts it is important institutional tasks. Throughout my fieldnotes when observing staff behavior, I noticed that physically turning toward the client enhanced the quality of the interaction. On one level, this is not at all surprising. Most human sensory organs face forward. Hands work better in front of the body. But homeless young adults, who are the subject of various forms of scorn from the general public, help highlight the fundamental reality that we can communicate compassion by turning toward the other.

Acts of Service

In addition to immediacy by turning toward, there seems to be a second way to be present in a full sense. This includes physical acts of service. Compassionate presence can manifest when, for a period of time, the body of one person lives and moves for the sake of the other. Consider the Disney server, or better yet, recall being waited upon by a hardworking server, or what it feels like to visit a home with an excellent host. By doing things for other people, a person can become fully present. Even though a busy host may not be interpersonally attentive, the young adults who see these efforts describe them as compassionate.

When I asked CJ how he could tell that someone thinks compassion is important, he said, “The volunteers stand in a 100-degree kitchen and cook bacon, pancakes, and eggs for two hours. And then maybe another hour later they go back into that same 100-degree kitchen and make lunch. If that’s not compassion then what is?” Amber provided a related food narrative when I asked her about displays of compassion.

Great food! Her cooking is amazing. You have to put a lot into that cooking honestly. You know what I’m saying? You know how cooking is. You put work into it, and it always tastes really really good here. She’s wonderful when it comes to food, my goodness... Oh my gosh, they had like rotisserie chickens... The love they put into the food they put into our tummies, and then we feel loved because of it. So that’s good.

Providing hungry young adults with food is not a new phenomenon. But notice how Amber highlights the work and love put in. Through the labor of cooking, the staff member makes her body about others. She exerts her calories so the youth can consume

theirs. This aboutness is not lost on the young adults I interviewed.

Inversely, lack of service gets read negatively. In this case, James, a 19-year-old who I met once at SUFK and interviewed later in the Phoenix library, recalls an interaction between another client and a staff member:

Somebody came up to her and was asking her to do something and she was cooking and the phone rang at the same time. So she had to do something in the pot in the oven and someone was trying to ask her, trying to get clothes out of the closet. And so she wanted to go get the phone and then kid was like, she could see it in her face, her emotion. But he wanted to get something out of the clothes, and he kept asking her and asking her. I didn't say something, but no no I did, I said something. But, she was like, well could you hold on? And then, "Can I get the phone real quick," she asked nicely. She got the phone anyway. And then he was like ahhh, he had this attitude like ahhh. She was obviously not, she had to take care of something. She's been doing a lot and stuff... I could see from the look on her face... but he didn't understand that.

The volunteer was not attending to the needs of the youth because of a variety of other distractions. James, the youth I was interviewing, thought she had sufficient reason to be distracted. But he recognized that the other youth, the one being put off, was not aware of her work load. The offended youth read her lack of service as offensive.

Organizational practices that demand the staff's time and attention could negatively impact the young adults' subjective evaluation of staff attentiveness and compassion. In summary, presence becomes rich in two cases – immediacy and acts of service. At first, I thought these were simply two options. However, upon further

analysis, they seem to be two forms of a single phenomenon, one I call embodied aboutness.

Embodied Aboutness

Although nonverbal immediacy and physical acts of service are distinct behaviors, I believe they are two forms of embodied aboutness. Embodied aboutness involves making one's body *about* the other. In the case of service, this involves performing tasks for the sake of the other. While in the act of service, a person's body is about the other. In the case of immediacy, this involves turning toward the other. Immediacy involves a nonverbal, representational aboutness. "About," as a preposition, means "on the subject of." Turning toward the other is a way of making one's body attend to the subject of the other.

Seeing immediacy and service as two forms of embodied aboutness is more than just an idle categorization. While nonverbal behaviors and doing for others are two ways to be present in the full sense, noticing the commonality between the two activities helps address the question of why these behaviors are read as compassionate presence. While willingness to co-occupy space could stem from various motivations, being willing to make one's body about the other powerfully indicates concern. Presence, when imbued with embodied aboutness, involves sharing our most precious resource – our selves. Or, as Peters (1999) puts it, "Touch and time, the two nonreproducible things we can share, are our only guarantees of sincerity."

Presence, both in its basic sense of physically being there, but also in its full sense of having immediacy or physically serving, is an important aspect of compassionate communication. The young adults also make it clear that while it is necessary, it is not

sufficient for compassion to be demonstrated. Existing models of compassion demonstrate further subcomponents needed to make a compassionate exchange. Below, I will outline how presence extends existing models of compassion.

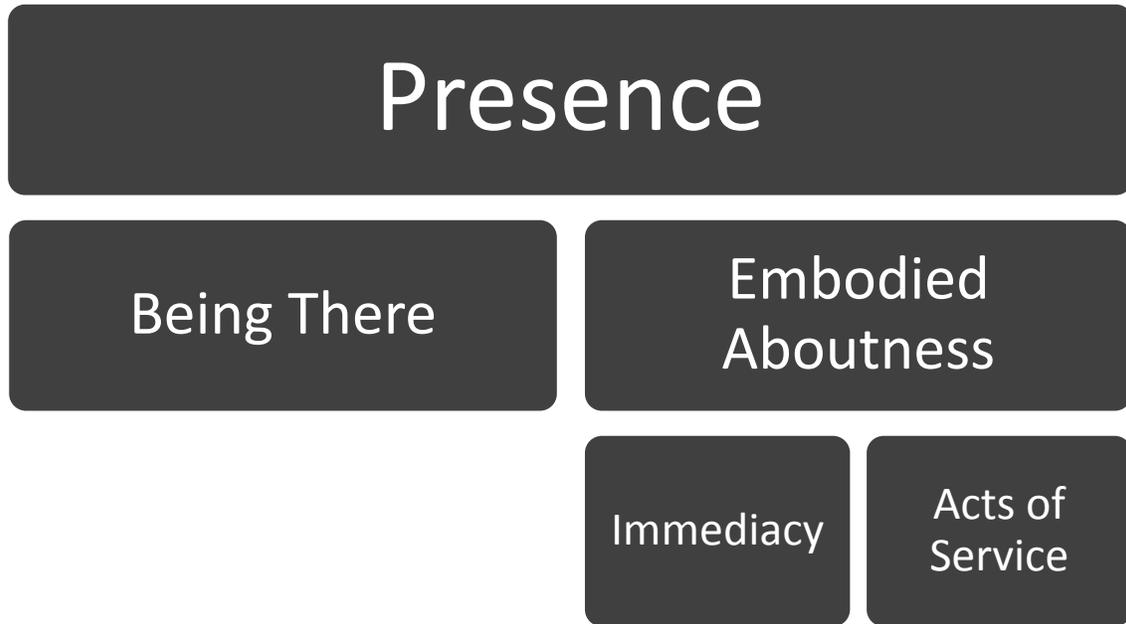


Figure 5.1. Compassionate Presence

Extending Compassion Models

The two prevalent models of compassion in communication are Miller’s (2007) and Way and Tracy’s (2012). I argue that each of these models is improved by integrating presence. In review, Miller’s (2007) model includes noticing, connecting, and responding. The compassionate communicator moves through these three steps sequentially. In this model, presence becomes “Step 0,” a necessary but insufficient precondition for the following steps to occur. It is also the case that presence manifests in the other processes. Physical presence enables noticing, while connecting requires

immediacy, and responding involves embodied aboutness.

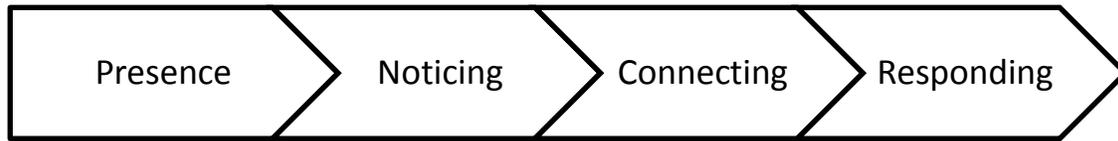


Figure 5.2. Extending Miller's Model

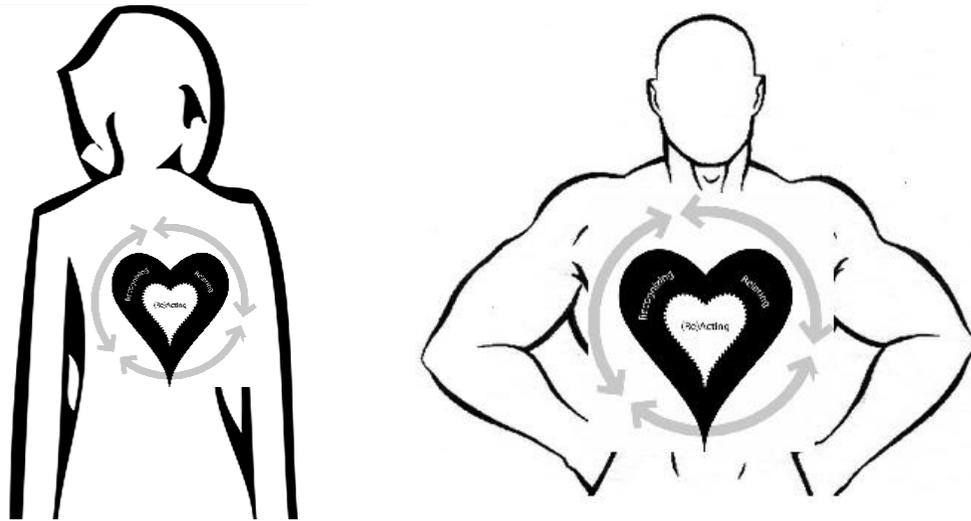
The other major model comes from Way and Tracy (2012). They argue that the subprocesses are better conceptualized, and more easily remembered, as recognizing, relating, and (re)acting. Unlike Miller, Way and Tracy see these subprocesses as nonlinear, dynamic, and interrelated. They also make the case that (re)acting is the heart of compassion, because it can be done even in the absence of the other two. In this model, presence takes the dual role of both context and outcome. Eschewing a strict order means



Figure 5.3. The Compassionate Heart, from Way and Tracy, 2012

that instead of being Step 0, presence serves as the context in which the other processes operate. Additionally, when paired with (re)action, presence becomes an outcome of compassion. Compassion enables, drives, and motivates the person to become bodily present, maintain immediacy, and make their body about the other.

Way and Tracy (2012) visualize compassion as a heart with (re)acting as the center and recognizing and relating as dynamically interrelated. Incorporating presence serves as a reminder that hearts abide in and empower bodies. To extend the metaphor, presence is the chest cavity, protecting and moved by the compassionate heart.



Or if one prefers:

Figure 5.4. The Embodied Heart

On Presence and Compassion

Homeless young adults are well positioned to see presence in communication interactions. I believe that presence is an element to all organizational compassion, but that the lived experience of homeless young adults speaks on the subject in particularly salient ways because of the various communicative dynamics and inequities they

encounter. Lilius et al. (2011) argue that high quality connections are an important aspect of organizational compassion. Presence, in its full sense with nonverbal immediacy or acts of service, helps provide a theoretical and practical picture of what high quality connections look like.

In chapter seven on compassionate dynamics in organizations, I will discuss how these findings change the way we think about organizing. The reflections of the youth highlight the ways corporeality matters. Young adults often report acts of service that are powerful and compassionate, not particularly because of their symbolic nature, but because of their material or embodied value. Being fed, clothed, and allowed to occupy a space safely all strongly figure and can even trump more conventional forms of social communication of compassion. This echoes recent arguments regarding sociomateriality. Resuscitating humanness may have as much to do with calories, sensory comfort, and reducing stress through security as it does with symbolic worlds. Chapter nine (implications) will outline how to build presence into organizational practices.

Chapter 6

RUPTURES IN COMPASSION

In chapter five, I articulate how presence plays a significant role in compassionate communication in organizations. Presence involves being in a place, but requires some form of embodied aboutness in order to be read as compassionate. I now turn to failures of compassion. While homeless young adults experience compassion in organizations, they also experience profoundly negative, noncompassionate interactions as well. While the youth reflections on compassion reinforce processes of presence, recognizing, relating, and (re)acting, their negative experiences show ways that these subprocesses can sometimes fail to be compassionate.

Miller (2007) and Way and Tracy's (2012) models lay out noticing, connecting, and responding as important components of compassion. But they do not clearly articulate the ways these subprocesses can fail to be compassionate even when performed. I found that not all presence, noticing, connecting, and response on the part of the service provider result in compassionate interactions with the young adults. Of course, compassion can fail to happen when one of these four processes fail to happen. However, more compelling is when the processes happen but go astray. I conceptualize compassion as ruptured when one or more of the potentially compassionate subprocesses are interpreted as an uncompassionate act.

Ruptures in Presence – Being Present in a Noncompassionate Way

Although failure to be present denotes a lack of compassion to the young adults I spoke with, being present does not guarantee compassion. Some examples of this dynamic can be found in chapter five. However, even presence plus embodied aboutness

can be uncompassionate. Perhaps the most apparent example of a rupture in compassionate presence was the exchange between Robbie and two police officers as recounted in chapter one. In review, Robbie, a 20-year-old youth I know from SUFK, had confided in me that he was depressed and hallucinating and had finally decided to call Reach Out, a mental health emergency organization. The call to Reach Out did not go very well – Robbie had discussed the ways he would kill himself and the Reach Out worker had responded in a way Robbie thought was insincere.

In response to Robbie’s self-threat, Reach Out called the police. Despite the best efforts of the police officers to be reasonable and even kind, Robbie took their presence as an act of aggression. They confiscated his knife and tried to calmly explain they were there to help him. Robbie’s basic response was, “Fuck you.” On the face of it, Robbie seemed to be overreacting, but there are two things to keep in mind. First, he was in the throes of relational turmoil, health problems, and mental illness. Second, but perhaps more important, is the highly negative relationship homeless youth and young adults often have with officers of the law. Cops wake them up in the middle of the night to tell them to leave. Cops are interpolated as the embodiment of social violence against the poor. In this particular case, the police were, at least to my eyes, being rational. They were of course armed and armored, protected from harm and poised to do harm, which may figure into Robbie’s overall attitude. A minute later, the foundation of his apparent overreaction started unfolding. He asked the police if he had called to ask for their help. He hadn’t. “If it’s all the same, I’d like to leave so I can hunt around for a place to sleep where you and your buddies can’t find me and stomp on my head while I’m sleeping.”

Their response was simply, “I don’t think you leaving is gonna happen. We are going to take you to a place that gives you treatment. We’d just rather you came voluntarily.”

The police officers were offering assistance. But despite the spoken desire to help, Robbie did not take their presence as a compassionate force. Part of his impression, when I asked him later, was because they were not asked, not called. When he started talking about finding a place where the cops’ buddies can’t find him to stomp on his head, another nuance becomes clear. For Robbie, the cops were guilty by association. Their presence was symbolically and materially tied to prior violent interactions, and he had no patience for what he read as inauthentic demonstration of concern. Now, the police officers were physically present. And they had high immediacy, in that they were focused on Robbie in the moment. They were even turned toward and ready to make their lives about Robbie. But even with all those components, which really is presence in the fullest sense, the police’s presence was interpreted as an aggressive form of surveillance and discipline from Robbie’s perspective.

Another example of ruptured presence happened while my wife and I were counseling a youth through a difficult time. Although Paul, a 24-year-old, had confided in me about various sufferings, he asked me to leave the room at one point to talk to my wife alone. He told her, and has told me since, that he had been molested by his step father as a child and that at times, men make him very uncomfortable. In this case, the presence of certain bodies can conjure past pain, even if the people know and like each other. Both the police officers and I both ruptured the sense of compassionate presence because of our bodies. Presence can be a threat and potential harm.

Therefore, one should not uncritically assume that presence will always communicate care. Even presence in its fullest sense can be a source of suffering and rupture compassionate communication. From the unwelcome, imposing presence of unbidden law enforcement to the unsettling presence that reembodies past trauma, bodies can harm even as they seek to heal.

Ruptures in Recognition – Noticing Needs Others Do Not Think They Have

When I asked Heather, a 20-year-old young woman I met through SUFK, how organizations could better demonstrate compassion, she said that compassion requires more than just care. She said, “Hey, you’ve got to work with them on where their level is – whether they actually want to go indoors or if they actually want to live on the streets.” Heather went on to say that trying to compassionately give someone a home if he or she does not want one is not compassionate. Heather’s reflection highlights the reality that needs, or at least some needs, are not objective facts and that “noticing” certain needs says more about the world of the noticer than it does the desires of the “needy.” In this way, noticing can be an oppressive, projective, and interpellative process of dragging the other into a social world. As Fraser (1989) articulates, talk about needs is a political business and identifying a need is an interpellative act. Many political arguments hinge on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a need.

Along a similar vein, consider the following exchange about the role of God in the drug recovery process.

Elliot: Jorge once told me that there was no way I was going to survive if I didn’t have God in my life. I am a hardcore atheist. Like I am not opposed to the idea of God

and people who are religious, but I don't believe in God. I always wished I had the ability to believe in God, but I have never quite gotten my way into it.

Tim: So when he laid that out...

Elliot: I was like what are doing here, you are wasting your time. And I was like, well fuck. Thanks for that.

Tim: He said that? If you don't believe in God you are wasting your time because your life is fucked?

Elliot: Yeah. I was like, you're really going to tell me that, really? I have been in here for five days. Like, it was my first interaction with Jorge. After that we kind of got to know each other, and we let that one go by... But you can see how that would be unhelpful.

Tim: Demotivating.

Elliot: Yeah, like why am I even here? I should go do more bath salts.

Elliot, an atheist, was perturbed when a staff member looked at his life and identified a need for a divine entity Elliot could not bring himself to think is real. Jorge noticing this "need" frustrated Elliot greatly. Projecting needs into the lives of others has a long history. The colonial mindset is often implicated for foisting its needs on others when it sees other cultures as suffering miserably for not being just like the colonialist (Loomba, 2005). In the communication of compassion, the need identified by the compassion "giver" is actually an interpretive assault if the "receiver" sees it differently.

Ruptures in Relating – Noncompassionate Relating as Interpreted by Homeless Young Adults

Relating to the life of the other does not guarantee compassionate interaction. Relating involves connecting with the other on an emotional level. However, there is not a single static other with which to relate, or a single, static self to connect to (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Often, relating is conceptualized as sensing a legitimate emotional reality in the life of the other and connecting that to some similar emotional reality within the self. However, seeing darkness in the other and connecting to that to darkness in the self is relating, too. Consider the following exchange between a police officer and two volunteers.

Volunteers Jenna and Howard had gone up to the officers to ask them about one particular youth at the shelter. We had served all the youth, so I walked over to gather Jenna and Howard to gather them so we could go to the next outreach spot. As I walked up, I heard one of the police officers speaking. He was a tall man, with a red complexion and closely shaved blond hair. Before I could even hear what he was saying I could see his eyes were narrowed, he had aggressive lean to his posture, and he spoke loudly. He seemed mad about the subject of conversation, or perhaps anger was his default way of being in the world. Either way, I was a little scared by his manner.

“... he probably sold his food stamps for drugs and is waiting for you guys to bring him snacks so he doesn’t starve.”

“You don’t know that,” Jenna said.

As we walk back to the outreach van, Jenna vents with her brow furrowed and her voice heated.

“God! Cops are such assholes. Even when you aren’t getting in trouble with them. I just went up to ask when it was the latest I could bring food by, and the guy was like, ‘You are gonna come back here and give them food yourself? They eat six meals a day. They don’t need your help.’ I told him, ‘I feel sorry for these people.’ His younger partner seemed to soften up a little, but then that guy just started going off.”

Some may argue that the police officer is not relating to the homeless young man about whom he was asked and that while he has noticed the hunger of the young man, he does not connect to it. However, notice the contested nature of the connection. Both Jenna and the police officer have seen a need, hunger, and have had an emotional reaction to it. More to the point, notice how the officer articulates what he believes the young man is thinking. This is no less empathic than the sorrow Jenna feels. Jenna feels sympathy, and is likely connecting the youth’s needs to her own experience of legitimate suffering. The police officer, however, is likely connecting the irresponsible activity and therefore illegitimate suffering of the homeless young man to the cop’s own experience with darkness, either in himself or things he has seen in his work. Of course, having not interviewed either, I can only speculate about their experience. But they both speak as though they are connecting with the inner life of the young man.

Regardless, just because Jenna’s connection is positive does not make it more “relating” than the police officer’s derogation. In fact, the police officer could be entirely correct. The young man could have actually had the following train of thought earlier in

the day, “Gosh, I’m hungry. Maybe I should buy food. Nah, I’ll spend it on drugs, because someone will come by tonight and give me food.” The truth is that our emotional connections to others are not perfect mirrors of the other’s internal world. Relating is an interpretive event, and even when based on real communicative cues, can have a wide range of outcomes. With this in mind, relating is not automatically compassionate. Relating that connects with the dark side of the other usually delegitimizes the perceived need. For the police officer, if someone is hungry because he or she squandered his or her money on drugs, then their hunger is an outcome of a blameworthy personal trait. Later in the van, Jenna and Howard discuss why they help people, even in the face of the possibility they do not deserve it.

“Yeah,” said Howard, “Maybe that guy was on drugs, and maybe another guy. But if I give out 10 bags of food, chances are I’m helping some people who need and deserve the help.”

“It’s not our job to judge,” says Jenna, “It’s our job to help people. Maybe some are on drugs and putting themselves in the situation they are in, but it’s not our job to decide who is worthy.”

Neither Howard nor Jenna ultimately disagreed with police officer’s assessment of that particular homeless young man. Rather, they deny the position of evaluator and highlight the action of helping over an assessment of character. Ultimately, they both make the point that they are willing to help some who do not deserve it in order to help

those who do. In the end, neither are willing to make type one ethical errors. They would rather serve the wrong person than fail to serve the right person.

From a pragmatic perspective, the volunteers and police officer's variance in relating is telling. The role of the volunteers is to provide food and services while the officer's role is to enforce the law. The pragmatic perspective renders the differing emotional and communicative connection as differing philosophies of action. Handing out food weekly is enabled by ideologies and emotional landscapes that limit judgment and err on the side of inclusion. Arresting homeless young adults, waking them from their slumber to move them on, and preventing them from committing crimes are all made more doable with an ideology and emotional landscape that internally attributes blame.

These two very different philosophies enable two very different sets of action. I suspect that the philosophy is both a result of selection, as well as propagation. As for selection, volunteers who feel taken advantage of when helping someone undeserving are likely to leave, and police officers plagued with guilt about arresting someone undeserving have a much harder job. As for propagation of compassion, I have seen members of StandUp For Kids share among themselves fragments of a philosophy of unconditional care. I certainly try to do my part to propagate compassion through training and when I interact with the staff. Segments of care-driven ideology move through the organization. While I know far less about the organizing structures of police officers, I suspect they have similar propagation of sensemaking tools. But whatever the pragmatic role the police officer's interpretation may play, his connection does not lead to responding to the youth's needs, which is a key part of compassion.

Another instance of ruptured relating/connection developed in the midst of a fight at the youth house. A fight between several youth drew the attention of some of the volunteers, who stepped in to mediate it. During this process, one young man – who was otherwise not involved – got angry when someone yelling at his girlfriend and started screaming over everyone. Kelly, a senior volunteer, decided to ask the screaming young man not come back. Afterward, I spoke with Kelly, and she told me that she did not feel safe opening the house as the lead if he was going to be around.

I felt like I “connected” with the young man. I saw his rage as a form of defensiveness of his girlfriend, and I suffered with him. How frustrating must it be to have people accuse and disrespect my partner? Now, my connection was a nonsymmetrical emotional response, not a mirroring one. If I were to get angry at his anger, that would have been a mirroring emotion. I connect to his anger by feeling concern and virtual frustration.

Some may argue that the Kelly failed to connect with the youth. However, she too was connecting with the young man’s rage-filled behavior, although she saw it as an act of dangerous aggression, and suffers *from* him. He could harm her, the other youth, or the volunteers at the house. Like my own connection, Kelly’s was not symmetrical. His anger did not elicit an angry response. Rather, she had a nonsymmetrical response. His anger triggered her fear and concern for herself and the other people at the house.

Because of the formal similarities, I see both Kelly’s and my own engagement as a form of connection. Just because we had nonsymmetrical emotional experiences when seeing the young man’s anger does not mean we were not connecting with him. Indeed, emotional contagion, the movement of one emotion to another, is not a more authentic

compassionate experience. A communicator need not, and in some situations, should not, seek to have the exact emotional state of the person for whom they have compassion.

Sometimes frustration should be met with calm, or despair met with support. As such, the sympathetic response to an angry person is a form of connection, and the fearful response to an intimidating person is connection as well.

Conceptualizing connection in this way helps articulate an important dimension of compassion. Connecting does not automatically create a compassionate response. The etymological root of compassion, “suffer *with*,” helps identify why connections vary in compassion. I suggest that it is the *prepositional* quality of the emotional response that is critical in determining how the response is interpreted. When Kelly suffered *from* the young man’s rage, she moved away from suffering *with* him. Of course, the gendered dynamics of relational violence may have influenced her position. However, Kelly “suffering from” being read as uncompassionate helps illuminate the nonessential nature of emotional connection. When a communicator connects to another, they share in the emotional life of the other. But not all connections lead to compassion.

Ruptures in (Re)acting – Noncompassionate Reacting

Perhaps most apparent, responding/(re)acting can go poorly. This takes two forms. In the first case, noncompassionate reacting can occur as a result or consequence of another rupture. In the second case, presence, recognizing, and relating go well, but the response/reaction is ineffective.

Other Ruptures Lead to Noncompassionate (Re)acting

Ruptures in presence, noticing, and connecting make compassionate (re)action less feasible. In part, the failure of the other three make an interaction less likely to be

interpreted by the receiver as compassion. Also, compassionate presence, noticing, and connecting each play a part in directing response in a compassionate way. Consider the following description given by Robbie about what happened after I dropped him off at the Community Connections. According to Robbie, he sat in a waiting room for 13 hours.

Tim: When did you finally get seen?

Robbie: So, you dropped me off there in the evening, right?

Tim: About 7 p.m.

Robbie: Ok, so, at 8 a.m. the next morning I get woken up by a woman. She asks me, “Did you just get here?” I’m like, “Are you serious?” I just look at her and say, “Are you serious?” Then she gets all snooty and says, “How can we *help* you?” [He mimics her, bobbing his head, speaking in an insincere, sing-songy voice, emphasizing the ‘help’].” So I say, “I’m not sure how you can help. I’m not sure what I’m doing here, and I’m starting to think you can’t help at all.” She says back, “Well, figure it out and let me know.”

Robbie clearly remembered the staff member’s reaction to his need as noncompassionate. He recalled a snooty response. However, close attention reveals that none of the other subprocesses are going well, either. The staff’s anemic service time indicates a rupture of presence. The fact that she did not recognize him indicates a rupture of noticing. And the fact that she did not see his frustration as legitimate suggests a rupture in connection.

Robbie’s experience with the police officers also illuminates ruptures of reacting. When Robbie says he doesn’t want their help and would rather leave, they responded by

saying, “You aren’t going to leave this room. We are going to take you to treatment. We’d rather you came voluntarily.” This interaction did not charm Robbie, as he attested later. Their help is both a threat and a paradox. The only choice the police are offering is this – will Robbie get roughed up before they take him to the hospital. However, the noncompassionate character of this response is rooted in the rupture of presence already discussed. The police officers’ presence is unrequested, and as such, their response lacks care.

Ineffective Response

Sometimes all other subprocesses go well, but a person’s reaction still fails to communicate compassion. This can be the result of touching on unknown sensitivities or because of past experiences of the receiver. For instance, on various occasions I have hugged a young adult going through troubled times. Usually this is seen as an effective communication of compassion. Periodically, however, my hugging reaction is an ineffective (re)action because the young adult is touch averse. What might have been an otherwise compassionate exchange becomes problematic. In addition to touch, some young adults are put off by tones of voice or styles of leadership that harkens back to past harm.

In one of the most heartbreaking interviews I performed, Derrick, a 20-year-old I met on outreach at CASS, reflected on how deep the resistance to compassionate communication can run. For Derrick, the trouble is not tied to a specific communication behavior, but rather of compassionate communication in general.

Tim: Can you give me an example of compassion displayed by a worker in a nonprofit

organization?

Derrick: In what?

Tim: Inside a nonprofit organization. Like CASS, or StandUp For Kids...

Derrick: A positive?

Tim: Compassionate.

Derrick: From CASS. No. [Laughs]

Tim: Any organization that has served you?

Derrick: No.

Tim: Ok. You never felt like a person that was there cared about you.

Derrick: No. I'm stubborn. So it takes a little bit for me to understand the entire person's way of working. And my body doesn't really care about compassion. It's self-centered. Doesn't really care what people think of it. So it pushes all positive outlook to it off.

Tim: So it's almost like a block in you?

Derrick: Yeah.

Tim: Do you think there are people who are trying to be compassionate and you just aren't taking it that way?

Derrick: Case managers, yes. I am trying to get better about it.

Tim: Do you think the case manager cares?

Derrick: Oh I know he does. Otherwise he wouldn't be trying to get me into programs.

Tim: But it's hard for you to take it as caring.

Derrick: Yeah.

Tim: So what can we do? How would I break through to you?

Derrick: I no idea. I haven't figured that one out yet.

Derrick's reflections highlight a sobering dynamic within compassionate communication. Regardless of the fact that he suspects his case manager cares about him, Derrick remains unable to feel cared about. Stubbornness is the reason he offers, plus his tendency to "push off" positive outlook. Having reviewed the various ruptures in the compassionate process, I now explain how awareness of prepositional character helps discriminate between compassionate and noncompassionate interactions.

Verb-Preposition Pairs: A Grammar of Compassion

Each element of compassion seems to have specific places where it can rupture. By looking across the ruptures of compassionate communication in organizations, I began to see that prepositional dynamics matter. For instance, the uninvited, aggressive presence of the police officers, which is "being embodied *against*," is decidedly not compassionate. Recall the offense taken when staff members see a need the homeless young adults do not think they have. This rupture can be understood as "recognizing *for*." When connecting with the suffering of the other, "suffering *from*" diminishes the compassionate quality of the interaction. Finally, "(re)acting *against*" gets read as noncompassionate.

Prepositional quality is not unique to compassionate communication. In fact, it would not be hard to argue that all communication has a prepositional quality. This is precisely why prepositions help reveal whether or not an interaction is compassionate. The prepositions most identified through the process of data analysis in this project include "with," "for," and "against." Interactions described by these prepositions were

then further coded using the four subprocesses of compassionate communication. Each was reread to determine if the young adult reported the interaction as positive or negative. This analysis yielded the following twelve cells, each representing a verb-preposition possibility.

Table 6.1			
Verb-Preposition Pairs Outlining Compassionate and Noncompassionate Interpretations			
	With	For	Against
Presence	Compassionate	Compassionate	Intimidation, past harm
Recognizing	Compassionate	Paternalism	Blame
Relating	Compassionate	-	Disdain
(Re)acting	Compassionate	Compassionate	Ineffective

“With” and “against” have clear positions. “For,” however, is problematic in some subprocesses and celebrated in others. These prepositional dynamics are particularly helpful for discerning right action in practice. Staff and volunteers can be trained to attend to the prepositional quality of their interactions and emotions and pay particular attention to “against,” and in some contexts “for.”

I also believe this grid helps provide a shorthand, textured account of how subprocesses can play out differently. It is no surprise that models of organizational compassion begin with an attention to verbs. Verbs are fairly apparent, particularly in communicative and social settings. However, the prepositional quality of those actions plays a characterizing role in how it is taken up.

Understanding the prepositional quality of presence, recognizing, relating, and (re)acting helps inform compassionate practice and extend how we theorize compassion in organizations. Most broadly, the dynamics of “for,” “with,” and “against” help highlight the way interpellation plays out in interactions with homeless young adults.

Said another way, interpellation helps explain why certain verb-preposition pairs are seen as particularly offensive.

Understanding the Prepositions Using Interpellation

Interpellation is the symbolic rendering of the other into a social world. This discursive construal against the will is conceptualized in critical scholarship. Interpellation involves hailing individuals into subjectivity embedded in ideology (Althusser, 1972, Hall, 1985). The individual is called to, and as he or she turns to respond, he or she comes to occupy a social subject place, often against their consent. While Heidegger (1927/1962) argues that we are all thrown into symbolic worlds, the interpellative process can throw people particularly violently into systems of domination. Through interactions, actors can call the homeless other into social worlds that marginalize them. Derrick recalled an unenchanted interaction he had with a staff at his shelter that reveals both a foisting of symbol and the effects.

Derrick: Adam was being a royal pain in the ass. He was basically nagging and bitching and screaming and moaning in order to get everyone who didn't belong in there out. And to everyone who had a problem with it, he said, why don't you go and get a life. Or "Why don't you go do something with your life." It was extremely freaking hot outside. Almost, what, to me it feels like 200 degrees. And it's just ridiculous. They treat people like crap.

Tim: Are there times when the interactions with staff – blue shirts – are particularly unhelpful or disabling?

Derrick: Adam's way of saying go do something with your life just threw me off course.

It made me feel like I'm a worthless piece of shit.

Tim: And I imagine that is not helpful for getting stuff done.

Derrick: No.

Tim: What's that like? So you leave that interaction – how long does that throw you off?

Derrick: It threw me off for like an hour. I went to the library and just blew off steam.

Tim: And did you get over it?

Derrick: Not really. I'm still going at it.

Tim: Still lingering? How long ago was this?

Derrick: About a week and a half ago.

The staff member, Adam, recapitulates any resistance to the organization's new policy as evidence that the person resisting is lazy and unmotivated. This places those resisting in the class of homeless persons that are most reviled: those who are homeless because they choose to do nothing to help themselves. Katz (1990) calls this stereotype "the undeserving poor." Not only is this a violence of symbol and identity, as Adam is using his power as an organizational agent to frame the worth and being of the other, but Adam's words are curiously and tragically self-fulfilling. Derrick's response to being told he is worthless is to "blow off steam" at the library, by which he means to use the computers for entertainment. Derrick is not applying for jobs to blow off steam, nor is he likely developing a résumé or looking for services. Adam's nagging is perhaps more powerful than he knows. Understanding the power of interpellative processes, I will now

show how interpellation helps identify which preposition-verb combinations are compassionate and which are not.

The Interpellative Power of “Against.”

In all cases, the preposition “against,” when paired with the subprocesses of compassion, caused ruptures. Each of these ruptures can be understood via interpellation. For instance, “presence against” makes a person feel threatened, accused, and criminalized. “Connecting against,” or connecting with the despicable parts of the other, delegitimizes need by internally attributing the conditions that lead to suffering. Said another way, the needs are pushed away making the individual homeless person personally responsible for being in the situation at all. Finally, “(re)acting against” forces the young adults to live in or relive painful subjectivities. In each case, being, seeing, feeling, or acting against draws the homeless other into an ideological structure that surrounds their physical conditions with an imagined world where they are failed subjects.

The Interpellative Power of “For.”

The preposition “for” is more complex. Presence and (re)acting “for” are both construed positively. However, “noticing for” is seen as negative. This is because when a communicator notices for another, they force them into having needs that the other may not agree they have. In particular with regard to interpellation, having an absent need noticed robs the other of setting their own agenda, living by their own criteria, or pursuing their own wellbeing. On the other hand, presence and (re)action “for” are often seen as compassionate because they do not violently construe the homeless other. If anything, compassionate presence and acting construe the provider as the servant of the

homeless other. If this calls the homeless individual into a subject position, it is a position of dignity/worth.

The Interpellative Power of “With.”

Presence with, noticing with, relating with, and (re)acting with are all framed positively, precisely because they do not aggressively construe the other. Rather, they engage in a process that involves invitation or joining. In order to perform with-ness, the communicator must welcome the other into the communicator’s own world, join the world of the other, or meet somewhere in the middle. While these relations are not 100% nonproblematic, nor are they categorically ethical acts, they have an ethical tilt, as they each evoke mutuality in some form. While Althusser (1972) may still argue that acting, connecting, noticing, and being with can subjectify, I argue that mutuality helps ameliorate some of the problems. Whatever onus is born by both. “With-ness,” it seems, becomes a powerful way to reconstitute communities where subjects have been interpellatively sundered through symbolic violence.

Looking at interpellation thusly requires a few shifts. First, it positions interpellation as an interactive event, which is to say that it occurs in the moment between people and is not the function of anonymous discourses. Ideology, in this view, need not be embodied by large social or political entities, but may be made real between people. It is also not a deterministic process that has an inherently problematic outcome. Rather, the outcome of the interpellative “call” relies on the prepositional quality of the interaction. Being called into mutual humanity with an interlocutor seems to avoid some of the critical concern. As a pragmatist, interpellation is valuable for its enabling/disabling factors. The self-fulfilling nature of Adam calling Derrick worthless is a powerful

reminder that how we conjure each other can have real outcomes. Inversely, the young adults' reflections on bodies and actions suggest another way pragmatism nuances interpellation, namely, that actions also interpellate. Interpellation is often framed as a discursive act, but people can be conjured/called into subject positions by communicative use of bodies as well.

Summary

Having presence, recognizing, relating, and (re)acting are not automatically and unproblematically compassionate. Various examples drawn from the experience of homeless young adults make clear that compassion can rupture. I have argued that prepositions become a useful way of identifying whether or not a particular subprocess will be read as noncompassionate. Ultimately, it is because of the process of interpellation, drawing an individual into a particular subject position within an ideology, that some verb-preposition combinations are derisive and others compassionate. In chapter nine (implications), I will discuss the ways these findings influence practice. In the following chapter, I turn to the task of conceptualizing compassion at the organizational level.

Chapter 7

DYNAMICS OF COMPASSION IN ORGANIZATIONS

In chapters five and six, I outline my own additions to models of compassionate communication within organizations. However, one of the most valuable promises of this project was the chance to broaden how we conceptualize compassion. In this chapter, I will show how prior models of compassion in organizations take the perspective of the compassionate individual and that by taking the perspective of the young adults a model of compassionate dynamics within organizations becomes feasible. I will then outline the analytic practices I used to create my derivatives of wellbeing model. Finally, I will relate the model to recent movements in communication scholarship concerning materiality and organizational constitution.

Modeling Dynamics of Compassion in Organizations

By taking the perspective of the homeless young adults, I was able to learn about dynamics of compassion not well conceptualized by prior models. The notice-connect-respond models all focus on the compassionate individual and the communicative processes they engage. In my interviews, I asked the young adults about one-on-one interactions, but also about their experiences in organizations more broadly. This built-in data focus led to rich accounts by the youth about dynamics of compassion that spanned multiple individuals. I then used the coding procedures of grounded theory to identify, collate, and structure concepts related to dynamics of compassion in organizations.

Open coding

I performed sentence by sentence coding on one third of my data and then culled those codes to produce a schema for coding the rest of the data. The guiding heuristic for

my open coding was, “What is happening here?” I identified various codes, some of which were emergent and some related to theoretical work drawn from other scholars.

Selective coding

Following open coding, I drew together various codes that related to compassion. Relation to compassion was identified in two ways: co-occurrence with the code “compassion” and conceptual relatedness to compassion. Co-occurrence was determined by use of NVivo. I had a big-bucket code “compassion,” into which I put all answers to compassion-related questions and other data that spontaneously discussed compassion. I then used NVivo to identify which other codes occurred simultaneously with the “compassion” code. There were a small handful of codes that did not regularly co-occur, but a close reading determined that they were conceptually related to compassion.

The initial phases of selective coding yielded the following codes related to compassion: “acts of service,” “actually,” “body,” “care,” “community,” “desire,” “helpful interaction,” “humor,” “immediacy,” “positive relationships,” “presence,” “support,” and “with.” The code “immediacy” was omitted because it better conceptualized individual compassion. “Humor” was omitted because it had no other conceptual partners. The remaining codes were arranged into concepts, yielding: care (from care and desire), healing/growth (from acts of service, support, and helpful interactions), shared humanness/community (from presence community, and with), and wellbeing (from body, actually, and positive relationships).

Axial coding

These four concepts, care, healing/growth, shared humanness/community, and wellbeing, were considered in relation to each other through close rereading of the data.

Although there are various ways of framing compassion, I chose wellbeing as the organizing concept for the others. This decision was made in part because of the young adults' repeated focus on basic aid when answering questions about compassion. After determining wellbeing as the center, the other concepts fell into place. Healing and growth are activities that increase wellbeing. Care drives people to increase the healing and growth of others. Finally, shared humanness and community increase care between people. When I recognized the similarities between these nested concepts and physics' derivatives of position over time, the model I will outline later in this chapter started to take shape. I should note that this model is still a work in progress, and I intend to collect more data to ground, nuance, and support.

Wellbeing, Growth, Care, and Shared Humanness

The dynamics of compassion in organizations involves the fluid change of wellbeing over time. Below I will lay out four dynamics of wellbeing, each derived from the prior dynamic. The four tiers include wellbeing, growth/healing, care, and shared humanness/community.

Wellbeing

The first tier of compassionate dynamics is wellbeing. Wellbeing is marked by human vitality and dignity. Youth report that simply having a place to be is compassionate. Oscar, a 20-year-old I met in Tumbleweed, describes the impact of homelessness on his wellbeing.

You get so worn out. I mean, sleeping on the street itself, having to hop a wall and pass out on someone's water cooler somewhere. It gets harder and harder because your body just becomes worn down over time, and you aren't wanting to go out

and find a job. You are wanting to find somewhere to go to sleep the whole day you know? Trying to find some money to go eat the whole day.

The youth discuss various parts of wellbeing by identifying having enough to eat, hydration, security, physical health, a safe place, needed items, good relationships, and respect/esteem. Wellbeing includes basic bodily conditions, like temperature. While justifying why he thinks an organization should have longer hours, Daniel, a 23-year-old, explains, “You’re getting kicked out of the AC right at the peak hours, which sends our nice cold bodies in shock and risks heat stroke.” Part of compassionate organizing is about offering sustained physical wellbeing for your clients.

Healing/Growth

The next level of compassionate organizing is growth/healing. Growth and healing are an increase in wellbeing over time. This can be in the form of an individual offering assistance or the material realities of an organization providing a resource. Healing is the increasing from illness to wellness, while growth is increasing from some form of wellness to even greater wellness. Amber, a 20-year-old, reflects, “Oh my gosh, they had rotisserie chickens... The love they put into the food they put into our tummies and then we feel loved because of it.” Amber reads the provision of food, which increases her wellbeing, as compassionate. Elliot, a 19-year-old, discusses interactions with his behavioral health technician in rehab.

He straightened me out really. We talked a lot. We decided that this wasn’t... I was already kind of done at this point. Like this wasn’t what I want anymore. He helped me realize that and like bring it to fruition. He helped me get all that Job Corps stuff set up, too.

Later Elliot calls the staff compassionate, but close attention to his reflection shows that the interaction involved mutual movement toward his wellbeing. As such, it is meaningful to identify the entire process as a compassionate one. Other youth identify growing and healing processes that include: developing professionally, learning, overcoming personal issues, deepening friendships, healing relational hurts, decreasing hunger, overcoming sickness, and healing from injury. All of these processes improve wellbeing. Harry, a 21-year-old, recounts the overall impact an organization has had on his personal and professional development.

When I first got involved with StandUp, I was in a dark place. Just a tough time in my life. I was homeless. I was stealing food to survive. I wasn't anywhere near getting off the street. Two years later, I have a job, I have a cell phone. I just signed a lease for a goddamn apartment. So I would definitely say that it created that vibe that's helped me push forward.

In summary, the second level of this model is healing/growth, which is the improvement of wellbeing over time.

Care

Care is the third level of compassionate dynamics, which is the increase of growth/healing over time. Care accelerates the processes of healing/growth and makes the overall gains happen faster. For instance, while professional growth is a form of growth, a training program in an organization accelerates the rate of that professional growth. While learning is a form of growth, tutoring accelerates the learning process. Similarly, medical care, counseling, and networking accelerate physical healing, personal growth, and professional development.

Jamie, a 19-year-old I met through Tumbleweed, describes the caring staff in her favorite nonprofit. “That look in their eyes like we’ll make sure you’re safe... That feels good. They want us to be safe. They want us to stay alive. They want us to stay out of trouble. I appreciate it.” In this description, care manifests in the classic fashion of emotional concern. However, she goes on to admire one particularly caring staff member for “snatching her up” and helping her get into a better program. The staff member’s insistence that Jamie get what she needs and expedient efforts to accomplish that demonstrates how processes of care accelerate healing and growth. The staff member was not satisfied that Jamie was getting help. He wanted it to happen faster. Or, as a 20-year-old man I met on Mill and interviewed at Tumbleweed, street named Ominous, articulates, “When there’s no compassion, nothing gets done.” In his experience, those who lack compassion become “lazy, complacent, and bored.” I argue that care increases processes of healing and growth. Ominous identifies the inverse. Not caring means a slowdown in healing and growth.

Shared Humanness/Community

Shared humanness/community is the fourth tier of compassionate dynamics, which is the increase in care over time. Shared humanness amplifies care, which makes care happen more immediately and more doggedly. Examples provided by the young adults include inspiration, connectedness, engaged referrals, and responsiveness to need. All of these are forms of shared humanness, and each augments care in a different way. Community reformulates both social and material boundaries, which leads to increased care. Community building activities reported by the youth include eating together, working together, developing friendships, and staff living homelessly for short periods of

time, all of which help overcome boundaries, develop deep connections, and share lives. Amber describes the positive feeling of mutuality. “They’re really good here. How they treat us is not like we’re homeless. It’s like we’re friends that just need help.” She goes on to explain why community is so important.

Feels like... hope is back. There’s like hope is not gone. And that you know we’re not alone in this world. It’s so... it’s so helpful to know you’re not alone. It really is. Because feeling alone is what makes us, you know, schitzo and post traumatic stress disorder. Bipolar like myself. We’ll get worse and worse and worse, and the more lonely the more hopeless we feel. And it really does make us feel like wow they’re a community. We have help. Like not all hope is gone, and that’s what we need. For sure.

For Amber, the feeling of community involves help, but more importantly creates a sense of a better future, that things can and will improve. Richard, a 22-year-old I have known for several years through SUFK, claims that the most compassionate experience he has had in an organization is when volunteers stayed out on the streets for a weekend. When I asked him why it was compassionate, he says “Cuz [the volunteers] get to experience what I do. Homelessness. For a weekend at least.” He describes the experience as transformative and says he came to know and care about the volunteers. He also feels like they know and care about him more, too. Justin, a 24-year-old I met on Mill Avenue, articulates how having a community helps.

Cuz being out there you’re alone. And coming to a place that’s here for you.

There’s other people that you can talk with. And people who are in the same boat

as you. You can relate with them. You can talk. You can feel for them and help each other out.

For Justin, having a place that lets people come together is the beginning of overcoming loneliness, but leads to mutual care. Community fosters care.

In summary, compassionate dynamics in organizations can be conceptualized as the interwoven processes that improve wellbeing over time. The foundation is wellbeing. The first derivative is healing/growth, which improves wellbeing. The second derivative is care, which increases healing/growth. Finally, the third derivative is shared humanness/community, which is the increase in care. I use the term “derivative” here in the calculus sense, as in, the change in one quantity in term of another.

Table 7.1			
The Derivatives Model of Compassionate Dynamics in Organizations			
	Definition	Examples identified by young adults	Physics analogy
Wellbeing	Physical and social health	Nutrition, hydration, housing, physical health, place, esteem	Function (position)
Growth/healing	Increase in wellbeing	Developing professionally, learning, overcoming anger, deepening friendships and professional relationships, healing relationships	1 st derivative (velocity)
Care	Increase in Growth/healing	Professional development, tutoring, counseling, networking	2 nd derivative (acceleration)
Shared humanness/community	Increase in care	Inspiration, connectedness, engaged referrals, responsiveness to need, overcoming boundaries, developing deep connections, sharing lives	3 rd derivative (jerk)

Change in Position Over Time

The derivatives model of compassionate organizing is a change model of compassionate dynamics in organizations that focuses on the dynamic movement of wellbeing. It draws its structure from the derivatives of position in physics. In physics, the starting point for studying displacement is position – where an object is. The first derivative is velocity, which is the change in position over time (in a specific direction). The second derivative is acceleration, which is the change in velocity over time. The third derivative is called jerk, which is the change in acceleration over time.

I find that how the body experiences speed, position, acceleration, and jerk serves as a powerful analogy to how people experience wellbeing, growth/healing, care, and shared humanness. For instance, the human body can take speed for granted by adjusting to the experience. Acceleration, however, is more obvious. Still more apparent is the pressed feeling of increased acceleration (jerk). Imagine the ordinary feeling of driving on the freeway at 70 miles per hour versus the intense feeling of a braking roller coaster.

Similarly, while youth describe compassion in terms of wellbeing, growth, care, and shared humanness, they report some of these as more transformative and profound experiences than others. Take for instance institutions that reliably provide food or shelter. These organizations are mentioned, but they are also, at times, taken for granted or even despised. Just as travel on the freeway can become quite normal, institutional forces of healing and growth can be more easily taken for granted. On the other hand, shared humanness, the rush of suddenly being treated as human, is analogous to the rush experienced when changing acceleration, such as on a rollercoaster. The sudden change

in care, moving from unimportant and left up to one's own devices to being treated as though one's needs matter, is far less likely to pass unnoticed.

I find that this model helps explain varied sensibilities with regard to compassionate organizing. As noted above, service organizations that are very standardized may not be perceived as compassionate. Each of the higher level derivatives is more likely to be read a compassionate organizational practice/phenomenon. No movement in sociomaterial wellbeing is the status quo. Growth and development promise movement toward wellbeing, but these forces are often institutionalized, slow moving, and ponderous, like government programs and hospitals. As such, they are fairly easy to take for granted. They also tend to be unresponsive to the particularities of individual cases and anemic in response. At the second derivative, care, compassion is more apparent. The active nature of care makes it easier to appreciate. But it is really at shared humanness, those processes that accelerate care, that youth speak of so highly. This is why presence, embodied aboutness, and immediacy are so important, because those communicative dynamics signal high-level changes in wellbeing. Turning toward demonstrates care and is the beginning of shared humanness. Lilius et al. (2011) suggest that organizational compassion is in part made from dynamic boundary permeability, which is an example of higher order derivatives at work because they allow members to increase the wellbeing of others faster than organizational practices would ordinarily foster. At its most basic, the derivative model draws a link between wellbeing and the fairly abstract notions of community and shared humanness. I believe this link should not be forgotten.

The Derivatives Model and Sociomateriality

By using wellbeing as its starting point, the derivatives model highlights aspects of organized life that are not classically considered communicative. In this section, I will describe how my derivatives model relates to recent scholarship regarding sociomaterial constitution. I will lay out notions of sociomaterial entanglement and the communicative constitution of organizations. Finally, I make the case that compassion is a form of sociomaterial constitution and demonstrate how the derivatives model helps explain this. Understanding compassionate constitution of organizations helps show the power of compassion and clarifies what organizations are actually made of. Before making those arguments, it is valuable to explain how the young adults I interviewed drew the focus toward materiality.

Beyond the Merely Social

One of the key questions in my interviews was “Can you give me an example of compassion displayed by a nonprofit organization?” Instead of focusing on a particular staff member, I asked the question to highlight the life of the organization and hoped that it would invite the young adults to reflect on their experience with organizations broadly.

Some of the homeless young adults reported humanizing, dignifying interactions within human service organizations. Jake, a 20-year-old I met on Mill Avenue, lays out being treated humanely.

That’s real compassion. To show that you can tell the other is a real person. A real human being. Not just a patient. Not just a client. Not just a name on a paper. You are a person, and I got to know you.

This sensibility is echoed by another homeless young man, Scooby, a 24-year-old I met on Mill Avenue, when I asked him what it felt like to be treated compassionately. “Makes you feel like a human. Makes you feel like part of society. Like, as a homeless you just kinda feel like you’re below everybody and that kinda just boosts you up to like, I am human.” Humanizing interactions promote wellbeing. Compassion in organizations involves symbolic restoration, discursive rehabilitation, and cultural reconfiguring. Compassionate communication reconstitutes the interpretive frameworks that gird human interaction, meaning that compassion can reform social reality. The reconstitutive power of compassion may be less visible when studying compassion directed toward people who society considers it normal to about. With regard to homeless people who are accustomed to being ignored or scorned, compassion reconstitutes a more healthy social order.

However, when I asked the question “Can you give me an example of compassion displayed by a nonprofit organization?,” the young adults more often talked about physical acts of service – things done to improve the material quality of their lives. I found it slightly frustrating. I would think to myself, “No, no, I want an act of *communicative* compassion.” So I would reframe the question to focus on specific interaction. They could answer that question, too, without any hesitation. But the young adults would usually go to the physical service first. Initially, I thought they weren’t answering my question. But as it happened time and time again, I realized I wasn’t listening to their answer. Physical service matters.

What are some examples of compassion displayed by a nonprofit organization?

“They will help you out with a bus ticket or even some clothing, which is vital if you’re in Phoenix... If you’re in the right area in the right time, they will actually pay for a hotel room, some food, or whatever supplies you need to get on to the next area. Someone’s paying a bus ticket. It feels like a blessing every single time.” Heather, 20

“I told him the situation, and [he] was like, ‘That’s not right. We will take you in the Dream Center.’ And they took me in right away. I guess that could be a sign of compassion.” James, 19

“The first week I was at the job... I had no transportation for getting to work. And one of the volunteers, I guess out of the goodness of their heart, came and brought me a bicycle. With a bike lock and a key. So, that’s compassion.” CJ, 23

“They don’t charge you for the help that they give you.” Ominous, 20

“They’re just really selfless. They’ll help, down to the last tee. I’ve seen them come at 6 o’clock in the morning, and they don’t even open until 11. Just so that they can sit there and help people... They’ll basically try to work toward your schedule in a way, even when they’re not supposed to... I got my tongue pierced, and I couldn’t eat anything because my tongue was swollen. They went and bought ice cream for me. Or like these shoes, these are \$110 shoes because I wear a size 13, and they didn’t have any shoes. So out of their own money, they went

and brought me to Ross and bought them for me. So they kinda show that in a sense, and they don't sit there and put it on their taxes or write it off on their business to get the money back in their paycheck. They just do it." Scooby, 24

I include the rather redundant quotes to make the point. Physical service matters, because to these young adults, a hugely important dynamic of compassion concerns material conditions. Compassion, in a very real way, involves the allocation of material resources to meet material needs. In retrospect, my resistance to material conditions as a compassionate mode reflects an underlying bias running through my own thinking, which is that the most vivid part of an interaction with an organization is the social interaction. As it turns out, I am not alone in the tendency to look to the social aspect of organized life for all the answers. Orlikowski (2007) argues as follows:

Over the years, the field of organization studies has generated important and valuable insights into the cultural, institutional, and situated aspects of organizing. However, I want to argue that these insights are limited in large part because the field has traditionally overlooked the ways in which organizing is bound up with the material forms and spaces through which humans act and interact. And to the extent that such neglect continues, our understanding of organizational life and its consequences will remain necessarily restricted. (p. 1435)

Or, more succinctly, "Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. But there is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter" (Barad, 2003, p. 801). Orlikowski goes on to articulate the ways that the material conditions of organized life have a profound impact on how things play out.

Ultimately, she advocates for dissolving much of the distinction between social and material processes, a position she calls sociomateriality (borrowed from Mol, 2002). While inadequate access to hygiene is a material reality and not having access to a home is a social reality, each is inextricably bound up with other social and material worlds. In brief, sociomateriality is a concept that highlights the way social worlds create and contextualize material worlds and the way material worlds create and contextualize social worlds. Amid those transactions, the distinction between social and material begin to collapse.

Other organizational scholars have taken up sociomateriality to bring attention to the various ways social and material processes are constitutionally entangled (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). Said another way, organizations are made from the intertwining of social and material forces. Ashcraft et al. (2009) describe how organizational communication scholars of recent years have focused on the ways communication creates organizations. They go on to argue that “However seductive, reducing the constitution of organization to communication runs the risk of naïve constructivism. After all, organizations are more than what we say they are” (2009, p. 23). Ashcraft et al. (2009) do not counter the notion that communication constitutes organizations, but offer a broader picture, one that includes objects, sites, and bodies as active agents in constituting organizations. In brief, humans and organizations are created by the inextricable intertwining of social and material movements. I will now make the case that compassion can be understood as a form of sociomaterial constitution.

Compassionate Dynamics as a Type of Sociomaterial Constitution

The homeless young adults I interviewed reported a diverse set of realities they considered compassionate. While some of them mirror the emotional dynamics of demonstrated care outlined by many communication scholars, such as Lilius et al. (2011) and Way and Tracy (2012), other phenomena considered compassionate include improvement in material conditions, interorganizational action, and shared space. These seemingly disparate accounts of what compassion is can be drawn together by casting compassion as a type of sociomaterial entanglement that constitutes organizations. I will first illustrate a specific example of compassion as sociomaterial constitution of organization: referrals to other human service agencies. Following, I will articulate more broadly how compassion constitutes organizations.

Compassionate Boundary Spanning: How Compassion Can Constitute Organizations

Compassionate communication can constitute organizations. This became clear to me when considering the homeless young adults' reflections on referrals from one organization to another. Interorganizational referrals are a reality in the modern homeless service system, since there are sundry service agencies that each provide different resources. As such, homeless people often get referred from one to the other to get what they need.

Some referrals are simple, just giving information about how to contact the other organization. This practice is primarily read by the youth neutrally, but with a little annoyance with regard to bureaucracy. More frustrating are what I call "brush off" referrals. A brush off referral is when a staff member of an organization says, "That's not

my job, go to someone else.” A deferral of responsibility. A brush off. The youth do not take kindly to these. Derrick, a 20-year-old young man, described.

You go up to a staff member, a blue shirt, and say “Oh I have such and such issue” and they say “Ok, and... Go talk to this person about it. It’s not my job to take care of you.” Then they start having a hissy fit.

Of course, getting all the people to all the right places can be difficult. However, I have experienced the “brush off” referral myself. The following is a small excerpt from my fieldnotes.

I call the sheltering organization Greg is staying in to get him permission to be gone one night so he can come on our leadership retreat. I select zero to speak with the operator. The operator picks up. I explain to her why I was calling. She replies:

“Oh, I’m not responsible for that [there is a falling tone at the end of “that”]. Let me put you through to case management.”

I had the urge to say, “I’m SO sorry to inconvenience you.” But I didn’t. Then I thought to myself, “Why is she explaining to me that it isn’t her job. Why would she think I would expect the operator’s job to be that?” Then I thought, “This is a brush off referral!”

The statement would have been value neutral if she would have said, “Let me put you through to case management.” It would have been positive if she would have said, “You know what, case management will take care of you!”

But not all referrals are negative experiences. The youth also report what I term “engaged referrals.” An engaged referral involves a staff member going above and beyond what they are required to do in order to make sure the youth gets what they need in the next organization. Not only are these experiences rated as positive, but these interactions also get read as compassionate by the youth. Amber recalls being referred by a compassionate staff member out of a shelter he worked in to a more youth-focused organization. “He totally snatched me and was like girl, you need to go to Tumbleweeds. You need to trust me. This [shelter] is not for you.” Unfortunately, staff members do not often perform engaged referrals, as they take a lot of time and follow up. However, engagement makes the referral process more likely to be successful. Erica, a 23-year-old I met on Mill Avenue, recounts the following tale about a compassionate staff member.

I know Dave has been trying to help me get a hold of my CPS case manager. And we finally did today. Between us we’ve been tag teaming her phone, and he’s been sending her emails trying to get a hold of her.

Youth read engaged referrals as compassion. In part, an effective referral is an act of service because it addresses a need and helps accomplish objectives. Engaged referrals are also a path through the woods, a moment of personal and institutional efficacy, and a ray of hope that things do actually move forward. Engaged referrals also demonstrate care on the part of the worker who works perhaps a little harder than strictly needed. For all these reasons, engaged referrals are compassionate.

Successful referrals take work, or at least mindfulness. It involves correctly identifying the problem, having a working knowledge of various organizations, understanding the eligibility of the particular program, knowing the oddities of how the

other organization selects clients, and having a relative dose of luck. It also helps to know someone inside the other organization. A successful, engaged referral is a beautiful thing. Good referrals often take extra time, but they can also be very simple, non-taxing, non time-intensive modifications.

At first, I thought youth saw engaged referrals as compassionate because the referrals were nontraditional problem solving, or what Lilius et al. (2011) call dynamic boundary permeability. Youth often recall times when staff and volunteers leave the ordinary grounds of the organization to take them to the county fair or drive them somewhere in the rain. I chalked this up to expectancy violation (Burgoon & Hale, 1988) or perhaps leader-member exchange (Deluga, 1998). Maybe the fact that youth didn't expect the act made it stand out, or because it was a nontraditional solution it increased rapport. I began to see, however, that referrals can be understood from the perspective of system theory, namely: engaged referrals are acts of boundary spanning.

Boundary spanners, as conceptualized by organizational systems theory, provide a vital function in organizational workings. These people perform the communicative labor of crossing inter- and intra-institutional boundaries. This enables networks to develop and increase the organization's ability to maintain dynamic homeostasis by enabling responsiveness and vetting input and directing output. It is no wild thesis to suggest that engaged referrals and transorganizational action are forms of boundary spanning. What is more interesting is that the youth perceive these boundary spanning activities as compassionate. Perhaps it is simply that the youth appreciate any rendering of service, particularly ones that are uncommon. However, I believe this explanation misses an important layer.

Compassion, at its etymological root, means “to suffer with.” Compassion is a form of shared humanness, a willingness to co-occupy a space, as outlined in chapter five. The engaged referral is an example of care-full co-presence, not only with the youth for whom the referral is being made, but also with the person in the other organization. A staff’s ability to compassionately collaborate with a member of another organization, to share humanness across institutional boundaries, improves their ability to meet the bureaucratic and intellectual challenge of translating a client from one sphere to another. The same grace that allows the staff member to live contemporaneously with the client they serve also allows them to forge relation-based organizational infrastructure.

This is not to say compassion is the only form of boundary spanning. Certainly intimidation, deception, and opportunism can drive the connections between organizations. However, in the case of engaged referrals, compassion is a possible “substance” from which the inter-organizational structure can be forged, a potential emotional, physical, and communicative reality that constitutes inter-organization.

And with this in mind, that compassionate communication can be inter-organizational “substance,” it seems plausible to suggest that compassion can also constitute intra-organizing. It really boils down to the “com-” of communication, community, commune, the togetherness, that operates at the heart of compassion. Shared suffering organizes people in powerful ways. Funerals draw family together. Lost children mobilize communities to act. Victims and martyrs mobilize revolutions. Compassion organizes.

Why does this matter? Understanding dynamics of compassion in organizations is not only a question of emotions in a group. It is more than just effective service delivery

or emotional quality control. It also provides a glimpse into the nature of organizing and the transcommunicative body of organizations themselves. Taken together with questions of constitution and sociomateriality, a model of compassion at the organizational level begins to take shape.

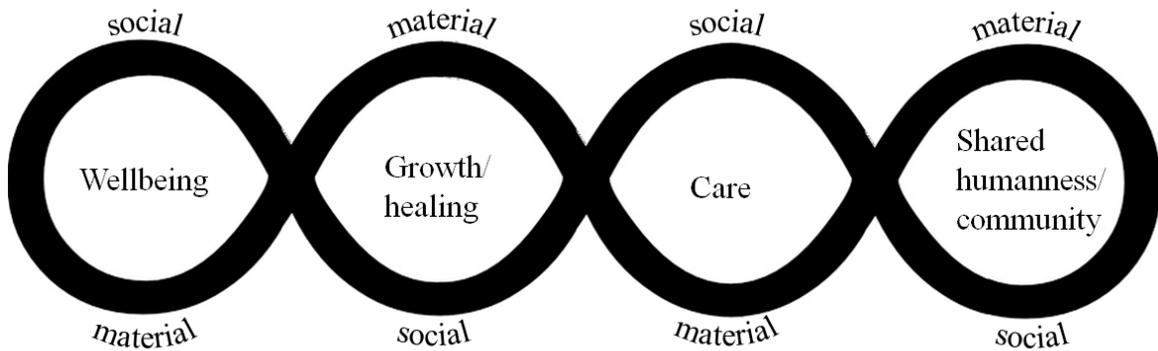
Compassion as Constitutional Entanglement That Concerns Wellbeing

The dynamics of compassion in organizations are best conceptualized as a type of constitutional entanglement – the intermingling of social and material worlds for increased wellbeing. I believe, like Orlikowski (2007), that the social and material movements within an organization are recursively intertwined and that it is shortsighted to try to conceptualize the social without the material and the material without the social. However, Orlikowski is vague about *how* the material and the social entangle. Picturing the process of entanglement provides a model for compassionate organizing. Thought of another way, Frost et al. (2005) argue that compassion can be conceptualized as more than an interpersonal event, but also as a dynamic form of organizing. Compassion involves sharing in, promoting, and sustaining wellbeing. As I defined earlier, compassionate dynamics in organizations are the fluid sociomaterial processes of wellbeing, growth/healing, care, and shared humanness/community interacting to constitute organized life.

The Sociomaterial Dimension of the Derivative Model

At each of the four levels of compassionate dynamics, one can see apparently social and apparently material realities that are ultimately entangled. For instance, at the level of wellbeing, access to housing is both a social and material reality. Of course, getting rained on is a material issue, but *access* to housing is the result of social factors.

Also, having no home means something and often gets interpreted negatively. This negative perception is shared by employers, who are less likely to give the homeless



person a job (making it less likely for them to have a home). The four tiers of the model, in that they are derivatives of each other, also speak to the sociomaterial entanglement

Figure 7.1. Compassionate Sociomaterial Entanglement

that progresses between tiers. For instance, dynamics of care intertwine sociomaterial resources to promote healing. Harry, a 21-year-old from SUFK, recounts how anticipating positive interactions helps him focus on the future, which ultimately helped him create a plan for his life and get a job. Applied to the model, care-filled social interactions allow him to grow socially, which improves his material wellbeing.

And so the full potential of the model becomes clear. What are the dynamics of organizational compassion? It is the fluid social and material movement of wellbeing and the forces that foster it. Compassion is not only an individual emotional and communicative experience, but also an active process capable of creating organization by comingling humanity.

Conclusion

In review, in this chapter I focused on compassion as a dynamic process within organizations. Using coding practices to identify themes within the youth reflections, I laid out a model based on wellbeing, healing/growth, care, and shared humanness/community. Also inspired by homeless young adult reflections that included both physical and social dynamics, I turned on recent work concerning social materiality. I ultimately defined compassionate dynamics in organizations as the fluid fostering of wellbeing over time. The derivatives of wellbeing model demonstrates how social and material movements across the four levels of the model not only can be seen as compassionate, but can also be seen as organizing itself. As such, compassion becomes one possible form of sociomaterial entanglement constituting organizations. Said another way, compassion can create organization by drawing together social and physical worlds. I now turn to the implications this project has for organizational theory, communication methods, and social justice organizing.

Chapter 8

PRAGMATIC FIELDWORK

Methods, ordinarily, are about generating, constructing, and analyzing data in an effort to answer a particular research question. Data collection is a necessary part of community-based, participatory action research (PAR), but data is only part of its undertaking. PAR also involves an outward mission, an active component, a doing in the world (Eisenberg et al., 2006). The active, outward mission of PAR is rooted in a social justice commitment: that knowledge structures have an obligation to respond to the needs of the community. However, action is not an addendum to the research project. Data collection and analysis can enhance and be enhanced by social action. This chapter outlines what I call pragmatic fieldwork, which is a method that rests at the intersection of qualitative research, participatory action research, and philosophical pragmatism.

Dewey (1939) suggests that knowledge is never really separate from inquiry. As such, I find it appropriate to buttress my discussions of compassion, homelessness, and organizing with a partner discussion about the methodological findings of this project. I did not intend to invent or extend any particular method during this process. Rather, I wanted to do good communication research while also engaging in meaningful social action.

But as I struggled to achieve both of those goals, I slowly developed practices that accomplished the aims simultaneously and stumbled upon ways of thinking that cast them as a single labor. This chapter accounts for that development by tracing my own particular path through social action and community research. I then offer a methodological framework and a set of practices I believe others called to this form of

research will find helpful. As I said before, I had no *a priori* intention of creating a research method.

Narratives of Action and Inquiry

I will never subscribe to the notion that knowledge and its production has no ethical thrust. I stand with Foley and Valenzuela (2005) in rejecting the notion of “value-free ethnographies” (p. 237). From a pragmatic view, knowledge always concerns action, and from most views, actions concern ethical consideration. I also believe that “scholars should have a continuing connection to their sites and to the circumstances in need of transformation” (Brantlinger, 1999, p. 420). As such, the participatory and active components of research are not incidental or periphery. They are an essential part. In the section following, I will narrate my research project as it grew out of my social action and involvement in the world of homelessness and homeless youth.

I recount my history here for various purposes. In part, I mean to simply be honest. This dissertation is the creative outgrowth in a longer project, and there is something I find disingenuous about pretending that it stands alone. I’ve been working in the direction of homelessness and virtue-driven community action for some time, and while other sections of my dissertation outline my methodological leaps and theoretical landings, I also want to give a sense of my running start.

Secondly, I pen this story to be transparent. In a world where all knowledge has a position and there are few, if any, techniques to determine the freestanding truth of affairs, truth lays in contextual particularity. Said another way, I reflexively recount my narrative so you, dear reader, can know, as best as I can render, the founding

assumptions, limitations, and agendas I picked up and used along the way (Richardson, 2000).

Perhaps most importantly, I feel compelled to start at the beginning for collaborative reasons. The life of community-engaged research moves both among and beyond any theoretical position or data collection technique. This document represents a climax of a wider journey, and journeys are best recreated in narrative. I am perpetually reminded by how much help I need and how incomplete my own powers are to build the world of which I dream. I need help. Guidance. Friendship. Compatriots. As such, I do myself no favors to leave my path hidden through the darkened woods. Rather, I've left the best trail of broken bread I can muster.

August 2008

This story begins on Saturday, August 2, 2008. I was driving late at night on a Los Angeles freeway to see an old friend. With no traffic and the city lights streaming past, I was quite lost in thought. The last six months had been particularly dramatic. I had been dumped by a longtime partner, reconnected with a woman who I suspected I would marry, been on a pilgrimage to Australia, and had both successes and failures in my professional life. While thinking about a dozen things at once, my brain suddenly blurted to itself:

I want my life to be the complex and beautiful answer to this simple question –

How can I do the greatest possible good?

It was one of those vibrant notions that stood out from the rest of my thoughts, distinct in its energy. Like it was more real than the others. And so I mulled it over in my head as I

drove with my windows down and passing stars, office buildings, and headlights streaked and twinkled. How can I do the greatest possible good?

Answering that question in the months that followed started to systematically fuse what had been a cloud of ideas into something very, very solid. Like a bunch of glaciers floating aimlessly in an ice flow that collided, slowly, but with such inertia that they instantly fused to each other. Relevant to our story here were two particular answers. One was “Get your Ph.D.” I realized that I didn’t know all the things I needed to in order to do the work I imagined. The second answer was the decision to live homelessly.

Dangerous Reading List

My decision to live homelessly did not come by chance. Rather, it came by reading three books that had compelling answers to the greatest possible good question and ultimately proved to be dangerous to my sense of the status quo: *The Irresistible Revolution*, *The Robe*, and *The Bible*. In *The Irresistible Revolution*, Shane Claiborne argues that Christianity, at its heart, has a lot less to do with contemporary political arguments and a lot more to do with living in solidarity with the poor. *The Robe* is a religious fiction about the centurion who crucified Christ converting to Christianity. Somewhat tangential to that plot is the tale of a small boy who is given a donkey and, despite his personal excitement, decides to give the donkey to a crippled boy. And then there is *The Bible*. Among other things, it suggested I give everything away to the poor and follow Christ. That story is usually interpreted metaphorically. But then, what if it was an actual suggestion?

“Do you need anything?”

In the wake of my dangerous reading, I slowly started seeing the world differently. More specifically, I started seeing homeless people less like they were monsters and more like they were people without homes. This perceptual shift opened me, and in the midst of a hurried trip to the airport, led to one of my life's most cherished experiences.

I have always traveled with food and money. I carry money just in case I need a quick fix for emergencies my debit card can't buy me. I carry food because I'm cheap and would rather buy food from the grocery store than the airport. My path to the airport in those days involved a train to Union Station in downtown Los Angeles and a bus to LAX. As I picked my way through a sparse crowd of people in Union Station on my way toward the ticket counter, I saw an elderly homeless woman. The skin on her arms and ankles was ashy and flaking off. I don't know what it is, but seeing homeless people's skin always gets me. Earlier the same day, I had given some money to a man who was begging, and he had open sores all over his body.

She was not begging, so I walked by. As I cruised up the walkway I stopped dead in my tracks, halted by this simple thought, "I just walked by Jesus."

As a Christian, I believe Jesus is in everyone. Which makes everyone Jesus, at least when it comes to moral consideration. Christ had a lot of "turn the system on its head" and care for the poor and lowly teachings. Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me (Matthew 25:40). I half turned to go back. My Christ-realization kept me from walking by, but there were other thoughts keeping me from talking to her.

At first I thought, "I am embarrassed." I didn't really know why. Perhaps nothing more than stranger anxiety.

Then I thought, "I'm in a hurry." I needed to catch my bus.

Thirdly, I thought, "I'm not sure what to say or how to act."

And then part of my brain set off the "I" alert. I had just had three consecutive thoughts about me and what I wanted. "Just act."

So I walked up to her, and I asked, "Do you need anything?" She wasn't asking for anything in particular, so I started there.

She just stared at me. Almost confused.

"Do you need anything?" I said again, "like... money... or food?"

Again, she just stared at me. After a moment, she gives me a meek, doe-eyed nod, never breaking eye contact. So I gave her five dollars, then grabbed a few fruit and protein bars from my backpack. As I put them in her right hand, she took her left hand and gently held my hands between hers. She looked me in the eyes. In a quiet, sweet, thankful, and unassuming voice she burned seven words into my life forever.

"No one has ever asked me that."

I didn't know what to say. I said something. I don't even remember what it was. We were just there in the midst of a moment of shared humanness. As I walked away, all my skin was tingling. In that moment, I felt simultaneously tiny and huge. Tiny compared to the God I had just fed. Tiny compared to her humanity. But my strides felt like seven leagues apiece as I walked to my bus. I realized the enormity of the difference I could make and that I carried the immense power of love inside me. I realized that this was just the beginning.

Voluntary Homelessness

My decision was ultimately driven by the conviction to do the greatest good, spurred by spiritual and religious inspiration, and a splash of personal finances. While homeless, I worked as a youth minister for a Catholic church and taught at California State University Los Angeles. I started out sleeping in my car, but after a series of incidents with police waking me up, I ended up sleeping in a one-person tent under a bush 100 meters off of a walking path in a wilderness park just north of Pasadena. While I was homeless, I learned how to bathe from a water bottle, that soap is an allergen, what it feels like to be fearful of every cop, that one must change sleeping patterns or get caught, and that sleeping under wet blankets in the rain with the flu sucks even more than it may sound.

In addition to physical challenges, from where to sleep to how to bathe, I struggled to communicate my stability and wellbeing to non-homeless persons. While having clean clothes and a fresh smell helped, I came to discover that my homeless condition relegated me to the status of unstable or even mentally unwell, even to people who knew and respected me prior. It should be noted that while I lived homelessly, I was not exactly impoverished. I had two well-paying jobs, health insurance, a vehicle, and a reliable network of homed friends and family. But even though my experience of homelessness was different from many, it provided me with a deeply personal relationship with the issue. This embodied knowing serves me when engaged in scholarly interpretation. It also serves as a foundation for my leadership of volunteers and my relationships with homeless youth.

Informal Service

My service to the homeless began informally. I was saving lots of money on rent living homelessly. I started carrying food, money, and information about homeless services with me almost everywhere I went. I was in part inspired by the postmodern superhero graphic novel (and movie adaptation) *The Watchmen*. Most of the heroes in the novel don't actually have any super powers, but they engage in (questionable) heroics none the less. While I didn't wear a suit or beat people up, I have always identified with the hero archetype. Perhaps it is because of a child- and adulthood filled with fantasy fiction. Maybe it is having a firefighter father and a union-side labor lawyer mother. Whatever the initial cause, I began ongoing, though unsystematic, service to homeless people. This individual call lasted through the spring and summer leading up to the beginning of my Ph.D. program.

The Hugh Downs School

I had applied to the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication (HDSHC) as a scholar of organizational communication. I wanted to improve my capacity to organize, to educate, to research, and to serve. In the first semester, all HDSHC students write a paper positioning themselves within the discipline. I found the activity challenging. Is there a real world? Yes. Can we learn about it? Yes. Are there constructed social realities? Yes. Can we uncover the narratives and cultures that create them? Yes. Are their hidden injustices? Yes. Can we reveal and attend to them? Yes. I found I couldn't frame my work in the classic frames because my commitments were elsewhere. I was committed to the poor. I was committed to doing good. But those weren't options. I would not find a scholarly position coherent with my commitments until I discovered

pragmatism. But in the meantime, the HDSHC gave me tools. Interviewing. Facilitation. Coding. Statistics. Organizational theories. Writing.

StandUp For Kids

My introduction to StandUp For Kids (SUFK) was the result of an invitation by a student. She walked into my office hours and told me she thought, based on how I taught, I would be interested in her homeless youth outreach organization. She was right.

Although I had research possibilities in mind when I joined the organization, I joined for a variety of other reasons. Primarily, it was my personal commitment to the poor. I also enjoy being in and serving communities. I also felt called on a spiritual level to join this organization. More personally, I wanted to be involved in an organization with my wife. Within a few months, my wife and I were trained and part of outreach, maintaining a youth house, providing apartment support, and helping with educational, personal, and professional development.

When I first joined SUFK, I was trained, went on outreach, and wrote grants. Within a few months, I became involved in new-volunteer training. Becoming a volunteer gave me insight into the embodied aspects of volunteering and enabled self reflexivity. I visited shelters on cold and rainy nights, crawled around in the back of the outreach van searching for blankets, and faced enraged homeless men. I have pulled on the purple shirt worn by all SUFK volunteers hundreds of times. The body is a site of knowing (Conqergood, 1991). My experiences are not the experiences of all volunteers, but my full involvement helps me to engage my research reflexively and see myself as part of the “setting” for the research (Altheide and Johnson, 1994).

Community-engaged Scholarship

As I volunteered, my graduate school training started to converge naturally with the needs of the organization. This is no surprise, really. Methods and theories are abstract, and individual people in a particular organization are concrete/embodied. Holding both close to my heart made their marriage natural.

The first bridge was facilitation. The HDSHC offers a class in intercultural facilitation that teaches communicative methods for solving problems in groups, particularly groups with diverse cultures. The facilitative techniques were often framed in terms of conflict negotiation, but there were also possibilities for organizational development—possibilities that could benefit SUFK. And so a classmate and I ran a facilitation that draw on volunteers, members of the community, and homeless youth to identify and address the main issues facing the organization. Of course the experience helped me write my final paper in the class. But the outcomes also clarified salient action items. We had imagined new ways to network with youth, develop volunteers, and build community. I brought the outcomes to the executive director at the time. She encouraged me to move forward with them.

The following semester I performed qualitative fieldwork inside the organization. Guided by a rigorous qualitative methods class, I focused on volunteer commitments, motivations, and sensemaking. During the interview process, I came to better know the volunteers, and the need to be in the field made my volunteering more reliable. This improved my relationship with the youth too. It turns out that the rigors of good qualitative research are complementary to organizational citizenship. Theoretically, the

project clarified my thinking about how volunteers experience nonprofit organizing, which spoke to notions of altruism, social exchange, and community membership.

While I was engaged in that project, the executive director stepped down. Initially, no one stepped up to take her place. Various people filled various sub-leadership positions. I continued training new volunteers. John, the director of the youth house, slowly assumed the responsibilities of executive director until it was mere formality to call him such. At the time, I didn't feel comfortable mixing my roles as researcher with that of leader. And so I continued to work and serve at the midrange, training and networking and grant seeking. But I didn't think I should lead. I was a researcher.

The following semester, now two years into my doctoral program, I took a class on narratives. We were encouraged to be creative with our class projects. I also was awarded a grant to improve leadership development among the volunteers at SUFK. These three objectives ended up converging in a leadership street retreat. I identified that we had three challenges from a leadership perspective. One was that our volunteers didn't know enough about homeless issues (because they didn't stay long enough to become experts). Secondly, there was a lack of dedication to the organization (evidenced by volunteers not staying very long). Finally, the community could be stronger. As I thought about how to accomplish these three objectives, I realized they were related. I remember saying to my wife, "If someone knew, really knew, about the struggles facing homeless youth, wouldn't commitment naturally flow?" Her response was simple, but its implications have been profoundly complicated and far reaching, "I guess it depends on *how* they knew it."

This basic principle guided the planning of the retreat, which culminated in a mutually planned and mutually led weekend of youth and volunteer homelessness that focused on both leadership and homeless issues. Based on a class on narratives I was taking at the time, I led a series of storytelling activities on the retreat. Specifically, I looked to see how the youth and volunteers stories about homelessness, wealth, poverty, and community through the course of the retreat. Much to my surprise, their stories didn't change. Narrative fidelity (Fisher, 1984) suggests that people accept narratives that are consonant with their experience. Based on this, clever storytellers will strategically changing a narrative to match his or her audience's life experiences. However, the retreat showed me the inverse – that people can strategically alter their life experiences to change the way they take up a narrative. I can attest to the reality of this movement. During the retreat, I realized that the current executive director needed help and that I was the one to do it. Which I had already known. But the retreat *real-ized* it.

My epistemic and axiological foundations rest in these parallel realities, that 1) we can change our experiences to alter our acceptance of narratives and that 2) knowledge, community, and dedication can be part of the same transaction. The retreat, and the subsequent retreats we have run, also helped clarify the subject of my dissertation. As I listened to the youth reflect on the panoply of services offered while also recounting assorted communicative difficulties with staff, I was struck by two thoughts. One, that coordinating between services seems relevant and that the communication ruptures, and more broadly interaction between staff and youth, seem to be an important dynamic to understand. If youth leave services when treated poorly, or

are kicked out when they treat staff poorly, there seems to be a communicative barrier to successful transformation.

Leadership

Based on the needs of the organization and prompted by the retreat, I took on the volunteer role as co-executive director. As a co-executive director, I coordinated various elements of the organization. My primary responsibilities included training, coordinating outreach, conflict management, resource development, and networking. Leadership also had heuristic qualities. Leading an organization provided me with an institutional framing of issues. Suddenly, I started thinking in terms of monthly costs, organizational liability, branding, and other administrative and managerial concerns. While as a volunteer I had concern for the wellbeing of the youth, leadership fostered in me concern for the wellbeing of the organization. I also came to more fully identify with SUFK. I even had a magnet on the side of my car with its contact information.

Leadership inside the organization also opened another epistemological community, the leaders of other organizations. While participating in a county-wide collaborative and networking with other organizations, I started developing the trust needed to act and know together. As such, the organizational link-ups that can vex some research projects, access and impact, started to become unvexed. Instead of Tim the scholar, I was Tim the SUFK guy who is working on a research project that will help various organizations.

Being deeply involved with SUFK was not without challenges. As one might expect, balancing the workload at times caused issues. I also suspect that identification with SUFK influenced my interpretations. The all-volunteer model of SUFK likely

tended my thinking toward community-based intervention as opposed to more institutionalized organizational forms. Also, I suspect a more traditional ethnographic approach could have done a similar study in less time, as the demands of serving and leading periodically overshadowed efforts of data collection. However, even incidents that demanded more focus on action than inquiry offered opportunities for reflection after the fact.

Dissertation

Having joined/associated with (to the degree that I could) three knowledge communities beyond my academic one, volunteers, nonprofit leaders, and homeless young adults, I collected qualitative data using the methods outlined in chapter four. My close homeless friends helped me by doing pilot interviews. My service on outreach helped me get interviews on the streets without breaking rules of appropriateness. The fact that I knew some youth through SUFK eased my entry into the scene, as a person I would know from outreach would often vouch for me to other young adults when I asked if I could do interviews. My broad knowledge of homeless services helped me provide suggestions to interviewees who needed it, and also helped deepen interviews to get at particularly relevant theoretical issues (as opposed to spending copious time on exposition).

I never felt like I knew too much, or had been in the scene too long, or had a biased or stilted opinion of what was unfolding. I think perhaps in an organization with no social justice issues afoot I could get over-saturated. But in a world as complex and dynamic as the cultural boundary land of homelessness, I never felt settled in my interpretation. In fact, I did not stop because I reached a moment of theoretic saturation.

Every new story challenged and recast other stories. Rather, I stopped collecting data when I reached a point of warranted assertability (Dewey, 1933), a readiness to move forward with the continued willingness to revise as needed. To be clear, I did not use theoretical saturation as a guiding research principle for this project, and I do not think it is appropriate for PAR projects. Saturation is a metaphoric reference to a sponge that cannot take any more. Participatory action researchers are not sponges, plunged into water and ready to be taken out when they can absorb no more. Sponges are about taking water from one place and slathering it in another. I do not abscond with the situated knowing of my research subjects to do my scholarly labor elsewhere. I am part of the community in which I work. So I act when I am reasonably sure it is worth trying. I speak and write when I feel I can honestly represent other members of my community.

Broader Outcomes

My dissertation can also make an impact on practice and policy. Since my dissertation focused on youth-staff interactions, it seemed most appropriate to frame my findings in a way that would be helpful to staff within homeless youth serving organizations. To this end, I have incorporated it into SUFK Phoenix trainings and have presented at trainings for the Human Services Campus, Maricopa County Superior Court, and various other organizations in Maricopa County. I am also in the process of networking with SUFK National to develop a training module on compassionate service that will be provided to all 40 of SUFK's chapters.

As for the future, I am deeply committed to academics laboring on locally salient issues, and while young adult homelessness is a major problem in many cities, there are places with more pressing concerns. While I cannot perfectly predict the social issues that

will draw my scholarship and service, I can predict the model I will use. What follows is an articulation of my approach to scholarship: ongoing, qualitative, pragmatic, community action through communicative inquiry and communicative inquiry through community action.

Pragmatic Fieldwork

Various scholars make a compelling case that social sciences need to be rejuvenated by doing socially engaged research (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011, Flyvbjerg, 2004, Levin & Greenwood, 2011, Mertens, 2007). In this section, I will outline one way of doing socially engaged work, a method I call pragmatic fieldwork. Pragmatic fieldwork is a method that produces both qualitative research and reflexive social action. It involves the ongoing engagement of multiple communities of knowing for the sake of fostering critical awareness and social justice. As a method, it draws on and combines participatory action research, qualitative methods, and philosophical pragmatism.

Participatory tendencies in qualitative research are on the rise. In their handbook, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) feature no less than six chapters concerning participatory and transformational approaches. Also, in Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba's (2011) most recent rendition of qualitative paradigms, they add "participatory" to the list of positivism, postpositivism, critical, and constructivism. As such, I am not alone in recognizing the value of participatory, qualitative research. While less numerous, there are also scholars making the connection between pragmatism and qualitative research. Bryant (2009) makes an articulate case for how pragmatism resolves some classic tensions in grounded theory. Novak (2008) uses pragmatism to frame his qualitative research project of homeless newspaper workers. In all these cases, various scholars give ample justification

for why communication scholars should do socially engaged work. However, in my view, few give detailed articulations about how.

This is not to say that there are no scholars outlining the ways participatory methods can be done. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) outline a three-part cycle for participatory action projects. Charmaz (2011) suggests how grounded theory can be used in the context of social justice research. But most efforts I find are either overly vague or only trace a single path. It is in that middle range that I believe pragmatic fieldwork moves – a method of actionable, flexible specificity.

There are parts of me that loathe suggesting that socially engaged scholars need another term to carry around. There is action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, Gilmore, Krantz & Ramirez, 1986), social change scholarship (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), translational scholarship (Petronio, 1999), experimental societies (Campbell, 1971, Bickman, 2000), community-based research (Stringer, 2007), organizational learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978, Senge, 1990), reflexive practitioners (Schön, 1983), intellectual entrepreneurship (Cherwitz, Darwin, Miller, & Groccia, 2005), community organizing (Lindeman, 1921), *phronesis* (Flyvbjerg, 2004), and more. Some may feel that in the presence of so many terms, we need fewer names, not more. I think there is a case to be made here. However, I believe that an articulate dictionary of action-oriented scholarship has a place. There are real differences between methods, and those nuances can be captured by a detailed language (multiple regressions, chi squared, factor analyses, and MANOVAs are significantly different, after all).

In the case of this project, my approach was ongoing, qualitative, community-engaged, participatory, active, and rooted in pragmatism. These layers matter. Not all

PAR is qualitative (Brydon-Miller, 1997, Defoer, De Groot, Hilhorst, Kante, & Budelman, 1998). Communities can be convened to help generate survey items. Not all PAR has an iterative tack between research and action. Some scholars do a classic research study and find a way to impact the community later.

Likewise, there are various approaches to qualitative methods. Qualitative research comes in various strands: positivist/postpositivist, constructivist, feminist, Marxist, ethnic, cultural, and queer theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) articulate, qualitative research reconstructs and probes the “situated form, content, and experience of social action” (p. 18). However, that can be done from a realist or a constructionist ontology, a value-free or a value-driven axiology, or an interpretive or objectivist epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Of course, these are not casual differences, and many battles have been fought over which of these positions is better founded. It is my intention to outline another paradigmatic approach to qualitative research.

Drawing on pragmatist concepts outlined by James, Peirce, Dewey, and Rorty, I engage in qualitative research with different criteria for success than if I had another stance. For example, postpositivist qualitative research succeeds when it creates a detailed picture of the social world (and perhaps triangulates with data collected in other ways) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Marxist qualitative research succeeds when it reveals the critical, historic, and economic landscape of a people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Constructivist qualitative research succeeds when it credibly represents the standpoint of the actors in a social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Along these lines, I propose that pragmatic qualitative research succeeds when it identifies the living, active knowledge of a social world. Creatively democratic, Dewey-inspired qualitative research also includes a generative aim, to imagine, articulate, and implement new social forms that improve future experience. It focuses on applications – or what works – and solutions to problems (Patton, 2001). A pragmatic approach privileges the research problem over the particular methods (Rossman & Wilson, 1985).

This dissertation is the product of what I call *pragmatic fieldwork*, the intersection among PAR, qualitative data collection, and pragmatism. I use *pragmatic* in its philosophical sense, meaning concerning the philosophy of action. I also mean it in its common sense form, as in practical. As for *fieldwork*, I mean it both as a method of qualitative data collection, as well as “to work in the field.” I intend this dual meaning to evoke both a sense of scholarly data collection and also labor. But unlike terms like “action research” where the two ends are represented by different words, I use the single term “fieldwork” to help blur the distinction between action and research. Theorizing helps quicken social action, and social action refines theory. I will now articulate the following aspects of pragmatic fieldwork: 1) its paradigmatic commitments; 2) models of community-based knowing; 3) its practical components; and, 4) its potential problems.

Commitments of Pragmatic Fieldwork

Pragmatic fieldwork draws on various aspects of qualitative methods. At its most basic, it relies on social modes of data collection (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). It requires the fieldworker to become a human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Krefting, 1991) or what Roman Krznaric (2012) would call an empathic adventurer. Pragmatic fieldwork lives in the rich tradition of qualitative research that urges researchers to go, usually with

their bodies, into the places they want to learn about. This method highlights the embodied nature of knowing (Conquergood, 1991).

Pragmatic fieldwork also takes an iterative approach to inquiry (Charmaz, 2006). Iterative research usually means the dynamic movement between data collection, review of other works, and analysis. In the context of pragmatic fieldwork, iterative movement also includes social action, encouraging the fieldworker to labor toward the wellbeing of people in the field while gathering data, gathering prior scholarship, and organizing ideas. Brantlinger (1999) writes that “blending research and activism are not only valid but mutually enhancing” (p. 415). This dialectic expresses the value of pragmatic fieldwork. There is empirical and heuristic value in action. Just as performance calls into our bodies new ways of knowing (Spry, 2011), acting in the world challenges us to embody our ideas. Shared life/solidarity in our scene helps deepen our empathy and capacity to see the other as human. Embodied analysis fosters theorizing and also challenges it. Acting while researching creates tight feedback loops that inform both acting and scholarship. Finally, through networking, action increases access to varied organizational positions.

Before moving on, I should be clear about what threads of the qualitative tradition pragmatic fieldwork eschews. First, it denies a distinction between naturalistic and experimental research (Patton, 2001). When studying humans, there is no “laboratory” apart from the world. Research is always done on people, and their humanity can never be isolated. Also, “naturalistic” often implies noninterference. Noninterference is not a virtue in pragmatic fieldwork, where an essential commitment is to act meaningfully in the field. Pragmatic fieldwork also rejects the notion that critical distance must be kept in order to make meaningful interpretations of a social world (Silverman, 2009) and denies

that “going native” means losing the ability to be thoughtful (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). Rather, pragmatic fieldwork assumes that “natives” think about their lives in meaningful and productive ways. Finally, pragmatic fieldwork explicitly eschews theoretic saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) as a measure of completeness.

Pragmatic fieldwork is heavily informed by its other namesake, pragmatism. It draws on creative democracy in spirit and in process in that it is optimistic, ongoing, and builds toward a better world. Dewey (1939) says that creative democracy should use past experience to create future flourishing. Qualitative forms of data collection help accomplish that goal. Analyzing experience rendered through interviews and observations by abductive reasoning (Peirce, 1905) leads to the creation of new social forms. Pragmatic fieldwork is also guided by warranted assertability (Dewey, 1941) as a criteria for knowing, which replaces theoretic saturation as a trigger for writing or speaking.

The method also draws on Rorty’s (1979) unprivileging of particular representations of the world and his focus on epistemic community. As reviewed in chapter three, Rorty rejects two classic notions of empiricism, namely that 1) ideas can be founded on a phenomena in the world and 2) a thinker can cleanly differentiate what is true by definition and what is true by evidence. Taken together, these two rejections make it difficult, if not impossible, to privilege one representation over another. This questioning of representation threatens the relationship between the knower and the known. Instead, Rorty focuses on the fact that people most often know together and implores his readers to see knowledge as a social process. As a method, pragmatic

fieldwork draws two lessons from Rorty. One is a deep respect for all accounts of the world. The second is an attention to the communal processes of knowing.

Pragmatism's focus on action, as well as its attention to what quickens or enlivens people to act (James, 1896), serves as both a philosophical justification for action and as an analytic starting point. As a philosophical justification, the purpose of research becomes focused on creating the type of knowledge that enables people to act. As an analytic starting point, it draws attention to communicated knowledge that organizes and creates action.

In summary, pragmatic fieldwork has the following commitments. It takes an ontology of optimism and immediacy that sees both embodied and ideological realities. Its epistemological commitments include a belief in the ongoing sophistication of action and experience and the connections among practical wisdom, theory, application, and polyvocal knowledge creation. It also takes a community-based approach to knowledge. Finally, its axiological commitments are toward enablement and life-enhancement, the ongoing pursuit of justice in society, and the endeavor to improve practices. I do not posit pragmatic fieldwork as an entirely new method, but rather as a subcategory. While PAR and pragmatism could frame various research designs and qualitative methods can be done from various paradigms, pragmatic fieldwork occupies the overlap between the three.

Multiple Spheres – Intersecting Epistemic Communities

As alluded to above, an important part of doing pragmatic fieldwork is bringing together diverse epistemic communities. An epistemic community is a group of people who engage in inquiry together and provide for each other the social dynamics of

justification. Epistemic communities authorize and reject claims based on how the knowledge game is played. Rorty's (1979) assertion that communities serve as the foundation of the justification process deeply informs pragmatic fieldwork. Instead of privileging the research question, which ultimately situates the research project across from a phenomena in the world, pragmatic fieldwork takes a stakeholder approach. It is more relevant to pragmatic fieldwork what communities of knowing the researcher is going to move between than any particular framing of the question. After the communities have been identified, the researcher can identify a focus (or set of foci) that mutually concerns the communities.

Taking a multi-community approach also helps establish a sense of mutual footing. In many forms of research, data comes from the field, while theory comes from academic writing. From the perspective of Rorty, who refuses to favor certain representations and highlights the communal aspects of knowing, the spoken texts of interviewed people and the written texts of educated people are both forms of knowing. As such, it is more meaningful to speak about bringing two epistemic communities into conversation than to suggest that one community authoritatively interprets the other.

While most research methods seek to *know about*, pragmatic fieldwork advocates for *knowing with*. Pragmatic fieldwork is in part a research method, because one of the epistemic communities is an academic (or at least professional) community. The other communities depend, of course, on the nature of the study. For me, my interest in homeless issues led me to the homeless youth, human service volunteers, and nonprofit leadership communities. It is possible that a pragmatic fieldwork project could include only two communities, the academy/profession and another. However, I encourage

fieldworkers to attend to the social dynamics of the particular place they wish to impact. One doesn't always know how the communities of knowing will parse out until the process begins, but being willing to conceptually separate sub-community structures can prove useful when gaining the language, trust, buy in, and other parts necessary for knowing.

Once the communities have been identified (at least roughly), the pragmatic fieldworker endeavors to join them. Bodies are sites of transformation. In a very real sense, experiences, relationships, and human powers serve as a foundation for methodology. As the human instrument, the researcher joins multiple epistemological communities and becomes the medium through which the situated social worlds of the various communities pass. Now, social worlds do not pass through a person with unproblematic equity. Researchers may occupy one social world more than another and some social worlds hold more sway over the researcher's interpretations than others. Mutuality, even between the notions held by a single mind, is never a place perfectly occupied. I suggest the pragmatic fieldworker apply the same "work in progress" label to their role as medium as he or she does to her ideas and actions. Ultimately, the community model can actually clarify the process of reflexivity, since identification with different communities can serve as starting points for contemplation ("As a volunteer, I see this..," "As a communication scholar, I see that..."). Membership in communities provides critical reflexivity with some context by giving the interrogating "I" a place in which to stand.

It is quite feasible to do high-quality scholarly work without a full membership model. However, there are various advantages to being an active boundary crosser. My

varied past experiences helped me generate interview questions. I could draw on different identities to negotiate access and foster various forms of social capital. Sometimes people from one sphere asked me about life in another. Perhaps most dear to me and still to this day, my past and periodic willingness to live homelessly helps me communicate and commiserate with the homeless people I serve. It forces me to take complaints more seriously, helps me attend to the impacts homelessness can have on mindset and mood, and provides me with ideas for creating new programs. Depending on the issue, not all researchers can simply join all of the constituent groups they wish to engage. However, I would encourage all researchers to seek ways to *share in the life* of all the communities involved.

Engaging in pragmatic fieldwork can also gird against potentially problematic research practices. Some scholars implicate qualitative research as engaging in colonialist forms of knowledge production (Smith, 1990, Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), whereby the social world of the scrutinized people is stolen, transported to the home culture, and transformed into a menagerie. Even researchers who actively try to help the studied population can fall into the colonialist trap of impinging their normative operating models on the studied population. This leads to “improving” the lives of the other by making them more closely resemble that of the researcher.

Pragmatic fieldwork tries to avoid this pitfall by broadening what counts as field. The process of pragmatic fieldwork seeks to know with people in addition to knowing about things. As such, the fieldworker should seek the mutual benefit of all epistemic communities they belong to. Now, particularly in the context of social justice issues, not all communities have the same levels of need. Therefore, a fieldworker should not

pretend all communities they draw together need the same level of labor. Nevertheless, from an epistemic perspective, pragmatic fieldwork follows in Rorty's (1979) critique of philosophy. Philosophy cannot be the "tribunal of culture," any more than it can create a mirror to nature. Instead, the pragmatic fieldworker engages in an inter-communal project of mutual discovery and action. Earnestly joining those communities creates the epistemic landscape of the project. This is not to say that values are never imported or imposed on others. Certainly I am driven by particular ideologies that I carry as I join other communities. But fostering a position of vulnerability as a researcher and striving for polyvocality helps ameliorate some of these concerns.

Pragmatic fieldwork sees community as the lattice through which inquiry grows; social life is the mechanism that produces knowing. Having laid out the community-based approach pragmatic fieldwork takes, the following section outlines the eight practices a pragmatic fieldworker can use to enjoin epistemic communities.

Eight Practices of Pragmatic Fieldwork

Having articulated the underlying paradigmatic commitments of pragmatic fieldwork, I now outline eight practices used by this method. These practices are themselves not original to pragmatic fieldwork, but rather are drawn from a variety of research methods and strategies for social action. The eight practices are: ask, envision, gather, labor, observe, present, reflect, and serve.

Ask.

Asking people questions rests at the heart of pragmatic fieldwork. Drawing on my own experience of asking the woman in Union Station if I could do something for her, I regularly engage in the practice of asking how I can help people. In fact, SUFK has a

tradition of saying, “If StandUp For Kids could do one thing for you today, what would it be?” In addition to guiding organizing practices, asking is at the root of data generation. Of course, interviews are a mainstay of qualitative research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). Also, Dewey’s creative democracy relies on using past experience to order conditions to improve future experience. How exactly is one to get at past experience if not by asking about it?

Envision.

The work of creative democracy is, in fact, creative. Imagination is not a child’s playground, but rather, it is one of humanity’s most powerful and primordial forces – to author worlds of the mind. Critique has limited pragmatic value if it is never followed with generative envisioning of better possible worlds. Similarly, envisioning also has limited transformative power if it is not informed by a critical attention to social realities. Envisioning has both organizational and scholarly ends. Vision can alter the flow of organizational life. It can also produce models and schema that gird theory.

In addition to generative imagination, envisioning also involves planning. Planning is often required to transform social conditions. Based on observations, experiences, and imagination, planning structures ideas in a way that makes them easier to convey and more likely to be put into practice. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) put planning at the first phase of PAR. However, I never found I knew enough to significantly plan before I entered a scene. Planning was always helped by other practices. That said, I concur with Kemmis and McTaggart’s assertion that planning can launch important action or data generation.

Gather.

Because pragmatic fieldwork is ultimately a community enterprise, gathering becomes a key practice. Pragmatic fieldworkers must gather people and resources for knowledge and action. People must be brought together in order to know together. Part of producing knowledge means gathering people. Academics are very familiar with a form of community gathering called the literature review. The academic community is diffused over both time and space, a community reality enabled by information technology (like writing and high speed internet). Gathering the writings of one's academic community girds the practices of nearly all academic traditions. The pragmatic fieldworker can also try to gather other stakeholding knowledge communities. Facilitating connections between relevant communities lies at the heart of pragmatic fieldwork.

Gathering people and resources also enables action. Material resources, like funding, food, and meeting places get taken up by mission-driven people. This means recruiting volunteers or staff, writing grants, and running fundraisers. Gathering creates the social and material conditions that constitute community.

Labor.

Pragmatic fieldwork involves work. It is not enough to inform policy. The pragmatic fieldworker labors. Labor is a powerful part of the method. Laboring is a “rubber-hits-the-road” moment that tests, in the body, the pragmatic power of an idea – its ability to motivate action (James, 1896). Labor evaluates the cleverness of a plan or policy. It is always easy to tell someone else how to do something, but actually doing it may reveal the strengths and flaws of the technique. Labor also develops social capital and trust in a community, which enlivens the process of knowing (Rorty, 1979).

Organizational stakeholders are more likely to grant access to someone who earnestly labors alongside them. It also develops a sense of the life within a community. Finally, labor can be profoundly dignifying, which can transform the fieldworker's identity in powerful ways.

Observe.

Related to ask, observation is another empirical foundation for pragmatic fieldwork. Observation characterizes ethnographic methods (Spradley, 1980). Fostering attentive ways of being in the world improves immediacy, empathy, evaluation, and a host of other organizational virtues. I feel the etymology of "observe" is instructive. It means "watch," but the word comes from the Latin root *ser*, which means to protect or guard. While surveillance often is rendered in a negative light in critical scholarship, to watch over people who are in actual need of protection is a highly ethical act. This act could just as well be called "witness," for simply seeing what others try to ignore is an act of justice.

Present.

The work of a pragmatic fieldworker is also done through written and spoken words. Presenting includes varied forms of representation, including writing, performing, teaching, training and speaking. Presenting is done in the fieldworker's various communities. Presenting warranted assertions need not be done when the research is over. In fact, Dewey (1941) combines inquiry and truth, and makes the case that knowledge can never really be disconnected from the process of inquiry. As such, speaking in the midst of a research project is not to be frowned upon. Rather, speaking with certain knowledge after a project is over is to be regarded with skepticism.

Presentation of ideas is not merely a matter of obtruse elucidation. Researchers have an ethical obligation to speak. To know about an issue but remain silent often plays into unjust social conditions. Speaking also has transformative power on the researcher. Just as performance can alter a person's relation to the knowledge he or she performs (Jones, 1997, Spry, 2011), a pragmatic fieldworker will often internalize realities of his or her work as he or she presents it. Ultimately, presenting ideas provides resources for action and invitation into inquiry.

Reflect.

Data generation and action do not flow between each other unmediated. The pragmatic fieldworker must reflect in order for the two to inform each other. Reflecting is the analytical partner to envisioning. The two mental processes work together to produce the inner world of social change. Reflecting is also key for transforming lived experience into theoretical models. As for pragmatic fieldwork, the method highlights the meaning-making power of intentional reflection. In a way, because of Dewey's fusing of truth and inquiry, the act of reflection becomes just as valuable as knowing.

Reflecting is also pivotal for sorting out practice-based abstractions (we often call them missions, policies, etc.). These are not any less "theoretical" than what passes for academic theory. Reflection also has an ethical dimension. Without critical analysis of the state of affairs, we are unlikely to act rightly. To aid this, the fieldworker's reflections can draw on the critical work done by others.

Serve.

One of the basic ways that pragmatic fieldwork differs from other academic methods is that it refuses to let the life the people it strives to help be separate from the

process of research. Service is related to labor in that it embodies action for the sake of justice, but service is inherently relational. The fieldworker serves *people*. This is based, in part, on an ontology of immediacy, that the world cannot wait for perfect understandings prior to action. Service is similar to labor, in that it tests the pragmatic value of a belief (Does it move you to serve?).

Service also directly improves the mission of academic research. Service stretches across the relational lines of human power, which means that interpretation changes as the fieldworker grows. When I make my body, my mind, my life about others, it alters how I think about them. To care for someone, to make their needs the purpose of my life, has transformative potential. Now, service doesn't necessarily have an ennobling effect. Serving someone in need without critical reflection, without asking what they need, or without joining in their life has the possibility of reinforcing problematic interpretations of power. However, paired with the insights drawn from critical scholarship (which enters pragmatic fieldwork through "reflect"), service to others can destabilize cultural discourses and can reframe operant schema.

The Eight Practices in Practice

I cannot remember to do eight things at once. Once a grocery trip involves more than three items, I must have a list. Otherwise, I will forget something every time. Similarly, I do not wish to imply that my method is to move between the computer screen, the streets, and organized life with all eight of these practices perfectly in mind. Rather, the eight practices are not unlike a to-do list. When spooling up a pragmatic fieldwork project, identifying opportunities and objectives for each practice is a fine

place to start. When engaged in an ongoing project, returning to the list to see if one of the practices has fallen away can be orienting as well.

Improving practice.

Practice is important for improving practice. Knowing the eight actions in which pragmatic fieldworkers engage lays out a personal curriculum. Here are a few ways each practice can be developed.

Ask: Develop empathy, learn interviewing techniques, be curious, foster respect for alternate representations of the world, practice active listening, and learn how to probe.

Envision: Learn heuristic devices, imagine often and vividly, draw ideas on paper, learn planning/problem solving models.

Gather: Learn techniques for recruitment and facilitation and improve skills in grant writing and fundraising.

Labor: Learn techniques for staff coordinating, facility maintenance, etc. Staying in active physical shape can also help prepare for labor.

Observe: Learn fieldnote techniques, read detective stories (Goodall, 1994), be curious, learn how to separate description and evaluation, learn how to be in your senses (active meditation that involves quieting the monkey mind), and engage in active observation.

Present: Learn ways to structure presentation, practice writing, speaking, and performing for a variety of audiences, develop new styles of presentation (including conversational, informational, inspirational, compassionate, etc). Read good writers and watch good speakers.

Reflect: Journal, meditate, learn how to identify and resist the urge to satisfy, read critical scholarship, learn logical reasoning (deduction, induction, abduction), practice reasoning from principles, practice reasoning from cases, learn techniques for reflexive consideration, close reading, and coding techniques.

Serve: Develop your hospitality, cultivate compassion, foster an attitude of otherness, learn strategies for communicating immediacy, and hone resilience techniques.

Each of the eight practices draws on our personalities and histories. Some people may even be naturally inclined to a few more than others. However, there are skills associated with each, and those skills can be improved. As Bourdieu (1977) articulates, our *habitus*, our ongoing, embodied actions, systematically shape the way we see. I believe the pragmatic fieldworker meaningfully pursues social justice by intentionally developing these eight *habitus*. This enables the fieldworker to see the life and structure of human interaction and reconstitute communities through symbols and bodies.

Action Pairs.

In addition to performing these pragmatic fieldwork practices one at a time, I also engage in what I call action pairs. The pragmatic fieldworker can engage in one action for the benefit of another. Formulated as a question, this inquiry reads “How can X improve Y?” How can asking improve my serving? How can observing improve my reflecting? How can reflecting improve my labor? The eight practices then become heuristic devices. If the fieldworker needs to write an interview guide, he or she can move through the six other practices for the sake of asking. These couplings can also form a chain of efforts. Pragmatic fieldworkers can observe to better ask, ask to better reflect, reflect to better envision, envision to better labor... and so on. There is some temptation to lay out an

objective order or step-by-step process. However, that process would be both fictive and useless. These processes move iteratively based on contextual judgment, sudden changes in situations, and external demands. I find it is more realistic to use them together as a broad palate of 64 action pairs that pragmatic fieldworkers can use to develop their project. The following chart provides an example of each action pair. On the left-most column is the practice that can be improved through the eight practices read to its right.

	through asking	through envisioning	through gathering	through laboring	through observing	through presenting	through reflecting	through serving
Improve asking	Practice	Generate questions	Ask the right people	Creates curiosity	Generates questions	Realize new directions	Engages empathy	Builds goodwill
Improve envisioning	Provides new frames	Practice	Input from others	Learn practical needs	See the possible	Perform knowing	Critiques ideas	See other's good
Improve gathering	Attend to various needs	Imagine new resources	Practice	Increase ethos	Direct gathering	Inspire	Identify motives	Increase ethos
Improve laboring	Focuses efforts	Imagine plans	Many hands	Practice	See inner workings	Engages honor	Evaluate efforts	Orients efforts
Improve observing	Another view point	Re-construct scenes	New connections	Share space	Practice	Realize new directions	See in new ways	Attend to the other
Improve presenting	Carry voices	Structure ideas	Share with groups	Increase ethos	Provides content	Practice	Provides structure	Increase ethos
Improve reflecting	Grounds reflection	Populate the mind	Input from others	Embody ideas	Populates the mind	Requires structure	Practice	Engage
Improve serving	Reveals needs	Foster empathy	Many hands	Prepares material	Attend to actual need	Engages honor	Foster empathy	Practice

I will provide an example of two action pair chains that I followed during the course of this project. Each action pair represents one practice moving into and augmenting a second practice.

Serve/Observe: When I first started volunteering at StandUp, I noticed that many volunteers didn't stay. We were always training new people. I wouldn't have known this if I had simply visited the organization, so it was through serving over time that it became observable.

Observe/Reflect: Based on that observation, I began to reflect on why. Certainly there are challenges to working with homeless youth. Volunteers burn out. But it may also have been that our training needed to be improved. The training was mostly informational, and lacked any real motivational component.

Reflect/Envision: Based on these reflections, I began envisioning new trainings. Ultimately, I restructured the training so it was loosely based on the extended parallel processing model (EPPM) (Witte, 1992). The EPPM argues that fear elicits action when the person thinks there is something to be done and they are the one to do it. Based on this model, the informational section of the training served as a form of fear appeal (for the sake of the youth), and the following discussion of program and practices served as efficacy building.

Envision/Labor: When I shared my new model with the executive director at the time, she decided to put me in charge of training.

Labor/Present: And so I began leading the monthly trainings for the organization, and have continued doing so for two and a half years.

As is demonstrated in the above training example, the action pairs lead into each other. The product of one practice calls for another practice to follow. Did I know when I started volunteering that I would be leading the trainings? No. Absolutely not. Instead, I was guided by contextual judgment as I moved through the scene. The work of a pragmatic fieldworker is not unlike a plant, twisting one way then another as it reaches for the sun. The plant never gets to the sun, just as the work of creative democracy is never complete. However, guided by the aspirant ideal, the fieldworker can navigate

around and incorporate different structures or challenges placed in his or her path. Here I provide another example that helps illustrate:

Reflect/Envision: I wondered why volunteers gave their time. So I envisioned a qualitative research project to help answer this question.

Envision/Serve: The research project encouraged me to be more consistent with my service to the youth. I started going on outreach regularly, which improved my ability to serve.

Serve/Observe: I began taking fieldnotes of my experiences volunteering. I was observing volunteer behavior, and being a volunteer helped open up observational avenues that were very valuable.

Observe/Reflect: As I observed, the actions and discussions of the volunteers began populating my fieldnotes. I read my fieldnotes and thought about what I saw. I started to articulate what I really wanted to know about their commitments and motivations.

Reflect/Envision: Having reflected on what was really curious, I could better envision how my interviews would go. I created an interview guide based on those reflections.

Envision/Ask: As standard qualitative practice suggests, having an interview guide improved the interviews I did. I recruited various volunteers and interviewed them on their commitments to SUFK.

Ask/Reflect: The answers to their questions became transcript data, and that, along with my fieldnote data, served as text to analyze. I started looking for themes and

patterns. During this time, I also engaged in the action pair Serve/Reflect, as my own volunteering pushed my analysis forward.

Reflect/Envision: By reflecting on my textual data and embodied experience, I created a model that helped describe volunteer commitment, drawn from the metaphors volunteers had used.

Envision/Present: I shared my model with my academic community.

Present/Envision: Presenting forced me to clarify what I really meant, and the feedback I received helped me tighten both my argument and the model.

Envision/Labor: Based on the model for volunteer commitment, I started thinking about the organization's efforts differently and began structuring our efforts based on the model. To this day, I use the model as a heuristic device for leading volunteers, strategizing development goals, and helping youth imagine their futures.

These two examples serve as pictures of the dynamic recursion of action pair chains in pragmatic fieldwork. The fieldworker moves dynamically, even messily, through the various practices. The stories above are in fact oversimplifications. In a single week, situations arose that called me to engage various practices. But despite being impossible to model linearly, the eight practices serve as an actionable guide for pragmatic fieldwork, which I hope serves as a specific model of creative democracy in a qualitative context.

The eight practices can be used to create plans for future projects. Scholars interested in doing pragmatic fieldwork can use them as a guide to envision action. The practices are perhaps even more valuable as a dynamic, responsive way of being in the world. There are times when I am in the midst of presenting, typing away at my

computer, when someone calls me and tells me the youth house has been broken into. And so I find myself drilling boards across broken doors or covering broken windows. I wasn't planning on laboring that day, but situations arise. Similarly, there have been times where academic concerns are far from my mind, and I am simply helping a young adult use Google to find a house. But then he will say something profound that triggers a series of realizations. And suddenly I find myself in the midst of an ethnographic interview, asking him questions and getting answers that speak to an important issue in communication studies. Sometimes I am trying to break up a fight, and in the midst of the screaming and perhaps traded blows, I'm desperately reflecting on de-escalation techniques that I can implement. In those moments, I'm never thinking, "I'm doing pragmatic fieldwork!" Rather, I draw on what practices I have developed as they are needed.

Potential Problems

Pragmatic fieldwork is not automatically good and right. A fieldworker can attempt to do the right thing but still muck it up horribly. The ethical use of pragmatic fieldwork is a delicate thing. Of course, pragmatic fieldwork is rooted in a value-driven approach to research, as it falls squarely in the transformative paradigm outlined by Mertens (2007). But being driven by virtue makes no guarantee of success. There can be errors in every sphere of action. One can labor in the wrong direction or have misguided service. One can ask flat questions or be distracted in observation. One can present inappropriately, envision incompletely, and reflect shortsightedly. Below is a list of some of the possible risks and some strategies for reducing those risks.

Table 8.2 Ethical Risks and Risk Reduction Strategies for Pragmatic Fieldwork	
Potential Risks	Risk Reduction Strategies
Promising too much transformation	Be honest about possibilities of failure
Disrupting service delivery during research	Try to secure alternative services
Causing human resource drain on staff and volunteers	Keep project and meetings well organized, attempt to compensate communities and organizations for strain
Disrupting worklife stability by recruiting community members into more (likely unpaid) labor	As above
Exposing sensitive information in the research process	Establish norms about information sharing, foster goodwill among participants
Creating data/findings that gets used by others to justify funding cuts	Create a legend of cautions (Fine et al., 2000), bring legislators and administrators in as stakeholders
Letting the community become reliant on the research project or researcher	Partner with and improve extant organizations, maintain some level of commitment to the scene after project's conclusion
Naively assuming power relations will not impact the research process	Use facilitative methods to improve participation, remain aware of possible compliance pressures

Even in the face of these concerns, the pragmatic fieldworker must still act. The possibility for moral failure is not an excuse for inaction. Just as there are type one and type two errors in knowing, there are type one and type two errors in action.

One can act wrongly (type one) or fail to do the right thing (type two). Ethical critique is a necessary part of right acting. But a scholar engaging in ethical critique without ever engaging in action will perform type two ethical errors on a regular basis. Pragmatic fieldwork draws on Dewey's (1933) notion of warranted assertability to attend to this tension. The fieldworker should act when he or she has good reason to, but should

avoid feeling justified in a strong moral sense. Rather, pragmatic fieldworkers must be open to the notion that they will, at times, act wrongly. Warrant here is not totally certain, but instead is a form of *warranty*. Here is my work, and if it is broken, I'll fix it. This highlights the ongoing nature of knowing and acting. As social realities continue to change and grow, our ongoing knowledge needs to produce resources for action. Just as there is no objective fixture on which to hang knowledge out of the context of knowing, there is no way to understand ethical action to other people outside the context of relating.

Table 8.3		
Comparing Errors of Knowing and Acting		
	Type I Error	Type II Error
Errors of Knowing	Believing something false	Not believing something true
Errors of Acting	Doing the wrong thing	Not doing the right thing

Conclusion

I traced a broad, narrative account of my engagement with homeless issues, communication scholarship, and organizing. It is my hope that this narrative reveals the particularities of my subject position. I outlined what I call pragmatic fieldwork, a method that exists at the intersection of pragmatist philosophy, qualitative methods, and participatory action. Pragmatic fieldwork is presented here as a description, an attempt to portray my practices in as honest a way as possible. However, I also intend it to be used by others. I believe there are not enough action-based methodologies that are *actionable*. While I have a dear love for qualitative research, PAR, and pragmatism all on their own and would advocate for their use individually, I believe that together they create a

coherent and powerful resource for transformation. I hope that pragmatic fieldwork can serve others who seek to be advocates, researchers, and social actors.

Chapter 9

IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Drawing on the voices and experiences of homeless youth and scholarly work regarding compassion and organizations, this project has theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. The project's community-engaged, participatory, and qualitative approach allowed the lives of homeless young adults to speak to communication theory, while at the same time promising better tools for practice.

Theoretical Implications: Compassion in Organizations

Individual Compassion in Organizations

As articulated in chapter five, the reflections of the homeless young adults highlight that presence is an important part of communicated compassion in organizations. Based on this finding, I suggest that both Miller's (2007) and Way and Tracy's (2012) models can be broadened to include presence. While this extension is particularly appropriate for understanding compassion with regard to homeless young adults, I suspect that the homeless young adults see social realities others have the luxury of being able to take for granted. Adding presence to the model of compassion helps highlight the often embodied nature of compassionate communication. Including presence in the model of compassionate communication draws attention to bodies, how they are turned and what they are doing. Communication theories are often processual and abstract, and although this can highlight certain dynamics, it can also obfuscate the physical bodies of the communicators. The young adults call us to attend to bodies and in so doing make Miller's (2007) prediction correct, that compassion does indeed involve nonverbal components.

Chapter six demonstrates various moments in the (extended) model of compassion in which interactions can go awry. While I advocate for the presence, recognize, relate, and (re)act model of compassion, we should not uncritically assume that any act of presence or relating is automatically going to be interpreted as compassionate by the one being cared for. The difficult experiences of homeless young adults help reveal important dynamics of aggression, paternalism, delegitimization, and ineffectiveness that move through what one might intend to be compassionate communication.

While Miller (2007) and Way and Tracy (2012) help move away from more psychological notions of noticing and connecting, articulating compassionate failures helps flesh out compassion as dyadic communication. It is not enough to say that compassion is a single person recognizing need and being moved to serve. Rather, compassion in its richest sense occurs when one communicator moves with loving care through the life of the other. James (1909) argues that speaking the truth of our own inner lives is far easier than speaking the truth into the life of the other. Said another way, it is not enough to demonstrate the care we feel, but we also need to consider the ways the other receives care.

It is my hope that the action-preposition pairs articulated in chapter six nuances our theoretical understanding of compassionate communication. Instead of framing compassionate communication as simple actions done by the one caring, prepositions force us to see compassion in relation to the other. This claim is not antithetical to work done by other scholars. Indeed, Way and Tracy (2012), Miller (2007), and Kanov et al. (2004) all claim that compassion is a relational activity. Noting the prepositional nature

of the compassionate subprocesses helps bear this relational reality out in compassion theory by illustrating the necessarily interpretive role of the one cared for. As Way and Tracy (2012) suggest, theories of compassion can “be bolstered and/or problematized by investigating compassion from the perspective of the receivers – the audiences directly benefiting from the compassionate communication” (p. 311). Taking a recipient perspective helps articulate the political and ideological struggles that surround need.

Attention to ruptures also helps guide critical concerns about potential colonialist manifestations of helping. Nonprofit action is not always admirable, and what may be done in the best of intention can destabilize local systems and harm far more than heal (Djankov, Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2008, Doucouliagos & Paldam, 2009, Easterly, 2006, Najam, 1996, Nussbaum & Glover, 1995). Striving for the good is often bound up in power and inequity (Blackstone, 2003). Highlighting the interpellative dimensions of compassion gives these concerns a theoretical frame that mirrors the reflections of the youth. Through systematically identifying interactions they find problematic, the homeless young adults in this study offer evidence that point to the symbolic violence of projection that compassion can perform. The young adults’ experience both gives shape and boundary to failed compassion. Can compassion be problematic? Absolutely, and these findings articulate how and why. Is compassionate communication essentially problematic? Absolutely not, as demonstrated by the young adults’ accounts of compassion being humanizing and transformational.

Compassionate Dynamics in Organizations

Chapter seven sought to conceptualize the dynamics of compassionate communication in organizations. Based on the youth reports on the physical and social

impacts of compassion, I turned to recent work regarding sociomateriality (Orlikowski, 2007, Ashcraft et al., 2009) to explain the relationship between social and material organizational realities. I proposed that compassionate communication is a type of sociomaterial entanglement, and I went on to outline organized compassion as the dynamic processes of change in wellbeing over time.

The derivatives model (wellbeing, growth/healing, care, and community) serves as a visual way of understanding compassionate interaction. I believe this strengthens the movement of sociomaterial constitution of organizations by proffering a more explicit outline of the process. One can identify the material and social forces of care that alter the material and social realities of healing. While I do hold that social and material realities are inextricably entangled (Orlikowski, 2007), I do not think that entanglement need be utter chaos. Articulating the derivatives of wellbeing helps conceptualize entanglement as a set of woven ropes as opposed to a mass of tangled yarn.

Curiously, since the derivatives model of compassionate dynamics is based on functions of calculus, this study also opens the door to those who have interest in studying the subject of compassion in organizations quantitatively. It would require developing a robust measure for sociomaterial wellbeing. I suspect any valid measure would be multidimensional, as sociomaterial wellbeing spans financial, legal, interpersonal, social, psychological, professional, health, and community issues. However, if a suitable measure could be developed, a research project could use the derivatives model as a way of charting compassionate organizing. The research design would need to be both longitudinal and periodic, as the model looks at wellbeing over time.

The derivatives model of compassion can provide insight into how social justice can constitute organizations, and perhaps how organizations are constituted more broadly.

Table 9.1 Potential Derivatives of Varied Forms of Constitution			
	Compassionate Constitution	Constitution (with attention to social justice)	Organizational Constitution
Initial variable	Wellbeing	Conditions	Conditions
1 st derivative	Growth/healing	Trends	Institutional movement
2 nd derivative	Care	Action	Organizing
3 rd derivative	Shared humanness/ Community	Transformation	Coordination

One of the promises of the model is that it enables a discussion of organizational constitution that sees something other than people. Now, as should be evidenced by my focus on presence in chapter five, I am not against an attention to people or their bodies. Nor am I against conceptualizing organizational activities as mutual embodiment. The major finding of a prior study I performed on altruism and social exchange argued for a mutual embodiment metaphor for understanding community life and reconciling tensions of self and other (Huffman, unpublished, 2011). However, I believe that organizational scholars often position their work between the micro and the macro levels of social interaction by casting organizations as a bit bigger than a person but a bit smaller than society. Perhaps most famously positioned in this way by Structuration (Giddens, 1984), organizational theory takes a size or level metaphor as a guiding sensibility.

On the other hand, the constitution of organizations as a process of entangling sociomaterial changes in conditions over time offers a different picture. It eschews a size/level model and co-opts various factors that might otherwise be seen as extraorganizational. Instead of focusing on level, it looks to the changing processes of social change over time. Instead of thinking of broad social issues or particular people, the model admits that particular people and broad social issues are always in constitutive relationships and attends to the ways that constitution changes through social and material movements.

Social Justice and Compassion

This project demonstrates the promise of pursuing social justice with attention to communication. As Peters (1999) puts it, “Just communication is an index of the good society” (p. 269). The social work studies of homeless youth in nonprofits identified traits of positive communication, such as mutuality and low power distance (De Rosa et al., 1999, de Winter & Noom, 2003). Rereading this social work scholarship within the presence and compassionate communication framework I have proposed yields similarities. The positive communication strategies social work scholars identify hover around embodied presence, acts of service, and immediacy. In so doing, the extended compassion model helps explain why the practices were identified by the other studies.

I also believe that this project speaks to the strength of social justice studies in communication because the homeless young adults help identify what compassion studies of more privileged groups may have missed. I suspect that presence is pivotal to all compassionate communication and that it is merely more legible in the context of homelessness.

Compassionate communication may have profound consequences for critical theorizing. In a way, compassion serves as a partner to reflexivity. Reflexivity, a commonly cited virtue of critical studies, involves directing the contemplative lens back on one's self and is important to doing sincere, critical, qualitative research (Madison, 2011, Richardson, 2000, Tracy, 2010). It is useful for interrogating the logics and emotions that construct a person's world. It serves to reveal and critique. Compassion, however, can be positioned as the "outrospective" mechanism for pursuing a more just world (Krznaric, 2012). In the same way that critical reflexivity can identify underlying internal processes that block ethical reflection and perpetuate ideological ills, critical compassion can identify underlying processes in the life and wellbeing of the other.

Specific to chapter five, presence and embodied aboutness help broaden thinking with regard to justice in communication. One conceptualization of marginality is from the perspective of voice. Critical scholarship often attends to the processes that delegitimize, deprive, and enable voice (Buzzanell, 2002, Johnson, 2004). Rakow and Wackwitz (2004) argue that "voice" is the second most important concept in feminism (trumped only by "difference"). Power in relationships, organizations, and societies can be understood by the metric of how much a particular population's voice is heard. This attention to voice is even written into the term "underrepresented." Concerning homelessness, voice is a valuable notion, as organizing processes celebrates the voices of stably housed members of a community over those who lack fixed habitation.

Another way social justice issues are often conceptualized concerns material conditions (Leo, 1891, Ryan, 1915, von Mises, (1922/1981)). Access, or more to the point, lack of access, to reliable finances, housing, healthcare, professional resources,

transportation, etc., becomes a way of measuring the degree of inequity a person experiences. Poverty levels are determined by cut offs in income. Food security is determined by reliable access to nutrition over time. Housing status is determined by ensured use of safe living and sleeping arrangements. Running through all these metrics is an attention to material opportunities and constraints. Concerning homelessness, material conditions become very important to assessing needs. Homeless people are systematically deprived of valuable material resources, and the resources they do muster are systematically delegitimized.

Voice and material conditions are useful and powerful perspectives in social justice. However, I believe that the findings discussed in chapter five concerning presence, immediacy, and embodied aboutness help concretize an embodied approach to social justice. For instance, the act of turning toward, which the homeless young adults identify as a way of being treated human, is not an act of voice or a material condition. It is not about representation or access to resources. Yet, the systematic denial of turning toward the other becomes a powerful way that injustice is enacted through embodied communication.

Consider the common social techniques of not turning toward a person asking for money. Before I started thinking about homelessness differently, when I was walking through a populated urban space, I would strategically not turn toward someone begging. I deployed this strategy for various reasons. Sometimes I was afraid. Sometimes I was busy. Sometimes it was to lessen the cognitive dissonance of not helping. Sometimes I was anxious or embarrassed. But whatever the reason, one implication of the practice is that I deprived the homeless person a moment of shared time and space by refusing to let

my body be about the other. A single act, or a small series of isolated acts, would likely be beneath notice. But the systematic, ongoing, and near ubiquitous practice of denying embodied aboutness constitutes a powerful enactment of marginalization that relegates homeless persons to the literal margins of society's collective senses.

From an embodied perspective, there are also social processes that delegitimize the bodies of homeless persons. Dirtiness alone can be sufficient cause to see the other as a monstrosity. Discourses of the "drugged body" are deployed to delegitimize needs like hunger and normalize destitution and suffering as well deserved (Katz, 1990). Practices of moving homeless people out of economic centers and awaking them and moving them at night contribute to the systematic delegitimization of their bodies. As noted before, these widespread social practices in the United States are part of why homeless young adults are particularly attentive to presence and embodied aboutness with regard to compassionate communication.

It is my hope that these findings about presence in communication help clarify another dimension of social justice communication. Bodies, in addition to voices and material conditions, are a key place where injustice occurs. It follows, also, that bodies become a site for social transformation. Just as facilitative and democratic processes attend to voices and activism and socially conscious organizational structures attend to material conditions, social justice can be sought by attending to bodies in personal, organizational, and cultural communication.

I am not the fabricator of this idea. Various feminisms draw attention to bodies with regard to justice issues (Buzzanell, 2000, Sawicki, 1991). How bodies are read and rendered figures into questions of race. Even in homeless organizing, dynamics of

invisibility of homeless bodies and creating mutuality through community have previously been identified (Harter, Berquist, Titsworth, Novak, & Brokaw, 2005). As such, I am not suggesting that my work here innovates an embodied approach to social justice. Rather, I hope this project joins and becomes a concrete example of how social justice communication can be approached from an embodied perspective. I also do not aim to undercut voice or material conditions. Dynamics of voice highlight ideological movements, and physical conditions highlight movements of materiality. I see the embodied approach as helping serve as the conceptual bridge between these two models. Indeed, the dialectic of ideology and materiality has played out in the philosophy of Marx (trans, 1978) and the development of the critical paradigm (Edelman, 2001). It also mirrors the struggles between philosophical realists and idealists (Walker, 1989).

If injustice as *limits on voice* stands across from injustice as *limits on materiality*, injustice as understood as *limits on bodies* serves to illuminate some of the dialectical landscape between them. For bodies are the resonators from which voices emerge and are the place where limited material conditions ultimately matter. Bodies are inextricably woven into ideology, constructing and constructed by movements of meaning. And yet, they occupy physical space, are constituted by arranged physical material, and move to alter other material arrangements. Including bodies when conceptualizing social justice helps make the dialectic of the material/ideological more clear.

And, perhaps most importantly, bodies, not as conceptualizations, but actual bodies, are the place where the material and the ideological actually merge. The things a person carries on his or her body mingle with what he or she thinks ownership means.

The bodies of the poor mingle with what poverty means. And when the ideological and the material converge, people act with their bodies.

In this section, I have argued that this dissertation extends and nuances current theory about compassion in organizations and social justice in communication. With regard to individual compassion in organizations, this project highlights embodied aspects of compassion by identifying presence as a necessary precondition for other subprocesses identified by Miller (2007), Kanov et al. (2004), and Way and Tracy (2012). It also deepens our understanding of ruptured compassionate interactions, identifies specific negative practices, and theorizes about why those practices fail. I also offer a model of compassionate dynamics in organizations. This derivatives model of compassionate dynamics draws on recent scholarship on the sociomaterial constitution of organizations (Orlikowski, 2007, Ashcraft et al., 2009) and provides an example of sociomaterial entanglement in process. Social and material realities mingle as community fosters care, care fosters growth, and growth fosters wellbeing. Finally, this project contributes to social justice communication scholarship by positioning compassion as a mid-range theory between more specific studies concerning homeless youth serving organizations (De Rosa et al., 1999, de Winter & Noom, 2003) and more conceptual work on social justice communication (Papa et al. 2005, Frey et al. 1996). It also joins a corpus of critical, justice-oriented scholars who highlight bodies (Buzzanell, 2000, Sawicki, 1991) as an important partner to voice and materiality. I now turn to the broader topic of pragmatism as a paradigm for communication inquiry.

Pragmatism and Communication

This project helps draw a more vivid line between the philosophy of action (pragmatism) and the study of communication. Other communication scholars have made this connection. Perry (2001) draws detailed and historical connections between communication and pragmatism. Russill (2004, 2005) and Craig (2007) discuss the strength of considering pragmatism as a framework for communication studies. In fact, one might point to George Herbert Mead, a Chicago pragmatist and father of symbolic interaction, and conclude that pragmatism and a communicative approach to the world are cut from the same cloth.

Rorty's (1979) attention to the social process of knowledge justification, what he calls behavioral epistemology, is particularly salient to organized life and dovetails with questions of organizational knowing. Behavioral epistemology helps bridge the gap between organizational knowledge as knowledge transfer between individuals and positing organizations as knowing entities (addressing an individualism and emergentism question). Organizational communication has much to contribute to, and much to gain from, an epistemology of social justification because the processes that Rorty identifies as knowledge producing are themselves organizational practices. Organizational knowing has been a key investigation in organizational communication (Cook & Brown, 1999, Orlikowski, 2002, Weick & Roberts 1993). But if Rorty is correct, these breakthroughs do not simply pertain to how organizations know, but how knowing works more broadly.

Pragmatism has other benefits. Concepts of social construction can be deployed to serve as tools for deconstruction and identify the component, symbolic parts of supposed realities (Burr, 2003). This is a valuable enterprise to be sure, but the labor of deconstruction is made all the more sweet by the creative recombination of the

component parts identified. This optimistic re-construction is envisaged by Dewey (1939) in his work on creative democracy. By seeing what parts of human life are constituted communicatively, we can not only disassemble them through critique but also reassemble them through creative, active, reification guided by our critical understandings. As Pearce (2009) articulates, social construction identifies the flexible nature of our social world. Dewey's creative democracy lays out how to push on that flexibility to seek a more fulfilling social life. Are new models of social life immune to further critique or consideration? Of course not. But they do offer new ways of being and promise the potential for more humane modes of experience.

Pragmatism also serves as a valuable foundation for qualitative work. While I have the utmost respect for the interpretive paradigm and its manifestations in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), I find that interpretivism and qualitative methodologies are often conflated. While there are some who make explicit the ways that qualitative methods can be used from within the postpositivist world view (Anderson, 2006, Lindlof & Taylor, 2010), pragmatism seems an important and productive alternative to either of these approaches. Some work hints at the connection between pragmatism and qualitative research, with grounded practical theory as an example. Creswell (2008) identifies pragmatism as a possible framing of mixed methodological studies. I laud these movements and have tried to make the connection between pragmatism and communication more fully realized. I believe that pragmatism should be thought of and taught as a paradigmatic foundation in communication studies.

Ultimately, this participatory action research serves as an example of pragmatism-based communication inquiry. The research drew richly from varied epistemic

communities while also striving to improve the interaction between those communities. It also serves as an example of creative democracy by laying out the dynamic movement between past experience, imagining conditions for future experience, and implementing those newly imagined practices. Finally, I argue that this research approach shows how pragmatism can serve as an alternative paradigmatic foundation for qualitative research. With this in mind, I now turn to the ways this project broadens community-based, qualitative methodologies.

Methodological Implications

Although, this project has compelling theoretical implications, its methodological import has broader applicability. One of my explicit aims of the project is to improve and develop participatory action research and community-embedded scholarship. PAR is an excellent research methodology for communication scholars. It lends robustness to our research regardless of the paradigm, as implementing successful programs is an excellent indicator of positivist validity and creating social change is the ultimate goal of critical research. PAR has a lot to offer communication studies. Also, communication scholars are well positioned to perform PAR and transform communities. With our various communicative competencies (including interpersonal immediacy, conflict negotiation, cultural sensitivity, nonverbal awareness, group facilitation, public speaking, and leadership, to name a few), we are trained in the skills needed to implement successful PAR projects. Engaged scholarship requires communication. Due to our broad education in communication skills and our ongoing exposure to these ideas through teaching, communication scholars are well equipped to move into a community space and justly, equitably, and democratically enrich lives. Inviting more communication scholars into

participatory methodologies will require more published models of PAR. This project adds to the growing body of methodologically sound and socially proactive research. Also, in chapter four, I provide an outline for pragmatic fieldwork, a pragmatic and qualitative approach to PAR. In this section, I will articulate the implications of pragmatic fieldwork in two ways. First, I will answer a series of questions posed by Kevin Barge (2001) regarding practical theory as each question pertains to pragmatic fieldwork. Second, I lay out the ways pragmatic fieldwork serves as a *relational* epistemology and how it broadens traditional academic productions of knowledge to include things like courage, dedication, and gentleness as important ways of knowing.

Pragmatic Fieldwork as Practical Theory

I believe that pragmatic fieldwork can be held up as a form of engaged, community-based, methodology for creating practical theory. It is not the only method, but it is particularly appropriate in the context of social justice issues. As such, it helps provide an answer to questions surrounding practical theory posed by Barge (2001). In his introduction to a special topics journal on practical theory, Barge defines practical theorists as:

Embodied persons elaborating their abilities to explore, make sense of, and engage the uniqueness of their lived experience at particular moments in time and to cocreate with others forms of communication that facilitate the emergence of new possibilities for action. (p. 6)

He describes the diverse body of practical scholarship by identifying three way of thinking about it, including mapping communicative dynamics, engaged reflection, and transformative practice (2001). In his summary of his reflection, Barge poses six

questions that I find very helpful because they highlight the ways that practical theory differs from broader academic norms. In the spirit of dialogue, I will answer each of Barge's questions about practical theory as it relates to pragmatic fieldwork.

“What is the role of practical theory?” (Barge, 2001, p. 10)

Practical theory is one outcome of pragmatic fieldwork. While serving and laboring, the fieldworker asks and observes. This produces ideas on which the fieldworker reflects, envisions new ways of understanding, and presents to others. However, practical theory is only an outcome in one sense (namely, to the academic community). In the pragmatic view, a practical theory is an abstraction that leads to action, or what James (1896) would call a living hypothesis. As such, the role of practical theory is also about eliciting action. Because of its focus on action, the metric of validity in practical theory is less about mirroring the world and more about moving the world. Practical theory also functions as an intercommunity collaboration. Because academics who create practical theory are themselves part of varied communities, contexts where practical theory are shared become an intercommunity gathering grounds.

This project created practical theory, provided motivation, and drew together community. It outlined practical theories about compassion that help focus communicative activity inside nonprofit organizations. It drove me, members of the academic community, and broader members of the homed community to become more involved in the lives of homeless people. Finally, the project fostered community between the various stakeholders to collaborate on improved services. In doing this project, I learned that “theory” is a much broader phenomenon than I had originally

understood. Yes, theory is a form or model of abstract knowledge, but it is also the knowledge that moves people and the knowledge between people.

“Does practical theory yield immediate benefit for those involved in the process of theorizing, or does that benefit surface at some later point in the form of training?” (Barge, 2001, p. 10)

While I have no problem with training practices, pragmatic fieldwork holds as an essential tenant that theory and action are engaged in iteratively. The fieldworker should strive to make his or her time in the field one that benefits the lives of those involved through transformative practice. This is motivated, in part, because of an ontology of immediacy, that the world unfolds in the present and that the present is the only time to act. However, pragmatic fieldwork is also rooted in the notion that theorizing is enlivened by action, that certain social worlds remain invisible until one serves, and that social transformation and knowledge production are separate moments of the same transaction. My initial entry point into issues of homelessness began in 2009, a full four years before the completion of my dissertation. Because of the social justice issues facing homeless people, four years would be far too long to wait to provide help. Also, in service to homeless people deeper dimensions of their worlds become made known. For these reasons, pragmatic fieldwork holds that theorizing and acting are both aspects of knowing.

“Are theory and practice viewed as separate strands?” (Barge, 2001, p. 11)

No. They are both the product of being in community. Certain communities have standards on what counts as what, but they are part of the same transaction.

“Practitioners” make abstractions and “academics” act. I prefer to think of theory and

practice as moments as opposed to strands. And there are even moments that they simultaneously occur. I can remember hurriedly running to a clothing drive and realizing that I had no sign or banner. All I had was my shirt. But as I showed up and starting collecting clothing I realized in that moment that my banner was my body. Not only did I have the symbol of my organization emblazoned across my chest, my presence and labor stood as a sign to interpreters. In that moment, where is the theory and where is the practice? One might call my realization the abstraction, but it is simultaneously the mechanism I was using to organize material resources. Frankly, notions of theory and practice fall apart when closely examined. The social world is the context on which all theory is based, but it is also the stage upon which we act. A vivid, pragmatic sense of social reality collapses distinctions of theory and practice.

“What is the role of the practical theorist?” (Barge, 2001, p. 11)

To work the field. Pragmatic fieldwork blends epistemic communities and highlights the social process of knowing by obfuscating the difference between academic, practitioner, and other community ways of knowing. In the social justice context, pragmatic fieldwork engages in a single labor that unifies communities and embodies the eight practices for the sake of enabling future flourishing. Among academics, this will seem like research in that it draws on the lived experiences of people and develops theoretical abstractions based on them. But it will also look like engaged social change. In this way, the role of the practical theorist depends on the perspective – researcher or activist. Most honestly, however, the role of the pragmatic fieldworker is citizen or, even more simply, member, of the communities they occupy.

I had a single labor – to improve the lives of homeless young adults. However, this labor required me to network with and draw on the experiences and knowledge resources of various groups, including organizational communication scholars, homeless youth, and nonprofit staff, volunteers, and leaders. In all spaces, I played the role of advocate, although the varied epistemic commitments of each community called for varied forms of representation and credibility. Citation is valuable to some. Time spent is valuable to others. Still others value what trials I have faced. Everyone, however, values that I care. What is a practical theorist? A loving doer in the world.

“Is the reflexive relationship between the “theorist” (read academic researcher) and the community members (read “subjects” or “coresearchers”) acknowledged and celebrated?” (Barge, 2001, p. 11)

Yes and no. In some ways, the theorist/fieldworker is no different than other community members. I suspect this question is looking at the “practical” community, so I’ll start with my relation to the human service community. I am not terribly different from other practitioners. Most practitioners have some form of education, draw on personal and conceptual resources to do their work, and are motivated by a personal and ideological set of beliefs. Am I a different kind of human service provider? In many ways, no.

This question, at least when considering pragmatic fieldwork, also concerns my relation to the academic community. I go to conferences, write papers, and teach students. I draw on my research to bring insight into scholarly discussion. Is that really different than other scholars? I think not very. Am I a different kind of academic? In many ways I am not.

It is important, though, to not obfuscate differences. I find that I often have responses that are a little different than other service providers. When disaster strikes, people often think, “What should we do?” I have a simultaneous thought, “What do we know?” I try to bring communication knowledge into moments of organizational rupture. SUFK had an extremely violent outburst between two youth that caused several volunteers to quit and a few youth to not come back. Naturally, it had us thinking about our conflict policies. However, in part because I worked down the hall from a well-known conflict scholar, I did not jump to immediate conclusions. Rather, I scheduled a meeting with Jess Alberts and discussed the communicative and conflict nuances facing the organization. I also called a similar, older organization in Phoenix for a sense of what other practitioners did. I do not think this is a unique trait, but it may set me apart from other members of the homeless human service community.

As for the academic community, I find that I often have different worries than my peers. I regularly hear stories of struggles with papers, difficulties with students, or general frustration that no one cares what they study. My work is not without worry, to be sure. I worry about how I am going to get enough money to feed 40 youth this Saturday. I worry about how to retain volunteers. I worry about the youth when it rains. And somehow, those worries make the strain of academics seem a little farther away. When I am sick and tired of writing and when I have no ideas left in my head, I remind myself that the more I learn the better I can help the people who need me. The tighter I write, the more people will know the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

“Is the practical theorist a change agent whose mission is to create the life enhancing within a given human system?” (Barge, 2001, p. 11)

Yes.

That's all that need be said about that.

In this section, I have responded to Barge's (2001) six questions about practical theory from the perspective of pragmatic fieldwork. I believe there are various good answers to these questions, as there are various good methodologies for creating practical theory. My project led me to think about theory, practice, and ethical action in a way that collapses substantive distinctions between the academic community and other communities. It challenged me to think about the embodied nature of abstraction and how abstractions are taken up by bodies. It also led me to reconfigure expectations about how long I should be in the field (longer), what counts as the field (conferences as well as alley ways), and what I am in the field (a human knower, just like everyone else). These realizations are born out in the model of pragmatic fieldwork I propose. I now turn to the broader, epistemic context in which pragmatic fieldwork operates. In so doing, I have two aims. My first goal is to position pragmatic fieldwork as an example of what I call relational epistemology. My second goal, though based on the first, is to show why pragmatic fieldwork matters. Because knowing is not nearly enough. It matters how and with whom we know.

Courage, Dedication, Gentleness, and Relational Epistemology

If a student walked up to me and asked how she could be more confident in a belief, I could give her a solid methodological answer. I would point her to various techniques from tests of statistical significance to robust case study. Many methods, when done well, can reliably provide confidence for a particular claim.

If a student walked up to me and asked how he could hold a belief more ethically, I could give him some methods for that, too. I could suggest some critical methods to reflexively examine taken-for-granted assumptions that serve the powerful at the expense of the oppressed.

But if a student came to me and asked how to hold a belief with more courage, more conviction, or more gentleness, I'd be at a loss. I might start to say, "Courage doesn't have anything to do with knowing..." but then I'd stop. Why not? Sure, courage has emotional dimensions. But don't confidence and doubt have emotional components?

From a pragmatist perspective, knowledge claims have to do with generating and coordinating action. Hypotheses, as James (1896) points out, can be living or dead. They can move us to action or not. In the face of danger, people often fail to act, even when they think they should. Perhaps if they knew more courageously, they would. Particularly in movements toward social justice, fear in the face of danger limits action. In this section, I will outline how relational epistemologies, of which pragmatic fieldwork is an example, can help give us the courage – epistemologically – we need to act.

Some may want to posit a broad dispositional trait of courage, but I think that is a weak claim. My father is courageous in the face of car crashes and flame-engulfed buildings, which is appropriate to his occupation as a firefighter. One of my most vivid memories as a child was my father sliding his body under a crashed car in the middle of the intersection to assess and comfort the people trapped underneath as they waited for the on-duty firefighters to arrive. He did this off duty, without his flame retardant gear, and without hesitation. However, I will also never forget him being nervous and fearful in the face of giving a toast at my brother's wedding, which is something as a speech

teacher I find pretty routine. Courage, it seems, is not a monolithic personal trait. I think it far safer to assume that our professionally-honed knowledges prepare us to act courageously. He doesn't just know about fires. He knows about fires in a courageous way.

As such, I refuse to chalk courage up to mere chance. As academics, we pay detailed attention to the manner of our knowing. For some conversations in communication studies, see Chaffee and Berger (1987) on social science, Phillips (1990) on post-positivism, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) for qualitative inquiry, Agger (1991) on critical theory, Best and Kellner, (1991) on post-modernism, and Darsey (1994) on rhetorical theory. Among these conversations, we have methods for knowing more confidently, more ethically, and in a more nuanced way. However, I see no reason we should not strive to know more courageously. And not just about giving toasts at weddings.

As a discipline, we have tools to make powerful and needed social change in various contexts, from social justice to democracy, training to negotiation, and more. And I challenge us to not only know how to meaningfully participate in justice, democracy, and negotiation, but also to know in a way that we act with courage, to know so we act even in the face of difficulty and danger.

I often hear calls for academics to apply their theories in the world or to seek a real impact. In order to accomplish that goal, it is important to investigate the systems in our academic world that push us to be disengaged. Of course, one can point to tenure processes or reward structures as institutional, and I think this a fair analysis. However,

policy often conforms to value, so I don't think reward structures are a sufficient explanation.

Our epistemologies bear consideration. Academic epistemologies generally favor skepticism, abstraction, and theorization. And none of these are bad. I see academic knowing as being based on the following gamble: the beliefs a person holds at the moment are accidents of experience, that there is very little chance all their beliefs are true, and that anything short of a thorough investigation is unlikely to improve the state of affairs. Now, I happen to find this sentiment very palatable. How can a person know better if he or she does not know how to evaluate his or her knowing? The man who thinks he knows everything never learns. Skepticism can be a form of epistemic humility, a hesitancy in the face of belief.

Epistemologies are frameworks for knowing, webs of knowing that serve to facilitate an intertextual evaluation of ideas. But in addition to these lofty definitions, epistemology also has emotional and ethical components. Skepticism is an epistemic position and intellectual practice, but we can conceive of skepticism as having the emotions of doubt, hesitancy, and self restraint about knowing. A research method is systematic, yes (in that it is a method), but research methods have emotional outcomes.

As such, epistemology can be defined as a network that helps determine the quality of ideas. But I encourage a reading of "quality" that moves past an uncomplicated sense of worth. An epistemology helps me ask "What *qualities* must my beliefs have if they are going to be worth having?" Epistemologies are ways of knowing, yes, and by that, they espouse certain ways a person should relate to a bit of belief, ways we should feel about our ideas. Epistemologies are the hands we use to gather, sort, hold, and

dispose of our beliefs. And each of those hands has emotional and ethical dimensions in addition to intellectual ones. The hands of (scientific) academic knowing are a reserved/calm hand of analysis, a doubtful/cautious hand of skepticism, and a confident hand of near certainty. How many scholarly projects could be characterized as passing a belief back and forth between reserved analysis, cautious skepticism, and confident near certainty? Some methods specialize at certain movements between these positions, but as a community, these are our general positions.

I came to a deeper understanding of academic ways of knowing when I interviewed to be a firefighter for the city of Long Beach. I was fresh out of graduate school, had recently moved, and was very open about the direction my life could take. Although I did not have the typical background of potential recruits, I had decided to apply to be a firefighter, and after passing a written and physical test, the next step was the chief's interview. Candidates can set up mock interviews and ride alongs at individual departments to prepare them for the actual interview with the chief (in exchange for ice cream).

During my mock interview, I was asked why I wanted to be a firefighter. I gave what I considered an excellent answer, a little mini account of my realization that life as a firefighter would be pretty good. I answered the other questions with similar ease. I stepped out of the kitchen to let them deliberate and was called back in five minutes later. We reviewed my answers, and the firefighters gave me little tips about what to focus on and how to frame things.

“Last, let's talk about why you want to be a firefighter.”

Ok, I thought to myself, I really knocked this one out of the park.

“Your answer... was wrong.”

I was flabbergasted. My mind stuck immediately to the obvious logical problem with their analysis. My answer was about why *I* wanted to be a firefighter. It was my opinion. Only an error in introspection could yield a wrong answer. And I was pretty sure I knew why I wanted to be a firefighter. But as my mind was reeling from this outrage, I was also trying to shut it up and listen.

The three men went on, saying that I'd be competing with the following answer: “Sir, I want to be a firefighter because I've always wanted to be a firefighter. (I didn't point out that that is a borderline tautology.) I've wanted to be a firefighter all my life. My first memory is touching a red, wet fire truck when I was a kid. I am going to be a firefighter; the only question is if I'll have the honor of serving Long Beach.”

Oh. That's a more quality answer. Or, more to the point, that answer has the epistemic qualities they are seeking, namely a deep, abiding commitment to the occupation. My thoughtful, contemplative response had demonstrated precious little conviction or courage because of its speculation. And guess what? No newsflash here. It takes conviction and courage to be a firefighter. Much in the way it requires reserved, even hesitant, contemplation to be an academic. It is easy to write off conviction and courage as merely personal traits or virtues or dispositions or emotional tendencies. Whatever else they are, courage and conviction are also epistemological. They concern how we relate to our beliefs.

Consider “knowing with conviction.” Conviction means to be decided. Its root is “with victory,” as in, to be overcome by the force of an argument. But closely related are also notions of devotion, loyalty, and commitment. These emotional/ethical experiences

shape our relationship to our ideas. In the same way I can be hesitant about a belief, I can be devoted to a belief. Loyal to a thought. Committed to an idea. Committed knowing is a deep, abiding relationship with a piece of knowledge, even in the face of fatigue.

Courageous knowing? A willingness to act on a belief, even in the face of danger. Unsurprisingly, an occupation that regularly faces danger values courageous knowing. Firefighters have the conditions to reliably discriminate between ideas that are held courageously and those that aren't. And they have the conditions to hone, improve, and deepen the courage with which they hold their ideas. Said another way, firefighters have methodologies (like training, tradition, close knit groups, risk-taking culture) for honing courageous knowing. Epistemologies of courage and commitment are not often fostered by academic knowledge structures. Most of our methods foster skepticism, analysis, and confidence.

When I first came to graduate school, we would be asked to introduce ourselves to various people and summarize our reasons for being there. As the introductions would go around the room, most members of my cohort, most advanced graduate students, and most faculty would use the same turn of phrase, "My name is so-and-so and I'm interested in..." As it would come around to being my turn, in the midst of a chorus of "I'm interested in," "I'm interested in," I would ask myself, "Why am I here? Am I *interested* in the lives of the poor?" Somehow that didn't sound right, and I certainly didn't feel that way. But no one ever started with "I'm deeply committed to..." so I would just say I was interested in nonprofit organizing and left it at that. Framing a scholarly agenda within the context of interest casts the role of the academic as one who is curious. However, curiosity is not the only inspiration for inquiry.

Had I to do it again, I would say, “I am inspired to do inquiry by a deep commitment to the lives and wellbeing of the poor. Based on that devotion, I pursue ways to improve the symbolic, relational, and material conditions of their lives.” Yes, I think homelessness is interesting. Yes, I think it is an interesting intersection of culture, space, class, bodies, consumerism, materiality, and discourse. But that is not why I study it. I flatly refuse interest as the sole motive, the lone emotion, the solitary ethic of my epistemology. My research agenda is an agenda. A plan of action. A thing to do. During my time at the Hugh Downs School, I volunteered at StandUp For Kids and served in various roles that included outreach counselor, volunteer coordinator, and executive director. More broadly, I worked with the Arizona Street Outreach Coalition and networked with various organizations and entities to improve the network of services provided to homeless people. None of these activities were driven solely, or even principally, by interest or curiosity.

Now, I love academics. I love curiosity. And I love a world where curiosity matters. But generating knowledge using only curiosity has its limitations. Curiosity is an epistemic hand that can grasp and turn and play. It can even have a consuming drive. But curiosity is not the appropriate emotional/ethical relation to a belief if one hopes to hold that belief through adversity or in the face of danger. Methods of curiosity and skepticism do not lean toward courageously or devotedly held beliefs. I am not arguing that curiosity or skepticism are bad relations or useless hands of knowing. They are powerful and profound. Being able to look skeptically at an organizational practice is valuable when assessing its success. Skepticism is the intellectual safeguard against fanaticism. Most of us know well, either through personal relationships, experience with politics, or

knowledge of history, the harsh outcomes of a person who is convicted to an idea that should be thrown away. Courageous and devoted knowing that lacks openness to being wrong is likely to lead to ruin. Inversely, openness without the ability to stand and risk and suffer has limitations, too.

If knowledge positions are like hands, it is my wish, prayer, and sacred task to be an epistemological Ganesha. Ganesha of many hands is the patron of arts and science, the diva of wisdom and intellect, and the remover of obstacles. Knowing can have transformative power. But if our only relationship to our thoughts is curiosity, we are unlikely to endure our pursuits when the interesting is stripped away and only the plaintive remains. If our only interaction to our belief is hesitancy, we are unlikely to respond in crisis or take our ideas past the brink of safety. Having a more diverse set of epistemological hands allows more possible knowledge relations, which in turn means a more diverse set of obstacles can be removed.

Some specific examples are in order. Through the course of this project, I have related to issues of youth homelessness in various ways. I have fostered doubt about organizational policies and practices, curiosity about alternate practice, dedication to the lives of the homeless, courage to act even when there were potential dangers, and gentleness toward the suffering of others. Practically speaking, each of these relationships was fostered through ongoing pragmatic fieldwork. Asking young adults for feedback and reflecting on their answers helped me skepticize organizational practice. These critiques, paired with imaginative envisioning, helped foster my curiosity about possibilities. Four years ago, I was not at all as dedicated to homeless people as I am today. The embodied aspects of pragmatic fieldwork helped foster my dedication. By

observing their suffering, trying to meet their needs through service and labor, and ultimately sharing in what parts of their lives I could, the priorities of my life became resituated to be in service of their community. Finally, courage in the face of danger slowly grew from asking the homeless young adults about effective strategies, presenting my ideas in public (which made me accountable to the person that I said I was), and gathering experience from long-term service. I have *known* about homelessness since I can remember. But it is only through use of ongoing, reflexive, and embodied methodological practices that I have come to know about in what James (1896) would call living ways.

This is an earnest invitation to more broadly imagine the structure of epistemology to include positions of belief that include courage, commitment, and gentleness. In a world where we attend so meticulously to the methods that impact how we hold our beliefs, I desire those methods to continue to grow in complexity so as to include methods that let us hold our beliefs gently in addition to loosely, passionately in addition to curiously, devotedly in addition to confidently, and courageously in addition to credibly. In that world, action, application, and advocacy flow freely from deeply held and embodied knowledge. For when we choose to relate to our beliefs differently, we will find they relate to us differently as well. When we hold our thoughts gently, passionately, devotedly, and courageously, few forces or powers or principalities can stand in our way.

Specific to this project, I hope that pragmatic fieldwork serves as an example of a method that can generate courageous, gentle, passionate, and devoted knowledge. As an iterative method, it mimics the many-handed movement between knowledge positions that I am suggesting. Moving between receptive positions (like asking and observing) to

inward positions (like reflecting and envisioning) to outward positions (like service and presenting) allows the fieldworker to have a rich set of experiences with a particular piece of knowledge.

More to the point, the nature of the method fosters commitment. Because it is embodied, relationship-based, and ongoing, researchers are likely to foster deeper ethical commitments with regard to “research participants.” The fact that pragmatic fieldwork is embodied creates commitment because it forces the fieldworker to live in closer communion with the subject being researched. Because it is relationship based, the fieldworker comes to intimately know the life of the other, which is perhaps the most reliable way to have concern. Finally, because it is ongoing, the fieldworker has time to create abiding bonds with both the issues and the people involved. Namely, this project has changed the way I think about food, rain, jobs, and homes through coming to better know homeless people. Statistics about health risks become embodied by the struggles of friends.

I can imagine some hesitating and saying, “Isn’t it manipulative to have people engaged in a method in order to increase their commitment to something?” In truth, many efforts to elicit loyalty or commitment are in the service of the powerful. However, pragmatic fieldwork is an intentional process, one engaged in at the behest of the fieldworker themselves. As such, it is a tool of self transformation used by the fieldworker to foster the commitments they desire to have. In my own development as a person, my early exposure to homeless issues involved a disconnect between what I felt and what I thought I should feel. I wanted to care more, but I didn’t. Even once I had started serving homeless people, there were days where I would have rather stayed home.

But the various positions pulled me forward. Sometimes I needed to network to get more interview data and that got me off the couch. The notion of “conflict of interests” in research methods is well established. However, I believe that “confluence of interests” is a powerful opportunity. When all interests pull toward the good, it becomes hard to let the moment pass.

Pragmatic fieldwork improves the gentleness of knowledge, too. While it develops habits of courageous knowing, it also fosters empathic and careful knowledge. By knowing members of community closely, the subject of research becomes more intimate and the stakes higher. Knowing gently means treating ideas and the possible actions they imply with care, attending to the details much like one brushes the wrinkles out of a blanket on a bed before a guest comes to stay the night. Most researchers would call their methods careful. Pragmatic fieldwork is best done when full of care.

In the end, I hope to contribute a relational epistemology. As I have articulated, epistemology concerns how we relate to our beliefs. Epistemologies are the frameworks upon which our beliefs hang; they are the hands with which we hold what we believe. This being the nature of epistemology, methodology becomes about altering our relations to belief. Passing a belief to another epistemic hand and possibly back again. Consider the epistemic position of doubt. We may relate to belief doubtfully (or hold it in the hand of doubt) and then engage in particular methodologies to alter our relation. Several failures to confirm it may deepen our doubt, while discovering evidence that the belief is true (or good, or right) may cause our relation to change, perhaps even pass into acceptance, confidence, or certainty.

However, epistemology also concerns our relations to other knowers. What and how we purport to know will lead our knowledge peers to see us as credible, false, trustworthy, ethical, responsible, pious, etc. Justification, what legitimizes or warrants our believing a thing (a well established criteria in the knowing process), is ultimately a social process. As Rorty (1979) reminds us, we know what our knowledge peers let us get away with.

In this light, methodology is also about transforming our relations with other knowers. When we engage methods for further discovery, doubt, or certainty, we most often engage our method in the context of an epistemic community and embody the methodology (praying deeply, counting closely, writing beautifully, or reading avidly). Research/knowing practices constitute epistemic communities. Some folks like to say, “Different questions require different methodologies.” I prefer, “How do you want to know what you want to know and with whom do you want to know it?” Epistemology is relational. This is true of all knowing, from oral traditions to ethnography, variable analytic study to charismatic religious insight.

By embracing the full sense of relating in the process of knowing, I believe we can create better organizations to serve homeless youth and create better societies. Not only does knowledge help provide resources for action, but also a community-based production of knowledge helps improve society. This is because the practices of relational research are, in fact, a model for improved social worlds. In this way Dewey’s (1941) fusing of inquiry and knowledge becomes vividly clear. Deepening relationships with others deepens relationships with the truth. What do we know better than who and what we love? Democracy, equity, liberty, and life enhancement are simultaneously the

ever-unattainable end and the imminent means of community knowing. And in a world where we always are already in transformation toward the good, courageous knowing, committed knowing, and gentle knowing become a matter of course.

The written representation of this project is necessary for connecting with the academic community. This is because the academic community is diffused over both time and space. However, I hold as equally important the relationships fostered through the project. This includes the volunteers I have worked alongside, the leaders of organizations I have mentored under, the staff I have trained, and, most importantly, the homeless young adults who have graciously shared their lives with me. These relationships are not peripheral social artifacts created by research but are instead an essential part to the process of knowing. Those relationships are, incidentally, the best chance this project has to have its practical implications acted upon.

Practical Implications

Consonant with my commitments to action, I consider the implication this project has on practice to be indispensable. As I theorized, one of my imagined audiences was nonprofit practitioners. While it was not the focus of this particular project, my fieldwork did include direct service providers, as well as administrators and management within human service agencies. These findings are hopefully as much a gift to those communities as they are to anyone else. In the following section, I will articulate how various findings can impact practice in nonprofit organizations that serve homeless young adults.

Presence and Compassion

Presence indicates care, particularly when, in addition to being there, the communicator engages in embodied aboutness, either in the form of nonverbal immediacy or through physical acts of service. Homeless young adults systematically referred to one or more of these components when reflecting on compassionate, positive, and/or helpful interactions in organizations.

Understanding presence in a rich way can inform direct practice. It serves as a reminder that young adults' perceptions of service provider motivations matter and that these perceptions are largely determined by nonverbal and embodied communicative dynamics. It is heartening that embodied aboutness can be achieved in two ways. On the immediacy front, turning toward, looking at, and attending to the other get read as indicators of authentic care. Although computers are often an important part of intake, making an effort to turn one's body toward the homeless young adult communicates presence and potentially compassion. This may mean turning a chair so the default position is toward the client as opposed to the computer or employing tablets to enable more immediacy for the client. Immediacy also serves as a guide for daily interactions with clients. In busy environments, it is easy to get frustrated by people coming up to ask questions. However, finding ways to respond to questions and requests with immediacy has value. Ultimately, immediacy supports arguments for client-centered processes. With regard to physical acts of service, consider this. Going above and beyond, even if just in little ways, can profoundly impact the way a client perceives themselves, the individual staff, the organization the staff works for, and even humanity or the world at large. As such, it is worth fostering care in work and finding small, time-effective ways of serving

clients in personal ways. These specific suggestions are not entirely different than ones made by customer service scholars (Gabbott & Hogg, 2000, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1990, Wuthnow, 1993). However, attention to presence as outlined above can serve organizations as a guiding heuristic for generating practice as opposed to specific suggestions that may or may not be applicable to varied organizations.

On the broader policy end, these findings are also instructive. Since homeless young adults read so much into immediacy and acts of service, both acts done with the body, it becomes a challenge to deliver effective, compassionate service with limited staff. Paying attention to clients directly and doing things for them bodily all require time. In an age when staff is smaller and clients more numerous, it seems challenging if not impossible to institute policies for direct and authentic interaction. The most natural suggestion based on these findings would be to increase staff, decrease case loads, and encourage more immediacy with clients. However, staff is often the most costly part of a nonprofit, and funding is harder to come by in recent years. However, not all acts of compassion require more time. In fact, engaged interaction and successful referrals can facilitate successful integration into organized life in ways that can potentially save time in the long run.

I suggest that a more strategic and integrated approach to volunteers has promise. Of the organizations I networked with through this project, all operated with one of two models. Either they were a predominantly volunteer organization, where all direct client work was done by volunteers, or they were predominantly paid staff, with volunteers fulfilling background and supportive functions and having little or no interaction with clients. Realistically improving presence inside paid staff organizations could be

accomplished by more funds and more staff. It could also be accomplished by integrating volunteer advocates/boundary spanners into the organization's function. Volunteers, who would be familiar with the organization's services and rules, could provide a present and caring face for nonprofits that had staff members who provided more classical functions.

Finally, presence serves as a strong counterpoint to the value of organizational mission and inclusive organizational language. Clients are unlikely to be charmed by an organization who always speaks politically correctly if its staff aren't spending time with them. The findings on presence also serve as a critique of physical spaces that disrupt immediacy, like service windows and food kitchen lines. Folks are likely to appreciate the food, but unlikely to interpret those interactions as compassionate. So in extreme cases, creating presence means dismantling the physical structures that control movement inside organizations. However, I do not blankly make those suggestions. There are other issues that must be considered that this study does not address. These include safety, crowd control, protection of information, and staff-client ratios.

Ruptures in Compassion

Identifying presence as a key part of compassion improves practice. Identifying practices that rupture the compassionate process is instructive as well. Often, nonprofit practitioners are very devoted people who have deep and noble reasons for working or volunteering in the capacities they perform. However, despite the best of intentions, interactions go awry. It is important, therefore, to have a detailed understanding of how those processes fail.

The ruptures model and its prepositions outlines a guide for practice. All compassionate subprocesses done "against" the other are likely to be read as

noncompassionate. Of course, it is not always obvious what the homeless young adult will consider “against,” but there are some common points to keep in mind. I would say the following to those who work with the homeless: Pay attention to clients’ body language to assess if one’s own presence is being taken as aggressive. Ask the young adults what they want before assuming you know their needs. When connecting/relating, focus on the legitimate and humanizing parts of the other. Finally, consider how (re)actions could be taken, with particular attention to the realities of touch aversion and allergy to paternalism. The prepositions can be used as a guide by asking the following question: “Will the other see this as for, with, or against them? In this situation, is that going to be ok?” Framed in the positive, staff should strive to be comforting in presence, nonoffensive in noticing, gracious in connecting, and appropriate/effective in responding.

Interpellation, the act of heralding people into a subject position, is sometimes an unwieldy concept. However, it is actually very helpful when creating organizational policies. Managers and leaders should consider how organizational practices “herald” or call people into a social position. Organizing chores by bunk numbers makes sense, but yelling out bunk numbers to gather people to clean the bathroom can be profoundly dehumanizing. Also, training staff to recognize their capacity for symbolic violence (consider the staff who rudely told Derrik to do something worthwhile with his life) becomes important as well.

Dynamics of Compassion in Organizations

The discussion of compassionate dynamics in organizations is perhaps the most abstract and academically minded aspect of this project. That said, I believe even it has potential impact on nonprofit organizational practice. The most basic is this:

organizations can be made from compassion. This does not imply one particular practice. Instead, it serves as a broad inspiration for a particular way of living in organizations. While rules and missions and service goals and pay checks are all important, I find it a helpful and refreshing reminder to know that organizations can be created through compassion – by sharing in each other’s lives. Also, the idea of sociomateriality, that social and material life are inextricably bound, can inform nonprofit action. We do a client or member of our community few favors when we see only part of the social and material interchange.

More specifically, the four tiers of compassionate organizing are also a helpful way of charting and brainstorming organizational function. Identifying wellbeing in a broad way that includes the wellbeing of all stakeholding people/communities develops a rich sense of what success means. This suggestion is not unlike Deetz’s (1992) call to attend to broad community interests as opposed to narrow corporate ones.

Growth/healing practices are ways to move, live, and grow toward greater wellbeing. These practices establish the basic functions in which the organization needs to engage. Knowing the ways to move toward the good, staff and leadership in organizations can then identify care practices – the ways organizations can accelerate growth/healing processes. What can make those practices more effective? What efforts can the organization take to bring those home? Organizations can also identify shared humanity practices, which are organizational dynamics and realities that improve care. What are the ways members of communities can more authentically respond to the humanness of the other? Finally, community-building practices can be identified to foster shared

humanness. These four levels serve as a powerful heuristic for facilitating broad and actionable efforts to foster compassionate dynamics in organizations.

Pragmatic Fieldwork for Nonacademics

In chapter four, I articulated the process of pragmatic fieldwork and described it as an action-imbued form of research. Because it is a methods section in an academic paper, I highlight the ways the practice produces knowing. However, pragmatic fieldwork is not restricted to use by academics. It is a feasible way to engage in organizational life, as well.

The principles are identical. The pragmatic fieldworker identifies communities and draws them together to better know and act. The fieldworker does this by engaging in the eight practices: ask, envision, gather, labor, observe, present, reflect, and serve.

The eight practices do not change because someone is getting his or her paycheck from an organization, or if they are not getting a paycheck at all. The back and forth movement between each practice to improve the other practices remains the same. Now, usually leaders, staff, and clients of organizations need encouragement in different ways. While academics may need to be urged to be more engaged in the world, nonacademics usually need encouragement to engage in more robust investigation. Although the pressures of daily functioning make idle searching for answers hard to fit into the schedule, important matters should still be researched.

Below is an example of how pragmatic fieldwork can be used by nonacademics to engage in creative democratic processes.

Ask: Ask people what they want, what they fear, and what they hope. Ask clients how they would run the organization. Ask managers how to best use their organizations.

Ask staff how their lives can be made better. If the fieldworker is in a position of power, he or she needs to pay attention to how their role will discipline responses. In all cases, being respectful of responses and making the person they are in conversation with feel comfortable improves the process of asking.

Envision: Creative envisioning of the future is important to the life of organizations. If a leader/manager, imagining potential directions helps decision making. Members or clients of organizations can use vision to contribute to the organization as well by drawing on their experiences to imagine new organizational forms.

Labor: Suggesting that practitioners should labor is somewhat silly, as their involvement in organized life is usually rooted in labor. However, practitioners should view their labor as potentially transformative in addition to being a matter of course. Both staff and managers should strive to keep an open mind about how engaging in nontraditional forms of labor can help them understand different parts of the organization. Clients in organizations can labor within organizations to gain a better understanding of the lives of staff members and broaden their own sense of what the organization is trying to accomplish.

Observe: Of course all people in organizations observe things. In addition to the ordinary observation needed to get through the day, pragmatic fieldwork asks that members of organizational life attune to rich and nuanced organizational happenings. Keeping a journal about events can help drive observation. Developing critical and analytic observation is helpful as well. Being able to unpack unstated assumptions and underlying trends not only fosters understanding but also hones practice.

Present: Representing organized life to others spreads information about the organization and drives the pragmatic fieldworker's own understanding. Both practitioners and clients can benefit from presenting about the organization's functions and the issues that face it.

Reflect: Analytic attention to organizational life is necessary to the liberation and life enhancement of the people within that organizational world. Based on the other pragmatic practices, the fieldworker generates insight via reflection. This reflection can be done informally or systematically, individually or in a group, or based on a specific instance or general experience.

Serve: Like labor, much of the work of practitioners rests in service to others, particularly in human service agencies. As such, it becomes important to attend to the ways that service drives the other practices and how the other practices improve service.

Research for nonacademics looks a little different. To those who want a disciplined approach to their practice and participation in organizations, I suggest they familiarize themselves with academic, peer-reviewed journal publications. While these texts can be daunting, they often contain very valuable insight that can inform practice. Practitioners can draw on theory to help create policies and envision new programs. In an electronic information age, people often research their medical diagnoses online. I encourage members of organized life to do the same.

However, pragmatic fieldwork is much more than searching databases. It also involves drawing on the processes of knowing within communities through qualitative research. Now, many organizations utilize comment boxes or opinion surveys to help gather feedback from constituent groups. What those forms of data collection have in

ease they lack in richness. Pragmatic fieldwork, on the other hand, has the capacity to generate textured accounts of both enacted behavior and personal experience. Perhaps more importantly, as the pragmatic fieldworker resists privileging particular representations, the knowledge creation process becomes more democratic. Of course, in the diverse life of organizations, not every interest can be fully met. Stakeholders can have competing and perhaps even zero-sum interests. Because of this, the democratic process becomes invaluable for reaching fair-minded compromises and creating possible futures that are informed by varied imaginations. I believe that earnestly engaged pragmatic fieldwork is also profoundly humanizing, as it asks the fieldworker to serve and labor for the sake of the other while being attentive and reflective. In this way, the practice can help the fieldworker to cross boundaries and see humanness in the life of the other, which I believe improves the democratic process as well.

Limitations and Keeping in Context

An important part of scholarship is being aware of the limitations of one's own work. Identifying limitations is not the same as apologizing. Each decision in the process of this project was made intentionally based on a set of criteria that are consistent with my commitments to social justice, pragmatic paradigm, and attention to communication. However, all positions have limitations.

Transferable, not Generalizable

All qualitative work rests in the context of its creation. Good qualitative research is not generalizable in the statistical sense but has potential to be transferrable (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Research is transferable when it “overlaps with [the reader's] situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action” (Tracy, 2010, p. 845). As

such, my degree of confidence that the findings discussed here can be used elsewhere varies with the degree to which the elsewhere is similar to the context in which this study took place. I would confidently organize in homeless young adult serving nonprofits in major metropolitan areas. I also think that the findings relate to homelessness in general, though certain older adult populations may place different emphasis on different interactions. I also suspect that youth and young adults, even those who are not homeless, may have similar attention to presence and perceive similar ruptures in the compassion process.

Beyond those contexts, I encourage readers to transfer the findings with prudence. This is not to say that this dissertation does not speak to general issues of organizing, compassion, or social justice. To be sure it does. But remembering this discussion's initial context, homeless young adults in nonprofit organizations, is key to making fair minded and safe transfer.

Warranted Assertability, Not Ultimate Knowing

As Dewey (1933) suggests, knowledge is not an independent outcome of knowing, but an inextricable part of the process. In this way, these findings are not final stopping points of analysis, but momentary resting points in the longer arc of the moral universe. As such, I do not promise they are without defect, but rather think they are ready to be used. And as they are used, I encourage and invite the insight of those who find flaws. I do not present a formula for utopia, but rather my best creative rendering of the democratic process of improving organized life with regard to homeless young adults. If it is broken, let us talk about how to fix it.

Legend of Cautions: How Not to Use These Ideas

Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2000) suggest that qualitative researchers include a “Legend of Cautions” in their work, an explicit naming of ways the work should not be used or interpretations that should not be drawn. This does not prevent said interpretations or actions from happening, of course, but at least a careful reader will know the truth of it. As such, I include a legend of cautions here by laying out some interpretations and actions that I consider it imprudent or unethical to try to draw from this project.

In general, hastily reconfiguring programs in unrelated fields is unwarranted based on this project. While I outline strategies for improving compassionate communication, decisions to alter practices should be based on a rich set of interests. Similarly hasty is the uncritical restructuring of legislative realities. While I believe this project does have implications for city, state, and national politics, those directions are not made immediately clear in this process. As such, I would caution against using these findings or the quotes presented to inform policy not also rooted in a broader analysis.

I will state a few ways that this project should not be used and that any attempt to use it in that way is a gross divergence from its data. First, I caution any who would try to justify spending cuts to homeless services because their problems can be solved through compassionate interaction. Such a conclusion ignores significant issues of materiality outlined in chapter seven. I also caution against using this project, particularly the section on ruptures, to infer that homeless young adults are somehow ungrateful for services provided or one sided in their analysis of conflict. On the contrary, most had very flattering things to say about organizations, and while their reflections on negative

interactions were often marked by intense emotions, they almost always provided fair-minded analysis of their own role in negative interactions. Finally, I do not intend to impugn any organization in particular or in general, or any representative of those organizations, as being simply unjust. While there are certainly stories of negative interactions with police officers or shelter workers, these narratives represent interpretive experience. This is not to say that these stories are not important, in fact, they are critically necessary to successful democratic organizing. However, so too are the voices of the nonprofit practitioners and police officers.

Not Experimental Design or Critical Deconstruction

The basic stance of this research project was one of engaged action with regard to social justice issues facing homeless young adults. Taking this research position places immediate social and material action as the focal point of the project. Although this focal point is useful for invigorating the change-oriented aspects of the methodology, it limits the project's ability to live up to the standards of experimental design and critical deconstruction.

Pragmatic fieldwork differs from experimental design methods in the rate at which it considers data, posits solutions, and acts on findings. While experimental design prudently waits until after a technique is proven, often in single or double blind studies, before implementation, pragmatic fieldwork engages in iterative movement between analysis, proposal, and action. Some may find this process risky. To be sure, there were moments where I found myself called to act in ways I was unprepared for, to make decisions that I wanted more time or data for, and asked to step into roles I doubted I could fill. Sometimes young adults would be experiencing health or legal issues beyond

my ken. I floundered with day-to-day aspects of administration. Other times I lacked the network and experience to fund activities or organizations. Sometimes I had to choose to expel or forgive a client from a program based on second-hand accounts alone. There were times when a policy needed to be changed quickly. And there were moments, although they were few, when I had to decide what I should do as violent conflict erupted between two (or more) young adults.

And I made mistakes. I made decisions based on a single principle instead of broader considerations. Sometimes I panicked and reacted rather than responding with composure. Still other times, I took a long view when more decisive action was needed. But even in these failures I remained, ever trying to improve the processes of my involvement in the community and deepening my capacity to act. I believe that experimental design has a place in participatory action research, particularly in developing costly or long-term policies. However, pragmatic fieldwork helps put the work of experimental design in context and provides a methodology that responds to changes more quickly.

My efforts also diverge from some of the sensibilities of critical deconstruction. For instance, my commitment to the service of others may seem to be a form of nonprofit neocolonialism. Action in the service of marginalized people can also reify differences between people. These critiques served as ethical considerations during my project, and I made every effort I could to not co-opt space used by homeless people or foist my own vision of what a good life is on others. My early work in the field helped orient me to the rules of appropriateness concerning unused urban space and provided me with various versions of what wellbeing looks like for people experiencing homelessness. But even

while taking these issues into consideration, I cannot promise my efforts were never invasive or “neocolonial.” While I tried to learn and be transformed in equal measure to what I taught or tried to change, I suspect some may worry that this project caused harm. This critical concern is not entirely different than the worries the experimental scientist has about hasty action. Wrong may be done in the pursuit of the good. These concerns are well founded.

But this project always had a mission. And that mission always was, and continues to be, rooted in a desperate urgency. Right now, even as I write this very sentence, some of my best friends, who just happen to be homeless, suffer in profound ways. One needs to have emergency surgery. Another is locked in legal problems. Another recently separated from a financially supportive partner. Another has pneumonia. Each of these needs do not present themselves as interesting research questions or critical concerns. They are carried to me by my friends, the members of my community. As such, this project favored action, even if it meant risking unreliable or problematic interaction. I do not blithely dismiss those risks, as they are both detrimental to ethical action. However, I also chose to not be petrified by them and collaborated with well-trained positivist and critical scholars to deepen my sensitivity to each concern.

Limits of Participatory Component

Even within the framework of PAR this project has limitations. I sought to incorporate the voices of various stakeholding groups in the process of the research. However, because the project evolved over time, there are ways that this effort involved less democratic processes than other PAR designs (for examples of highly democratic PAR, see Pearce & Pearce, 2001, Brydon-Miller, 2001). The research questions were

formulated in conversation with homeless young adults about issues in their lives. Data focused principally on homeless young adult experience. Analysis was informed by conversations with homeless young adults. Despite these feedback processes, what this project did not involve was ongoing, open forum facilitation of the research processes. I consider this a limitation, and in future studies I hope to include the community stakeholders in more parts of the process of pragmatic fieldwork. For the time being, I think it is fair to say that I had significant success in the liberating, life enhancing, and equitable standards of PAR and that the democratic process was less robust. While I was fully participative in the life of the community, the various stakeholding communities were involved in the research process in fragmented as opposed to holistic ways. This was in part because of IRB (Institutional Review Board) regulations on the process and because of practical timelines set by my own life circumstances. In future projects, I look forward to inviting more participation from varied community members into all parts of the process.

Future Work

Having reviewed the various theoretical, methodological, and practical implications, I now turn the question of where to go from here.

Perhaps the most basic, though still valuable, is to investigate the importance of presence as a subprocess of compassion in other contexts. As this is a qualitative project, its explanatory strength rests in its context. Homeless young adults, who are deprived of presence by systems of social inequity, highlighted it in their interviews. It stands to reason that they may notice presence, nonverbal immediacy, and acts of physical service in ways that others may take for granted. However, that is a speculative claim, which

could be supported through further qualitative (and potentially quantitative) work. In what contexts is presence also needed? Are there contexts where presence is incidental? I think there is valuable work to be done with regard to online/virtual displays of compassion and presence. Online formats complicate notions of embodiment, and therefore notions of presence.

In addition to investigating the theoretic claim more broadly, I believe there is value in replicating the recipient-focused inquiry of compassion for other populations. My own study was directed by the insight of Way and Tracy (2012) and their intuitions that looking at recipients would provide valuable nuance proved to be very true. In part, studying other contexts with a recipient focus will help develop a broader conversation and sets of data on ruptured compassion. Potential contexts include health communication, parenting, and teaching. I also think that there is nuance to be had through taking the question one step further and studying compassion from a mutual stance. This would involve decentering compassion from a provider-recipient perspective. Studying compassion mutually would be best served by interviewing across various groups.

This project can also continue by broadening its topical focus. Conze (1997) articulates how Buddhism use the Bodhisattvas to teach that compassion cannot be fully given without wisdom. Wisdom and compassion are the two chief virtues of the Bodhisattvas, who delay their enlightenment to seek the cessation of suffering for all. But Conze argues that enlightenment/wisdom is not periphery to the work of the Bodhisattvas, because wisdom allows true attention to the other by avoiding the complicated dynamics of selfish service to others. Also, the various ruptures of

compassion suggest that wisdom could play a role in effective compassionate action. As such, bringing this work into conversation with work done on wisdom in organized life seems fruitful.

Another potential topical expansion includes emotional labor. Managing emotions in the workplace are often conceptualized from the perspective of a paid employee for the sake of a paying customer. Emotional labor is therefore conceptualized as problematic because it systematically benefits the interests of the management at the detriment of the employee. However, what are the ways compassion for underrepresented people problematizes notions of emotional labor? Bolton (2000) begins the work of disentangling the paid/at work versus unpaid/not at work dichotomy, but more attention could be paid to the dynamics and outcomes of emotional labor in the social justice context. Therefore, I suggest that notions of emotional labor can be both extended and delineated by taking them up in organizations where workers support the disenfranchised. For instance, are the dynamics of burnout different when expressing felt concern?

In addition to expanding topics, this project lays out a variety of concepts that could be measured quantitatively. As a pragmatist, I am methodologically agnostic and believe that one or another does not offer a privileged perspective on the truth. While a quantitative account would lose some richness, it could test to what degree aspects of presence and ruptured compassion are widespread phenomena. I also believe this project is a gift to more rhetorical and broad discourse-inclined analysts because it provides an opportunity to show how high-level discourse plays out on the level of individuals. The homeless young adult's interpretations of their interaction can help illustrate discursive consequences of particular ideological and social formations.

With regard to the derivatives model of wellbeing, further work can be done to develop and collate measures of sociomaterial wellbeing. The derivatives model can be modeled mathematically because it is based on actual derivatives (the change in x over the change in y). In this case, x is sociomaterial wellbeing and y is time. Collecting data for this model would involve ongoing, longitudinal measurement of wellbeing. This study poses significant challenges. The measure of wellbeing would need to be sufficiently diverse to capture the richness of the various sociomaterial components, while at the same time the survey would need to be brief enough that it could be taken often and without detracting from the ordinary function of the participating organization. That said, modeling the accelerations in wellbeing (healing/growth, care, and shared humanness/community) would be profoundly valuable both on a practical and academic level.

Additionally, future opportunities lie in teasing out how compassion constitutes organizations. I believe qualitative research is well positioned to demonstrate how organizations come to be constituted. What are other constitutive dynamics? Can organizations be competitively constituted? Collaboratively constituted? Does the derivatives model abstract out to other forms of constitution? Scholars like Lilius et al. (2011) are beginning to raise questions about how compassion manifests at the organizational level as opposed to the individual level. I believe there is a rich intersection between the question of organizational-level compassion, sociomateriality, and the dynamics of compassion in organizations.

Another future project involves developing compassion, empathy, and outrospection as the partner to critical reflexivity. Reflexivity is lionized in critical and

qualitative research, and I believe there is a more articulate case to be made about how to read one's own stance through systematic and in-depth attention to the lives, minds, and souls of the other. There also seems to be more work regarding the dynamics between discourse, bodies, and materiality in organized life via qualitative research.

On a paradigmatic level, I would like to see pragmatism continue to be forwarded as an alternative foundation for doing communication inquiry, for both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Pragmatism and the discipline of communication share intellectual history, have overlapping goals, and partner together well. It is perhaps because the fit is so strong that we do not have to identify it. However, I believe that identifying pragmatist values is a reflexive responsibility. Also, I find that the most commonly cited paradigms (postpositivist, interpretive, and critical) each pose some challenges to socially active research. Finally, pragmatism offers interparadigmatic commensurability, which has value for our disciplinary lives.

Perhaps the most impactful direction this project can take concerns adopting, testing, amending, and critiquing pragmatic fieldwork as a method of advocating for social justice and creating knowledge. Pragmatic fieldwork stands at the crossroads of more than a century of qualitative best practices, American pragmatist philosophy, and social justice advocacy through research. As such, it is not so much a new method, but rather an identified space between rich traditions. However, where space is, people can be. My own use of pragmatic fieldwork over the last few years has been extraordinarily rewarding and I hope fruitful for the communities in which I have lived. Developing it further involves use, both by others and myself. Are there missed practices? Are some

action pairs more productive than others? What are the ethical considerations tied to each practice? What are potentially problematic dynamics of connecting communities?

Related to developing the method of pragmatic fieldwork is the project of probing the relational and emotional side of epistemology. I believe the twin attention to how a knower relates to a belief and how he or she relates to other knowers is extraordinarily valuable for understanding the process of knowledge. Further articulation of the precepts of relational epistemology lies in the future, as well as comparing and contrasting it to various other epistemological traditions.

Similarly, future work concerns taking up the question of dedicated, courageous, and gentle knowing. In part, this is valuable because it helps articulate the relational and emotional parts of knowing as noted above. Perhaps even more powerfully, understanding how dedicated, courageous, and gentle knowing has the potential to contribute to and extend the pragmatist project of philosophy in action. Researchers, practitioners, and members of communities can develop methods to produce the kinds of knowledge relations needed to take up the tasks they desire. Social transformation can be fostered by strategically taking up projects of knowing that hone action. This helps problematize the distinctions between practice and theory, research and activism, and knowing and doing. But it does much more. There are things that must be done, and we want people to do them. Dedication, courage, and gentleness enable us to know the things we need to be the people who can do the things that must be done.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

It is not uncommon in ethical discussions to propose thought experiments. Sometimes these are moral dilemmas that drive the imagination to identify salient ethical values. Other times they are extensions of implications, sets of nested “what ifs” that push consideration of actions into the future. While I love ethical thought experiments, they are themselves not enough to create ethical realities. Imagination only transforms the world when bodies move.

My project sought to produce a creative, transformative confluence between homeless young adults, nonprofit organizations, volunteers/staff, and communication scholarship. By taking a community-engaged, participatory, and qualitative approach, I focused on the interactions between youth and the organizations. Particularly, I looked at how homeless young adult experiences help improve services and illuminate compassion within the context of the nonprofit organizations. In the end, this project extended the individual model of compassion to include presence, identified potential ruptures in the process of compassion, and identified compassionate dynamics in organizations. It also articulates a method I call pragmatic fieldwork, a qualitative and pragmatic approach to participatory action research. Each of these outcomes speaks to varied community interests, from theoretical nuance to informing policy.

My project is not made meaningful because it fulfills an objective hole in the intellectual space created by the prior work of other scholars. It is rendered meaningful by being part of an ongoing, dynamic process of inquiry, a socially embedded

conversation about what it means to live good lives, have healthy relationships, and be part of just communities.

Similarly, this dissertation is not a culmination of knowledge – the final, artful production of a set of ideas. If this is the end, then I am a charlatan and a fool. A written work, a spoken presentation, or a representation of any kind has no place being the final moment of anything. Knowledge outside inquiry is woefully adrift, because inquiry is the process that gives knowledge life. Deeper and dearer will I study and act, and I invite others to follow.

It is likely I will try to publish sections of this project. I wish those pieces well. But my more furtive hope is that the many threads herein follow me, their writer, and are taken up by you, their reader. Questions of how communities should be made still must be asked. Conversations between the homed and the homeless must continue. Acts of service must continue to be embodied. Care must be given. People organized. Two hundred some pages later, we have only just begun. For it is only in action that any ideas have a chance to be real or beautiful or good or true.

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