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Enabling Courageous Collective Action: Conversations from United Airlines Flight 93

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On September 11, 2001, the passengers and crew members aboard Flight 93 responded to the hijacking of their airplane by organizing a counterattack against the hijackers. The airplane crashed into an unpopulated field, causing no damage to human lives or national landmarks beyond the lives of those aboard the airplane. We draw on this story of courageous collective action to explore the question of what makes this kind of action possible. We propose that to take courageous collective action, people need three narratives—a personal narrative that helps them understand who they are beyond the immediate situation and manage the intense emotions that accompany duress, a narrative that explains the duress that has been imposed upon them sufficiently to make moral and practical judgments about how to act, and a narrative of collective action—and the resources that make the creation of these narratives feasible. We also consider how the creation of these narratives is relevant to courageous collective action in more common organizational circumstances, and identify how this analysis suggests new insights into our understanding of the core framing tasks of social movements, ways in which social movement actors draw on social infrastructure, the role of discourse and morality in social movements, the formation of collective identity, and resource mobilization.

Key words: adversity; collective action; conversation; courage; narrative; organizing; social movement framing
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On September 11, 2001, four men hijacked United Airlines Flight 93 as part of a large-scale attack on the people and symbols of the United States. The people aboard Flight 93, with help from family and friends on the ground, fought back against their hijackers, compelling them to crash the plane into an unpopulated field rather than into a national landmark (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004). Many people, including family and friends, media representatives, and government leaders, have admired the courage they saw in the responses of people aboard Flight 93 (e.g., Bush 2003, *Dateline NBC* 2001b, Kashurba 2002, Longman 2002). While we cannot describe the pain and emptiness created by the loss of these people, or the loss of thousands of others on that day, as fellow citizens we too admire the courage of the passengers and crew aboard Flight 93. And as organizational scholars we admire the ability of a group of strangers to organize a courageous response to a frightening and unimaginable situation. We were inspired by this story to conduct a theoretical analysis of what occurred, which is valuable to organizational scholars for two reasons. First, we believe that trying to learn from these people is a way of honoring and valuing what they were able to accomplish. Second, the actions aboard Flight 93 address a pressing theoretical question for organizational scholars: "What enables courageous collective action?"

Although people in most organizations seldom face situations as terrifying as those on Flight 93, they do face situations that require them to organize collective action in the face of unexpected, threatening, or fearful developments (Hamel 2000). An exploration of the events that occurred aboard Flight 93 offers insight to people who must organize responses to duress, whether it stems from violence or from social and economic change. This question is timely because demographic shifts, trends in technological advancement, political tension, management reorganization, and deregulated competition all suggest that we can expect organizations and their members to face increasing duress as the future unfolds (Karoly and Panis 2004, *The Atlantic Monthly* 2004, World Trade Organization 2003).

Beyond the practical implications for those living and working in a rapidly changing and often threatening world, the events aboard Flight 93 also offer important theoretical challenges. The story defies simple explanation, lending it what Weick (2007, p. 14) terms the "generative properties of richness." Many theories would suggest that the actions aboard Flight 93 were improbable. For example, research on the collapse of sensemaking (e.g., Weick 1993) suggests that organized action is unlikely from strangers operating under extreme duress. We would be surprised to see people taking on informal leadership roles in a fearful situation, given people's

tendency to diffuse responsibility (Darley and Latane 1968). Furthermore, the typical responses to threats that organizational literature identifies would suggest rigidity (Staw et al. 1981), overlearned responses (Barthol and Ku 1959), or a visceral "fight or flight" response (Cannon 1963) to the hijacking. The passengers' and crew's choice to fight back may have been visceral, but it could not have been viscera alone that guided it, given that even the most action oriented among them spent nearly 30 minutes talking and developing a plan before acting.

Beyond the social psychology of the events, a post hoc game theoretic analysis (e.g., Murninghan 1994) of incentives for cooperating or defecting in the collective action problem that Flight 93 presented would suggest that fighting back rather than accepting death was rational. This is obvious only in retrospect, though. On the flight, the passengers and crew faced conflicting cues, did not know the hijackers' motives, and struggled with intense emotions (Longman 2002). Even after deciding to attack, "rational" analysis could not provide easy answers to questions about running up a narrow aisle toward armed men who had already killed people aboard the plane. In our analysis, we attempt to restore some of the uncertainty that was present on that day. In this we are following Weick's (2007, p. 17) advice to researchers studying difficult human events: "You need to restore the past to its own present with all its incoherence, complications, and 'might-have-beens.' Capturing more of the present moment is important to offset our tendency to rely too heavily on the specious clarity of rolling 20/20 hindsight."

Given the problems of collective action aboard Flight 93, a useful literature for helping explain events comes from the study of social movements (Davis and Thompson 1994, McAdam et al. 1996, Tilly 1978, Zald and Berger 1978) and particularly research on the framing of social movements (e.g., Benford and Snow 2000) because of its focus on language use. This perspective on collective action examines how people work within a social infrastructure to construct interests and mobilize resources. Rather than assume that actors' interests are given, social movement scholars show how people create the conditions under which social action happens (McAdam et al. 1996). These literatures are limited, however, in addressing the interactive and discursive nature of real-time collective action. Social movement framing focuses on sensegiving rather than sensemaking and largely ignores how people manage the intense and often debilitating emotions that often accompany duress.

Given the advantages of social movement research for our focus, we use ideas from this literature to draw insights into conditions that enabled courageous collective action aboard Flight 93. Given the lack of focus on emotions, interactive discourse, and sensemaking, however, we extend this literature by drawing on additional theoretical perspectives, such as sensemaking (Weick 1995), resourcing (Feldman 2004), and the organizing property of communication (Cooren 2000, Quinn and Dutton 2005) to examine how people create and use narratives, not just frames, to make sense of difficult situations, manage emotion, explore the moral ramifications of potential actions, mobilize resources, and create new identities that help them address the problems of collective action under duress.

Courageous Collective Action

Our claim that events aboard Flight 93 provide an opportunity to understand what enables courageous collective action may seem strange if we understand courage as solely based in subjective experience. Our ability to understand how the passengers and crew members aboard Flight 93 felt and interpreted their situation is limited. However, an analysis of more than two thousand years of philosophical, historical, theological, and social scientific literature on courage (Aquinas 2002, Aristotle 1985, Becker 1973, Rachman 1990, Tillich 1952, Yearley 1990) suggests that courage inheres in a pattern of actions rather than in the dispositions or emotions that people feel (Worline 2004, Worline and Steen 2004). Specifically, courage involves a pattern of constructive confrontation of duress—where duress is a situation filled with compulsion, pressure, or difficulty that threatens the integrity of the group or its ability to carry on with its projects (Worline 2006). People recognize and identify this pattern with impressive consistency, using it instinctively to label actions as courageous (Worline 2004).

In this view, courageous action is constructive, because a person or collective engages in actions of moral or social worth, but also confrontational, because the actor is moving in ways that are opposed to the ongoing norms, social pressures, expectations, and flow of events. Under this definition, actions such as speaking up (Morrison and Milliken 2003), principled organizational dissent (Graham 1986), pro-social rule breaking (Morrison 2006), whistle blowing (Miceli and Near 1988), expressing minority views (Nemeth and Chiles 1988), or issue selling (Dutton et al. 2002) are often, but not always, courageous. Speaking up, for example, can be felt and understood as courageous by members of a collective when the group is under duress that goes unaddressed because of norms or pressures that reward silence. When a person speaks up anyway—in opposition to the pressures toward conformity, status quo, or silence—to say something that has worth for the social system and perhaps even remedies the duress, participants in the system, who sense the duress and recognize actions that are directed toward remedying it, intuitively recognize this kind of voice as a courageous act (Worline 2004). By contrast, if a person speaks up in the absence of duress, or speaks in a way that adds no value to the

broader social system, speaking up would not be recognized as a courageous act.

We adopt a definition of courage as a pattern of constructive confrontation in a situation of duress, suggesting that courageous collective action is constructive confrontation of duress by a collective entity. With this view, we can speak definitively of the counterattack on Flight 93 as courageous, whether or not the passengers and crew thought of themselves that way. A hijacking is a situation that puts people in duress in every case and did so even before airplanes were used as weapons in suicide attacks (Bailes 2001). The people on Flight 93, acting as a collective entity, confronted this duress with actions that had moral and social worth for their families and friends and for the American people generally. Evidence of their effect on observers can be found in books, presidential speeches, news reports, and many other reactions to Flight 93 including Paul Greengrass's 2006 film, *United 93*.

As we explore questions about what enabled the people aboard Flight 93 to organize courageous collective action, we also remember that we are analyzing events from a day that still evokes raw emotions for many people. If we can understand what enables courageous collective action, we hope to shed light on how collectives create constructive outcomes in a world where pressures threaten the very people who try to make a difference (Quinn 1996). Without compromising the rigor of our analysis, we hope to examine these events tenderly and in ways that unlock their inspiration for organizational theorists, researchers, and actors. Ultimately, our hope is that our theorizing will enable people to create courageous collective action in organizational life and that each instance of courageous collective action will become a living tribute to add to the extraordinary legacy of those who died on that day.

Events on and Around Flight 93

Before entering our analysis, we sketch the events that occurred on and around United Airlines Flight 93 on September 11, 2001. We order the events following Longman's (2002) *Among the Heroes* and *The 9/11 Commission Report* (2004), which we discuss more fully below.[1]

United Airlines Flight 93 was scheduled to fly from Newark, New Jersey, to San Francisco, California, at 8:01 AM on September 11, 2001. Seven crewmembers were assigned to United Airlines Flight 93, including Captain Jason Dahl, First Officer LeRoy Homer, Jr., and five flight attendants. Captain Dahl arrived at approximately 7 AM, reviewed the status of the plane, completed his paperwork, met his first officer, boarded the plane, ran through his preflight checklist, and met with Deborah Welsh, the lead flight attendant. Nothing in the flight preparations led the crew to suspect anything unusual.

The first boarding call for Flight 93 occurred at 7:20 AM. The flight was scheduled to board 37 passengers, including the four hijackers. Ten passengers, including the four hijackers, sat among the Boeing 757's 24 first class seats. The remaining 27 passengers sat among the 158 seats in coach. The passengers boarded, and the plane left the gate on schedule, but the runways at Newark International were congested. Flight 93 waited until 8:42 AM before it was cleared for takeoff.

Three other airplanes, United Airlines Flight 175, American Airlines Flight 11, and American Airlines Flight 77 were all hijacked while Flight 93 was waiting for takeoff or within minutes after Flight 93 left the runway. The first of these was Flight 11, which was hijacked at 8:24 AM, while Flight 93 was still on the ground in Newark. Flight controllers apparently knew of the hijacking by 8:25 AM, but communication among flight control, airplanes, the government, and the military was haphazard and incomplete. Flight 11 crashed into the first tower of the World Trade Center at 8:45 AM, just minutes after Flight 93 took off. Flight 175 crashed into the second tower of the World Trade Center at 9:06 AM. An e-mail message that read, "Beware any cockpit intrusion—Two a/c [aircraft] hit World Trade Center" was not sent to Flight 93 until 9:24 AM, to which Captain Dahl responded at 9:26 AM. "Ed, confirm latest mssg plz—Jason." Flight data indicate that no further messages were sent.

Shortly before 9:28 AM, the four hijackers on Flight 93 put on red bandanas, stood up, and apparently killed at least one person and possibly two with a knife. Air traffic controllers and pilots in other planes reported hearing the shouts and the scuffling of a fight in the cockpit. The hijackers reprogrammed the destination of the flight as Reagan International Airport in Washington, D.C. At 9:32 AM controllers heard the Flight 93 hijackers say in thickly accented English, "Ladies and gentlemen here, it's the captain. Please sit down. Keep remaining sitting. We have a bomb on board." (This announcement appears to have been intended for the passengers, suggesting that hijackers pushed the wrong button by broadcasting this announcement to air traffic controllers.) People aboard the airplane said that the hijackers moved them to the back of the airplane during or shortly after the time when they took over the cockpit.

People on Flight 93 began making phone calls to family members and friends on the ground after being moved to the back of the plane, although one or more of the calls may have occurred before the passengers moved. Passengers and flight attendants made more than two dozen telephone calls, speaking to people on the ground sporadically from 9:32 to 9:57 AM. They learned about the flights that had hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Passengers and crew also began to talk to each other, and some advocated attacking the hijackers. Eventually, they took a vote on whether or not to act. By

9:57 AM—perhaps a few minutes earlier—they launched a counterattack. The cockpit voice recorder suggests that passengers and crew members began trying to force their way into the cockpit at 9:58 AM. Family members who listened to the recording from the cockpit voice recorder said that they could hear voices from passengers and hijackers as well as grunting, struggling, and breaking dishes or glass. At 10:06 AM the plane crashed in an unpopulated field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. There were no survivors.

Learning About Flight 93

We use the case of Flight 93 to help us generate insight into what enables courageous collective action (Eisenhardt 1989). These theoretical insights help push the boundaries of our thinking about organizational phenomena, generating new questions and integrating ideas from relevant theoretical perspectives (e.g., Benford and Snow 2000, Cooren 2000, Weick 1995). Given the limitations of this method and the secondary nature of the data, however, we want to be clear that we are not attempting to use events aboard Flight 93 to offer a comprehensive analysis of every moment of the flight, nor are we proposing a definitive theory of courageous collective action. Rather, we use what we know from Flight 93 to suggest a set of conditions that appear to be necessary to enable courageous collective action and deserve further research attention from scholars who investigate the contextual and social factors that contribute to different types of collective action and courage in organizations.

The data for our analysis of Flight 93 come from books and news articles written by investigative reporters and government officials (Harris 1991). These sources include interviews, archival records, observation, and trace records. One significant source is Longman's (2002) re-creation of events leading up to the crash of Flight 93 and reports on interviews with all but one of the passengers' families. Another is *The 9/11 Commission Report* compiled by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks (2004), which provides detailed analysis of all of the events on September 11th. Books by family, friends, and others also give insight into the people aboard Flight 93 and their relationships with people on the ground (Barrett 2002, Beamer and Abraham 2003, Glick and Zegart 2004, Jefferson and Middlebrooks 2006). Hundreds of interviews were conducted to write these books and reports, including interviews with the people who the passengers and crew on Flight 93 spoke to, the air traffic controllers who tracked Flight 93, the coroner and other people involved with the investigation of the crash site, airline employees, and government officials. We also compared the stories reported in these books with news articles written immediately after September 11, 2001 (e.g., Breslau et al. 2001, *Dateline NBC* 2001, Roddy 2001, Wald and Slack 2001), to compile information and glean the advantages of both the immediate recollections of people involved and the long-term data and analysis that can only be accumulated over time.

The stories told by these people are accounts of conversations rather than the conversations themselves, and thus bear the weaknesses of second-hand interview data, such as our inability to confirm the exact words spoken or to know the intent or subjective experiences of the other people in the conversation. However, supplemental texts, such as the cockpit voice recorder, messages left by passengers and crew on answering machines, reports of contextual information about the passengers' and crew members' lives, the tone of passengers' and crew members' voices during conversations, remnants of the airplane itself and the crater it created, belongings left behind by the hijackers, the air traffic control's flight tracking data, documents on United Airlines policies and on procedures for dealing with hijacking prior to 9/11, documents created by passengers and crew members, and Longman's (2002) visits to the crash site with experts to learn about the debris, wind patterns, and other relevant information, confirm many of the essential elements of the stories. This level of support for the accuracy of the data is sufficient to our purpose of generating new ideas and insights about what enables courageous collective action (Runkel and McGrath 1972, Weick 1993, Yin 1994). In some cases, secondary data are helpful in that they limit social desirability and other self-report biases (Harris 1991). We acknowledge our lack of data when necessary and describe supplemental or supporting data when they are available.

Analysis: Pushing the Boundaries of Our Thinking

Although our intent is to use the data from Flight 93 as an extreme case (Starbuck 2005) to push the boundaries of our thinking, we relied on established methods of case study analysis to help us generate insights and develop theoretical links between the case and other work (Eisenhardt 1989). Specifically, this involved several steps: (1) reading the books and articles cited in the section above to accomplish a joint working knowledge of the events that occurred aboard Flight 93, (2) creating lists, tables, and chronologies of physical and verbal events (Abbott 1990), (3) asking which particular events enabled people to take courageous collective action and how those events were significant (Yin 1994), and (4) examining the data through relevant theoretical lenses in an attempt to understand the events and to challenge the theoretical lenses to explain the data (Eisenhardt 1989). The presentation of case facts below emerged from our use of various theoretical frames to explain events aboard Flight 93.

We relied most on an analytic strategy of breaking the case into events—specific and identifiable happenings aboard the flight—and identifying those that were

most important for enabling courageous collective action because this approach allowed us to (1) understand why the events followed a particular trajectory (Abbott 1990) and (2) compare these events and their sequences with things that could have happened but did not (Lukacs 2002). This approach also allows us to explore how people organized collective action. The material shown in Tables 1 and 2 provides examples of ways in which we identified conversational events, parsing communicative actions from two conversational reports. We include tables of these two conversations because they contain the most information of all of the reported conversations that remain from Flight 93 and because we have multiple versions of reports of these conversations.

Our efforts to identify which physical and verbal events mattered most in enabling people to take courageous collective action occurred concurrently and iteratively with examining the data through relevant theoretical lenses. Some events seemed to be important immediately because they were repeated across participants or because they provided critical evidence of social processes that were under way between passengers on the plane. For example, an event that is repeated across most participants is placing telephone calls to people on the ground, usually to family or other loved ones. As we began to identify such events, we also examined them through different theoretical lenses, such as responses to threat and threat rigidity (e.g., Staw et al. 1981), game theory (e.g., Murninghan 1994), sensemaking (Weick 1995), social movement framing (e.g., Benford and Snow 2000), organizational capabilities (Orlikowski 2002), the organizing property of communication (Cooren 2000), and resourcing (Feldman 2004). Some theoretical lenses were consistent with the data, some were not, and others needed to be enriched. We combined insights from the application of the theoretical lenses into a holistic picture of conditions that enable courageous collective action. We did not assume that people's actions were determined by structure, nor did we assume that structure was composed completely by action, but rather that structure and action are recursively implicated in human events (Gioia and Pitre 1990), a stance that relies on the theoretical perspective of social practice (Bourdieu 1977, Schatzki et al. 2001). As such, our insights suggest that people aboard Flight 93 were constrained by the structures in which they were embedded but also reveal ways in which their collective action re-created structures and resources, reshaping the outcome of events.

What Enables Courageous Collective Action?

Flight 93 left the runway at 8:42, three minutes before the crash of Flight 11 into the first tower of the World Trade Center. At the time of takeoff, the people aboard the flight were largely strangers to each other. Georgine Corrigan was an antiques dealer from Hawaii who was returning from her annual trip to the mainland. Toshiya Kuge was a student returning to school. Linda Gronlund and Joe DeLuca were a couple going on a vacation. Edward Felt was an engineer for BEA Systems going to a business meeting in San Francisco. We can think of each person on board as having a distinct social identity, or role (such as antiques dealer, student, girlfriend, boyfriend, or engineer), in a personal life narrative (such as acquiring antiques, gaining a cultural experience, escaping the grind of work and life, or going on a business trip) (Czarniawska 1997). At the time of takeoff, most of these people's identities and narratives interrelated only to the extent that they were on the same airplane.

By identifying people's identities as embedded in narrative, we are drawing on theories that suggest that people organize their lives and their actions through narrative projects. Narratives are social, temporal, and thematic accounts of events that people use to create meaning (Barry and Elmes 1997). Narratives tend to unfold in particular patterns across the lifespan (McAdams 2001) and display a limited number of sensible patterns in context (Cooren 2000). The identities that people adopt are made up of the various meanings that people hold of themselves, which may be shaped by personal characteristics, group membership, and social interactions within life narratives (Brewer and Gardner 1996, Somers 1994). People enact narratives as they go about their daily activities, creating in action meaningful stories that organize their life experiences and make those experiences understandable (Czarniawska 1997). A narrative lens, then, allows us to draw upon the data from Flight 93 to explore, reconstruct, and reconstitute some of the human meaning and reality experienced on the airplane that day (Gergen 1994).

Hijacking as an Incomprehensible Event

Flight 93 was reaching cruising altitude when Flight 175 crashed into the second tower of the World Trade Center at 9:06 AM. The only indication passengers and crew had about Flight 11 or Flight 175 prior to the 9:28 hijacking was the unconfirmed e-mail that Captain Dahl received. Thus, we can understand the shock that passengers and crew expressed over having four men in their first-class cabin put on red bandanas, stand up, take over the cockpit, and kill at least one person (possibly more—some evidence suggests that they killed or severely injured the pilots, a flight attendant, and a passenger).

Most people experience hijackings as shocking and incomprehensible (Bailes 2001), and telephone calls from people aboard Flight 93 seem to indicate a similar reaction. Incomprehensible events tend to strip people of identity, leaving them no sensible narrative to enact (Perrow 1984, Somers 1994). People do not, of course, think of themselves as stripped of narrative and identity,

Table 1 Report of Telephone Calls Between Tom Burnett and Deena Burnett*

Call 1 (Begins 9:20 AM EDT)		
Deena	Tom, are you okay [all right]?	1
Tom	No, I'm on United Flight 93 from Newark to San Francisco.	2
	We are in the air.	3
	The plane has been hijacked.	4
	They've already knifed a guy.	5
(Deena asks Tom if it was a passenger who was "knifed," and Tom confirms that it was.)		6
	One of them has a gun.	7
	They're saying there is a bomb on board.	8
	Please call the authorities. [Call the FBI.]	9
Call 2 (9:34 AM EDT)		
Tom	They're in the cockpit.	10
	The man they knifed is dead.	11
	I tried to help, but there was no pulse.	12
Deena	A lot of planes have been hijacked.	13
	They don't know how many.	14
	Two planes have hit the towers of the World Trade Center.	15
	Terrorists seem to be hitting designated targets.	16
Tom	You've got to be kidding.	17
Deena	No.	18
Tom	Oh my God.	19
	It's a suicide mission.	20
(Tom relays the information to someone else.)		21
Deena	Who are you talking to?	22
Tom	My seatmate.	23
(Tom asks Deena a series of questions such as whether the planes were commercial, what airlines might be involved, how many planes have been hijacked, and who is involved. Deena tells Tom she does not know.)		24
Tom	We're turning back to New York.	25
	No, we're turning back the other way—we're headed south.	26
Deena	What can you see?	27
Tom	It's just a rural area.	28
	I have to go.	29
Call 3 (9:45 AM EDT)		
Deena	Tom, you're okay?	30
Tom	No, I'm not.	31
Deena	A third plane hit the Pentagon.	32
Tom	(Passes information to the other passengers.) What else can you tell me?	33
Deena	The planes seem to be commercial airliners originating on the East Coast.	34
Tom	Do you know who's involved?	35
Deena	No.	36
Tom	(Passes on information.) Do you think they have a bomb on board? [They say they have a bomb.]	37
	I don't think they have one.	38
	I think they're just telling us that.	39
	Have you called the authorities?	40
Deena	Yes.	41
	They didn't seem to know anything about your plane.	42
Tom	[The hijackers are talking about crashing the plane into the ground.]	43
	We have to do something.	44
	A group of us are making a plan.	45
	Don't worry.	46
	I'll call you back.	47
Call 4 (9:54 AM EDT)		
Tom	How are the girls?	48
Deena	They want to talk to you.	49
Tom	I'll talk to them later.	50
	We've got a plan to regain control over the airplane in a rural area. [There's a group of us, and we're going to do something.]	51

Table 1 (cont'd.)

Deena	No.	52
	Sit down.	53
	Be still.	54
	Be quiet.	55
	And don't draw attention to yourself.	56
Tom	[No.] If they're going to crash [drive] this plane into the ground, we're going to have [we've got] to do something.	57
	There is no time to wait for authorities.	58
	It's up to us.	59
	I think we can do it.	60
Deena	What do you want me to do?	61
Tom	Pray, Deena, just pray.	62
Deena	I love you.	63
Tom	Don't worry.	64
	We're going to do something.	65

*The text for this table come from pages 107–118 of Longman's (2002) book with minor edits as necessary for clarity. These are not recorded conversations, but Deena Burnett's reports of the conversations. We compared her reports in Longman's book with the reports she gave to reporters immediately after September 11, 2001 (*Dateline NBC* 2001c) and marked differences between reports (which are minor) with brackets. When Deena summarized rather than described conversational segments we depict these segments with parentheses. We refer to lines from these tables when we present our analysis and to other conversations with citations and page numbers from the appropriate source.

but the loss of a sensible narrative generates feelings like fear, meaninglessness, and disconnection (e.g., Fineman 1993). Inappropriate action and tragedy often result when people experience the extreme duress of incomprehensible events (e.g., Weick 1990, 1993). Theoretically, it is important to examine the moments that follow such events, because what happens in those moments determines the trajectory of action that people will take

Table 2 Report of Telephone Call Between Jeremy Glick and Lyz Glick*

(The call began just before 9:30 AM)		
JoAnne Makely	Jeremy. Thank God.	1
	We're [We've been] so worried.	2
Jeremy	It's bad news. [There are bad men on the plane.]	3
	Let me speak to Lyz.	4
JoAnne	It's Jeremy.	5
	He's okay for right now.	6
Jeremy	It's bad news.	7
	There are bad men on the plane.	8
	Three Iranian [Arabic]-looking men wearing red headbands, [carrying knives,] saying they have a bomb.	9
	It looks like a box with something red around it.	10
	[They sent us to the back of the plane, and they're threatening to blow it up.]	11
	I can't believe this is happening to me. (repeats multiple times)	12
Lyz	Oh my God!	13
	They've got a bomb, and Jeremy's on the plane!	14
Jeremy	(Responds, but Lyz did not report what he said.)	15
Lyz	I'll be strong, I'll be strong…	16
Jeremy	I don't think I'm going to make it out of here.	17
Lyz	You're being silly.	18
	That's not going to happen.	19
(Jeremy and Lyz tell each other they love each other for what "felt like hundreds of times.")		20
Jeremy	I need you to be happy in the rest of your life.	21
	I'll support any decisions you make.	22
	Love our baby, and tell her I love her.	23
(Lyz's father gets the cell phone, and her mother calls 911. She relays questions from the police through Lyz to Jeremy and back. The police ask Jeremy questions through Lyz's father and through Lyz such as what the flight number is, where the plane is headed, how many passengers are on board, the nationality and appearance of the hijackers, and what the ground looked like beneath the plane. Jeremy answered as best as he could.)		24

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Jeremy	The plane has made a turn.	25
	(Jeremy says that the hijackers say they have a bomb, but one of the other passengers heard that planes were crashing into the World Trade Center.)	26
	(Jeremy asks if the hijackers are blowing planes up.)	27
Lyz	I don't know, but it is true that two planes have crashed into the World Trade Center. [You need to be strong, but, yes, they are doing that.]	28
Jeremy	Are they going to crash my plane into the World Trade Center?	29
Lyz	No, they are not going there.	30
Jeremy	Why?	31
Lyz	They knocked it down.	32
	Be strong.	33
	The hijackers could be taking it somewhere else.	34
Jeremy	What should I do?	35
	Should I do anything?	36
Lyz	Are the pilots alive?	37
Jeremy	I don't know.	38
Lyz	Have the real pilots said anything to you over the public address system?	39
Jeremy	No.	40
Lyz	Do the hijackers have automatic weapons?	41
Jeremy	No guns. They have knives.	42
	How could people have gotten onto the plane with knives and a bomb?	43
	We just had breakfast, and we have our butter knives!	44
	There are three other guys as big as me.	45
	They are thinking about attacking the hijackers. [Should we, you know, we're talking about attacking these men.]	46
	We are taking a vote.	47
	Is that a good idea?	48
	What should I do? [I need some advice—what to do.]	49
Lyz	I think you need to do it. [Honey, you need to do it.]	50
Jeremy	Okay.	51
	[You know, I'm going to leave the phone here.] Stay on the phone [line].	52
	I'll be right back.	53
	(After a pause) We are going to jump on the hijackers and attack them.	54
Lyz	Put a picture of me and the baby in your head.	55
	Think good thoughts.	56
(Lyz hands the phone to her father, who listens to noises until the connection ends.)		57

*The text for this table come from pages 142–147 of Longman's (2002) book, with minor edits as necessary for clarity. These are not recorded conversations, but Lyz Glick's reports of the conversations. We compared her reports in Longman's book with the reports she gave to reporters immediately after September 11, 2001 (*Dateline NBC* 2001a) and marked differences between reports (which are minor) with brackets. When Lyz summarized rather than described conversational segments we depict these segments with parentheses. We refer to lines from these tables when we present our analysis and to other conversations with citations and page numbers from the appropriate source.

to reestablish their identities and narratives, ultimately influencing the outcome of the event (Abbott 1990). For instance, in his analysis of the Mann Gulch tragedy, Weick (1993) suggests that, by refusing to drop their tools during the 16 minutes between realizing that the fire had jumped the gulch and their tragic deaths, the smokejumpers reestablished their identities as individual firefighters but lost their identity as a social unit. If they had stuck together, followed their leader, and dropped their tools, they would have been more likely to outrun the fire that overcame them or to have participated in a potentially life-saving move to allow the fire to sweep over them. Although this was not the only factor affecting the events that occurred in Mann Gulch, it does offer an interesting comparison between the unorganized strangers aboard Flight 93, who were able to create a collective identity under duress, and the formally organized band of smokejumpers, who were not.

We theorize that one difference between the conditions aboard Flight 93 and those described in the Mann Gulch fire has to do with the resources available to the participants. By resources, we refer to Feldman's (2004) definition of resource as an asset that allows an actor to enact a schema. Feldman suggests that material, cognitive, social, and emotional assets become resources when they are put into use to accomplish goals. On Flight 93, passengers and crew had cellular and seat-back telephones as assets that they could put to use to understand what was happening. They also had time—at least 34 minutes between the hijacking of Flight 77 and their

own flight, and approximately 35 minutes between their own hijacking and the crash of the airplane (19 more minutes than the firefighters at Mann Gulch). This time was an invaluable asset that gave people like Deena Burnett and others on the ground a chance to learn about the other hijackings and communicate this information to those aboard the plane. Another asset that distinguishes the conditions aboard Flight 93 from those in Mann Gulch is the information that could flow to the passengers aboard Flight 93 because of the prevalence of the 24-hour cable and national news, which reported on the planes that had been crashed almost as soon as events occurred. Finally, their confinement within the same metal structure in the air meant that those aboard Flight 93 were constrained to share a common fate—a constraint the smokejumpers in Mann Gulch did not share. Hence, we theorize that the people aboard Flight 93 had mutable and dynamic resources (Feldman 2004), such as extra time, a constrained common fate, and a way to contact people outside of the situation for information, which the smokejumpers at Mann Gulch or the people aboard the other flights on 9/11/01 did not have.

Resources alone are not sufficient to enable courageous collective action, however. As Ganz (2000) points out, some social movement organizations are wealthy in assets and still are not resourceful in how they use those assets. To enable courageous collective action, the people aboard Flight 93 needed to be resourceful in how they managed the emotions of extreme duress, made moral and practical sense of a senseless situation, and organized dangerous interdependent action among insecure strangers. Much of this mobilization could be explained using insights from social movement research, such as identifying the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames that social movement entrepreneurs used to frame the situation (Benford and Snow 2000). Strategically imposed frames are not sufficient, however, to explain how people aboard Flight 93 managed their emotions and used interactive discourse to make sense. To account for this, we draw on sensemaking (Weick 1995), communication (Cooren 2000), and resourcing (Feldman 2004) research, which invites us to use a narrative lens to examine their efforts.

Narratives, like frames, are socially negotiated constructs that organize people's thoughts and actions, but narratives do so in a temporal sequence that explains how particular orderings of actors and actions lead to particular social arrangements (Ricoeur 1984). Narratives are a narrower construct than frames, or schemata (Goffman 1974), which include almost every informal and general mental construct such as binary oppositions, conventions, recipes, scenarios, principles, and habits (Sewell 1992). Narrative is particularly useful for understanding the events that occurred aboard Flight 93 because of its focus on the meaning and organization of events across time and because theories of communication help us understand how types of communicative actions contribute to the development of narrative (Cooren 2000). Given social movement framing scholars' interest in narrative fidelity and the relative lack of research on discursive practices (Benford and Snow 2000), introducing narration into the analysis of collective action is a natural extension. Therefore, we theorize that the people aboard Flight 93 were able to organize courageous collective action because they used available resources to construct three narratives: (1) personal narratives, (2) narratives to explain duress, and (3) narratives of collective action.

Reestablishing Personal Narratives

After moving to the rear of the airplane, the first action that many of the people aboard Flight 93 took was to use telephones to call people on the ground. For example, Mark Bingham called his mother, Alice Hoglan. He told her what was happening on the airplane and asked her, "Do you believe me? It's true." Alice replied, "I believe you," and then the phone went dead (Longman 2002, p. 133).

Simply connecting with a person who is outside of a tense situation can help a person to manage feelings of tension; it suggests that at least some part of the world is acting in a comprehensible way, even if one's immediate situation is not (Kahn 2001). Alice did more than connect with Mark, however. She also expressed belief in him. An expression in communication theory is a communicative action that people interpret to convey positive or negative sanction for the role they played in existing or completed narratives (Cooren 2000). In our theory, sanction is a symbolic asset created through interaction that can be used as a resource. By expressing her belief in him, Alice created a symbol that Mark could have used as a resource to reestablish his identity as a son who was trusted and believed. Theoretically, then, we can see how resources and narratives could be chained together in conversation: resources (e.g., time, the telephone) put to use to enact a narrative (e.g., making a call to someone on the ground), which in turn help create new resources (e.g., positive sanction) that foster one's ability to re-create an identity (e.g., trusted son) within a personal narrative (e.g., Mark's life with his mother). This chain of resource and narrative creation fuels people's capacity to reestablish their personal narratives.

We theorize that, when people receive sanction from others who play relevant and important roles in their life narratives, it helps them manage the emotions of extreme duress through mutual connection with another (Dutton and Heaphy 2003) and through validation of one's identity (Weick 1995). We can see this kind of emotional change in Elizabeth Wainio's conversation with her stepmother, Esther Heyman (Longman 2002, pp. 167–172). Elizabeth's conversation began when she called Esther

and said, "Hello, Mom. We're being hijacked. I'm calling to say goodbye."

Esther replied, "Elizabeth, I've got my arms around you, and I'm holding you, and I love you."

"I can feel your arms around me," Elizabeth replied, "And I love you too."

Esther and Elizabeth then spent much of their time on the phone in silence, "holding" each other and being "in the present" (Longman 2002). Esther described Elizabeth's emotions when she first called in this way: although Elizabeth spoke calmly, her breath sounded shallow, as if she were hyperventilating. In contrast, near the end of the call, Esther said that Elizabeth spoke with "calm resolution," saying that she knew that her deceased grandmothers were waiting for her. Shortly after 10:00 AM Elizabeth said, "They're getting ready to break into the cockpit. I have to go. I love you. Goodbye." Esther believes, based on Elizabeth's words, breath, and tone of voice, that Elizabeth found calm, determination, and peace in the midst of such a roiling and incomprehensible situation.

In this example, Esther offered Elizabeth many expressions of positive sanction. Elizabeth, by saying that she could feel Esther's arms and by using the word "too" when she expressed love to Esther, acknowledged and accepted the sanction that Esther gave her. This mutual connection provides comfort and positive emotion (Dutton and Heaphy 2003). Validated narratives and identities also help people reduce shock and fear because negative emotional activation focuses attention on the source of disruption until new meaning can be found to replace the disrupted meaning (Mandler 1984). As Weick (1995, p. 24) points out, "the more selves I have access to, the more meanings I should be able to extract and impose in any situation." Thus, emotional connection and meaning making bolstered by positive sanction are ways in which people manage emotions and regain the ability to act amidst duress. The changes that Esther heard in Elizabeth's words, breath, and tone of voice are consistent with this explanation.

In sum, we theorize that people require narratives as a basis for courageous collective action, and the first involves reestablishing personal narratives. Personal narratives contain identities, which serve as resources in the midst of duress. A personal identity independent of the situation enables people to manage their emotions and be resilient (Barker-Caza 2007). In an incomprehensible event, people are not always able to access alternative identities on their own, but they can use available assets like telephones as resources to seek the sanction that they need, as we see aboard Flight 93. Positive sanction, in turn, becomes a resource for people to use to reestablish their identities. In this theoretical chain, identities also then become resources that people draw upon to manage their emotions sufficiently to consider a broader range of cues (Mandler 1984) that might help them narrate an explanation of their duress.

Narrating the Duress

Todd Beamer placed a call using the telephone in the airline seat-back and ended up speaking to Lisa Jefferson, a Verizon supervisor (Longman 2002, pp. 198–204). Todd told Lisa who he was, described the situation on the plane, and asked, "Do you know what they want? Money or ransom or what?" (p. 199). Lisa said she did not know. Todd's questions, however, provide an indication of the difficulty that faced people aboard Flight 93. As Weick (1995, p. 14) puts it, "sensemaking begins with the basic question, 'is it still possible to take things for granted?' " When the answer is no, as it was aboard Flight 93, people seek to extract cues from the situation and put them into a plausible order (Weick 1995)—in other words, to create a narrative that explains the situation. This is the second accomplishment that we theorize is necessary for enabling courageous collective action: a narrative that explains the duress.

Tom Burnett created a narrative that explained the hijacking with the help of his wife, Deena, who was on the ground. Tom's first call came at 9:30 AM, just after the hijacking occurred (see Table 1). Tom told Deena what was happening on the airplane and asked her to call the authorities (Table 1, Lines 1–9). Deena did, and she also learned from the television about the airplanes that had crashed into the World Trade Center. Four minutes later Tom called again and Deena told him about the other flights (Lines 13–16). Tom used this information as a resource to make an inference about what was going on aboard his own plane, and declared: "It's a suicide mission!" (Line 20).

Declarations like "It's a suicide mission!" are definitional claims (McFarland 2004), which allow people to confer new identities upon the things to which they are attributed (Cooren 2000). With this declaration, Tom identified the people aboard Flight 93 as victims in a suicide attack rather than pawns in a negotiation. His declaration is the first moment in the reported conversations when we see someone label the hijacking as a suicide mission. His declaration is important for three reasons: first, it suggests that Tom was working to construct a narrative that explained their duress; second, it departs from the traditional negotiation narrative for a hijacking; and third, it was social, proposing a new narrative that he and other passengers could question, debate, talk about, and confirm. No one else reached this conclusion as quickly as Tom did, and some may not have come to this conclusion at all.

Tom's inference may seem obvious now, but the events that occurred on September 11, 2001, were nearly incomprehensible at the time, particularly for the people who lived through them (e.g., Weick 1993). People aboard the plane had no precedent for airplane hijackings being used for suicide missions. Airline policy instructed flight attendants to comply with hijacker demands and to keep passengers calm (Longman 2002).

In fact, even after telling Tom about the other hijackings and hearing his declaration about the suicide mission, Deena Burnett, a former flight attendant, encouraged Tom to follow established procedures for hijackings (Table 1, Lines 52–56). Some passengers asked people on the ground to confirm that other airplanes had been crashed into buildings, suggesting that others needed verification of Tom's declaration in order for it to become believable.

Tom's declaration was not only difficult to accept because of its incomprehensibility, but also because of the inconsistency of the cues that passengers and crew members received. For example, Jeremy Glick expressed confusion over why the hijackers had a bomb if they were planning to crash the airplane into a building (Table 2, Line 26). Tom Burnett also considered the bomb, but he dismissed it by saying that the hijackers were lying (Table 1, Lines 37–39). By sifting through data, seeking confirmation, questioning, and debating, people could become increasingly certain about the accuracy of Tom's narrative for the duress. We theorize that this is important for courageous collective action, because the narrative of duress sets up the logic of appropriateness for any response to duress (March 1994). Because situations of duress often call into question basic ideas about the moral and social worth of actions, people pay attention to "what is right" to be sure that their narratives and the responses they enact will create moral and social worth. If people are struggling to understand what is happening and they need a response that is moral as well as practical, they not only need a plausible narrative for what is going on, but they also need to be relatively confident in the accuracy of their narrative.

In considering the accuracy of the narratives available to them the people aboard Flight 93 had two essential options. They may not have articulated it this way, but we can examine these options to generate theoretical insight into the construction of narratives of duress. One option was the traditional hijacking scenario; the other was a suicide mission. In response to these options, the passengers and crew members could remain seated or try to regain control of the airplane. Each pairing of the narratives and responses had different ethical implications. For example, if the hijacking was a traditional one, then remaining seated would have had moral worth because it would have allowed professionals to handle negotiations, whereas attacking the hijackers would have put themselves and others at greater risk. On the other hand, if the hijacking was a suicide mission and the people aboard Flight 93 chose not to act, they would be choosing their own deaths and possibly the deaths of others. Finally, if it was a suicide mission and they acted, they would have a chance of countering the hijackers and saving lives and property. We theorize that this parsing of options distinguishes the narration of duress for courageous collective action from sensemaking generally. As the sensemaking perspective makes clear, people need only to create plausible narratives to be able to act (Weick 1995). Courageous action, however, because it hinges on addressing questions of moral and social worth, may often require that people attend to the accuracy of their narratives of duress, even as the events stretch the boundaries of plausibility.

People often use judgment and intuition to choose moral actions, rather than an analysis like the one described above (Haidt 2001). People do this by drawing on other narratives (McAdams 2001), which they can do because all narratives are embedded in and overlap with other narratives (Cooren 2000). The hijacking narrative, for example, was embedded in the narrative of Al-Qaeda's jihad against the United States. In contrast, Todd Beamer's life narrative, which had now been pulled into this hijacking narrative, was embedded in a Christian narrative of life's purpose: Todd asked Lisa Jefferson, the GTE-Verizon operator, to pass his love to family if he did not survive and asked her to recite the Lord's Prayer and the twenty-third Psalm with him (Longman 2002, p. 200). These scriptures are part of a Christian narrative in which Todd need "fear no evil" because he could trust God's "will be done" even though he was walking "through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalms 23:4, Matthew 6:10).

We theorize that drawing on broader societal narratives like religion, tradition, or ideology can help people become able to participate in courageous collective action in at least two ways. First, it helps people make moral judgments (Somers 1994). Narrative scholars (e.g., Czarniawska 1997, McAdams 2001) would argue that humans always draw on broader narratives when making moral and practical judgments. Because courageous collective action requires perceived moral or social worth, and people learn about social worth from participation in the broad narratives of society, people generally draw on these narratives to help them decide what is right (March 1994). Todd's quotation of scripture was an explicit way to remind himself of distinctions between good and evil, of the need to resist evil, and of a moral system that values the sanctity of life. The second way in which broader social narratives can enable people to take courageous collective action is by helping people find an enlarged sense of meaning (McAdams 2001, Polletta and Jasper 2001). If events, like a hijacking, have rendered a situation incomprehensible, a broader social narrative can create meaning even when there is no explanation for why the duress occurred. A religious narrative, for example, like the one that Lisa Jefferson helped Todd Beamer reconnect to, can create the resource of faith. With faith, such as a belief that one can trust in the will of a loving God, people can render incomprehensible situations sensible, whether or not they understand why the duress occurred or why it has been imposed on them. Todd implied that

he was using faith like this as a resource when he told Lisa, after she asked if he wanted to participate in the counterattack against the hijackers, that he would have to "go out on faith" (Longman 2002, p. 203).

Constructing a Collective Narrative

We theorize that personal narratives and a narrative to explain duress were necessary for courageous collective action aboard Flight 93, but they were not sufficient. The third narrative that we theorize is necessary is a collective narrative in which individuals subsume themselves to a collective identity and undertake roles in a coordinated plan of action. As passengers and crew worked to create a shared narrative for their duress, passengers and crew also began to make a transformation from a group of strangers into a collective entity. We see traces of this in Tom Burnett's third call to his wife, Deena, at 9:45 AM, shortly after the hijackers turned the plane toward Washington, D.C. Deena told Tom that a third airplane had hit the Pentagon, that the airplanes all seemed to be commercial airliners originating from the East Coast, and that the authorities did not know about Tom's airplane (Table 1, Lines 32 and 34). At this point Tom declared, "We have to do something!" (Table 1, Line 44).

Tom's declaration marks the beginning of an effort to create a narrative of collective resistance. His declaration served three purposes. First, by using the inclusive referent "we," it invited passengers and crew members to adopt a new identity, transforming from individual victims to a collective actor (Cheney 1983). Second, it acknowledged that the passengers and crew were bound by a common fate. And third, by using the verb "have," it implied that this new, collective actor had a duty to act in a narrative of responding to the hijacking. Declarations, however, confer new identities only if they are considered to be legitimate (Cooren 2000). When Tom made this declaration, many passengers had not yet decided whether they believed that the hijacking was a suicide mission. Tom was a stranger making a radical and unprecedented claim. In response to Tom's declarations, passengers and crew members confirmed Tom's information with people on the ground (e.g., Table 2, Line 28), gathered more information, discussed it with each other, and discussed it with people on the ground before they came to see Tom's declaration as legitimate (e.g., Table 1, Lines 32–42; Table 2, Lines 24–51; Longman 2002).

An example of this deliberation comes from the conversation between Jeremy and Lyz Glick (see Table 2). Jeremy expressed disbelief that the hijacking was happening to him (Lines 12 and 43), expressed confusion about what the hijackers were trying to do (Line 26), and was uncertain about what he should do (Lines 35 and 49). Eventually, after discussing the situation, Lyz said that she thought he should attack the hijackers (Line 50). Jeremy replied, "Okay." Lyz then describes a change in which Jeremy suddenly began to speak decisively instead of uncertainly (Lines 52–54). By saying that she thought he should participate in the counterattack, Lyz uttered permission—a communicative action that confers prospective positive sanction on a narrative that a person could enact in the future (Cooren 2000). Jeremy's response, including his subsequent language, demeanor, and action, suggests that Lyz's sanction helped him confer legitimacy upon Tom's declaration. We theorize, then, that prospective sanction can be used as a socially created resource to legitimate and to fuel participation in a narrative of collective action.

Jeremy also told Lyz that he and the other passengers were taking a vote (Table 2, Line 47). This vote appears to have been the culmination of the information gathering, confirmations, and collective discussion about the nature of the duress and the appropriate response. A vote is an explicit, public, volitional action. It enhances the legitimacy of a declaration because it makes the acceptance of the declaration social and shared. When people take explicit, public, volitional actions, they feel compelled to justify those actions, which tends to increase their commitment to pursuing the course of action that they have begun (Salancik 1977). Furthermore, people who see others take action that they perceive to be volitional are likely to expect them to continue to act consistently with actions (Pratt and Dirks 2006). Thus, public actions also communicate commitment to others. Commitments are communicative actions that promise submission to a future action narrative (Cooren 2000). A public action, like a vote, then, has the potential to engender trust through both commitment and the justification of public actions.

Trust is a willingness to make oneself vulnerable, under the expectation that a person will behave in a particular way (Rousseau et al. 1998). In this way, trust functions as a resource that people can call upon to bolster their own and others' participation in the collective narrative. We theorize that a fragile trust forming among the passengers, bolstered by a vote, would have been critical aboard Flight 93, because attacking multiple armed men with control of an airplane is a risky, interdependent activity. We suggest that the vote to attack the hijackers functioned among the group as a means to formalize the growing legitimacy of Tom Burnett's declaration that the hijackers were on a suicide mission, to heighten the legitimacy of the forming collective identity, and to create trust among the strangers thrown together in the situation of duress. Passengers and crew could then use resources such as trust and collective identity to emplot their collective narrative of counterattack.

Passengers and crew members' utterances used more and more inclusive referents as they confirmed information, discussed its implications, voted, and planned the

counterattack, providing evidence that they were submitting themselves to a collective identity. For example, Jeremy Glick told Lyz, "We're going to jump on the hijackers and attack them" (Table 2, Line 54), and Todd Beamer made the now famous remark, "Let's roll" (Longman 2002, p. 204). When people act as if there is a collective, they create the collective that they are enacting (Asch 1952). As people submitted to this collective narrative, the identity and the trust it created became resources for quickly emplotting action (Klandermans 2002).

Passengers and crew had little time to emplot their narrative. Emplotment is a discursive process of bringing events, agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, and results together in a logical and temporal sequence to create a meaningful story (Ricoeur 1984). By emplotting narratives, people construct an image of a future reality that would allow them to enact their values (Polkinghorne 1988). After the vote, passengers and crew members began to emplot the counterattack by planning (Barry and Elmes 1997), incorporating new roles and responsibilities into their plan (e.g., Table 2, Line 51), and equipping themselves with improvised weapons. Todd Beamer told Lisa Jefferson that his role in the plan included jumping on the hijacker with the bomb (Longman 2002, p. 203), possibly in concert with Jeremy Glick (*Dateline NBC* 2001b). Flight attendant Sandy Bradshaw called her husband to tell him what was happening on the plane and asked if he had any ideas for weapons in addition to the water she was heating in coffee pots to use as projectile weapons (Longman 2002, p. 176).

Courageous Collective Action

After their vote and emplotment of a collective plan, passengers and crew members began a counterattack on the hijackers by 9:57 AM. The cockpit voice recorder suggests that they began trying to force their way into the cockpit at 9:58 AM. The construction of their collective narrative continued even as the passengers and crew began enacting their counterattack. Family members who listened to the cockpit voice recorder said that they could hear passengers and crew uttering directions such as, "In the cockpit!," "Hold!," and "Stop him!" (Longman 2002, p. 271). Directions are communicative actions that instruct people to execute a specific narrative plot or subplot (Cooren 2000). Thus, we see those aboard Flight 93 updating their plan in real time, and the emplotted narrative that the passengers created served as a resource from which to improvise their collective action in real time (Czarniawska 1997).

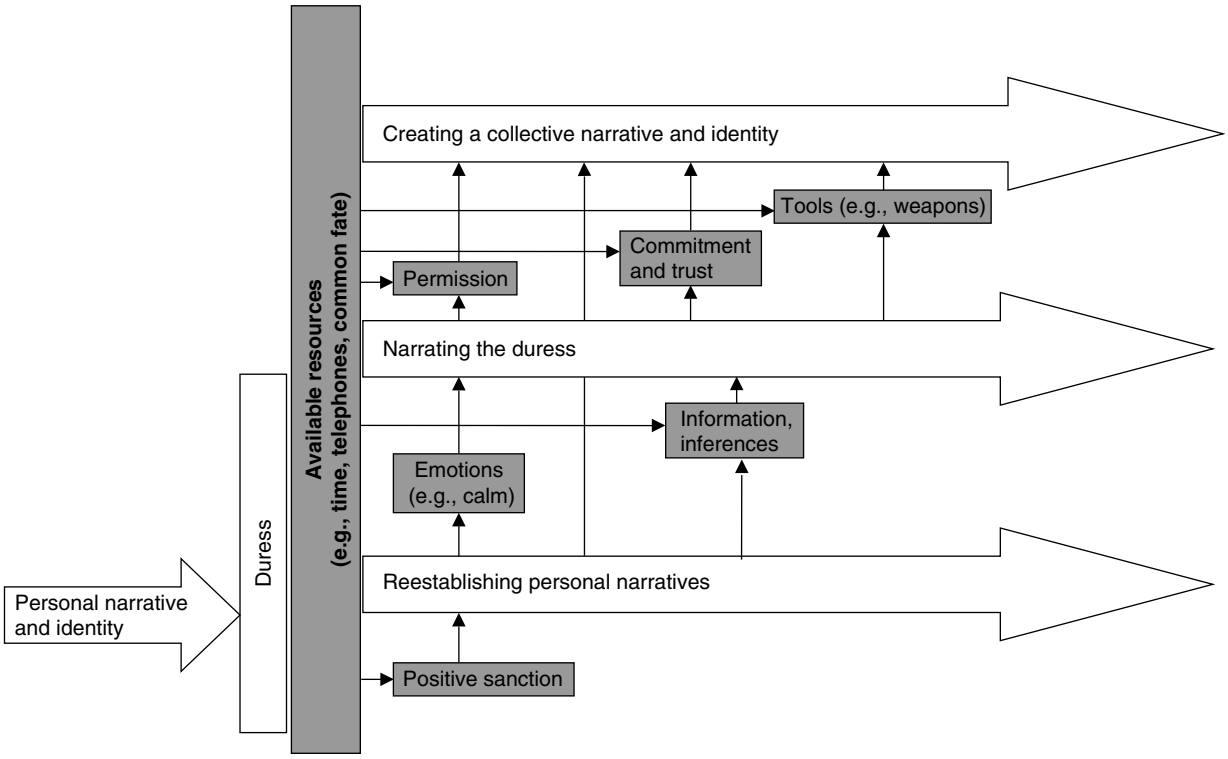
As the passengers and crew tried to gain access to the cockpit, the hijackers tried to fight back with actions like rocking the wings of the airplane (Longman 2002, p. 271). Eventually, as the passengers pushed into the cockpit, the hijackers drove the airplane into the ground. Though the passengers and crew were unable to retake control of the airplane, they forced the hijackers to abort their mission. At 10:06 AM, the plane crashed into an unpopulated field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The site is now a memorial for people to visit in admiration of the courageous collective action of those aboard Flight 93.

Summary: Narratives that Enable Courageous Collective Action

We theorize that people must create or re-create three distinct narratives to enable courageous collective action: personal narratives that restore identities that have meaning outside of the current situation ("Who am I?"); narratives of duress that explain the situation ("What's going on here?"); and a narrative of collective action that creates a collective identity and a collective plot ("What do people like us do in a situation like this?"). These narratives (depicted in Figure 1) mobilize resources, provide answers to these three questions that emerge under duress, guide subsequent action, and can become resources themselves when creating subsequent narratives. Reestablishing personal narratives creates meaningful identities that help people manage negative emotions and guide their interpretation of adversity. Narrating the duress with information about the situation and with broader social narratives as a context lends confidence to the moral or social appropriateness of possible responses in a situation that defies plausibility. And narratives of collective action give people a collective identity and a coordinated plot. The development of a narrative of collective action requires that people acknowledge their common fate and helps transform individuals into a singular and coherent collective actor. Collective identity facilitates the development of trust, and a collective plot coordinates action.

As we depict in Figure 1, people aboard Flight 93 used available assets (like time and telephones) to get sanction from others outside the situation in order to reestablish personal narratives, which allowed them to manage emotions and regain a meaningful identity. With increased resilience and more ability to process cues in their situation, they used information gleaned from telephone calls in conjunction with their identities and emotions created from reestablishing personal narratives to help create a narrative to explain the duress they were experiencing. Having created an accurate narrative to the best of their ability, they also used resources such as their common fate, permission from others outside the situation, commitment, trust, and improvised weapons to create a narrative of collective action. In a complex, dangerous, and uncertain situation, the people aboard Flight 93 needed resources to create narratives, but they also needed narratives to see what kinds of resources they would need—an iterative and reciprocal relationship between resources and narrative action similar to Feldman's (2004) model

Figure 1 Narratives and Resources Aboard Flight 93



of resourcing. As passengers and crew members iteratively created resources and narratives, their ability to discern the moral landscape around them with sufficient accuracy and their ability to create a viable collective narrative of response to duress increased until they created and enacted that narrative.

Courageous Collective Action in Everyday Organizations

Courage, argued Becker (1973), is fundamental to the human wrestling match with the fear of death. May (1978) also suggested that idea in relationship to the courage involved in creativity, as did Tillich (1952) in his discussion of courage and its place in a life of faith. Although mortality may seem like a topic more fitting for philosophy than for organizational scholarship, it is at the heart of most human concerns. This may be why Fineman (1993) suggested that organizational change can be considered a microcosm of people's fear of death. Weick (2007, p. 18) suggests that richness in organizational research matters because it functions in ways that enlarge our understanding of the human condition and that Mann Gulch as a rich story is important in restraining our hubris by "point[ing] up fear" and "thrust[ing] death in our face." Thus, although "everyday organizations" are different in many ways from the group of strangers who organized courageous collective action aboard Flight 93, everyday organizations are not exempt from situations of duress that provoke raw emotions and require courageous collective responses.

In theorizing about conditions that enabled courageous collective action aboard Flight 93, we have suggested links to more common organizational situations, such as speaking up or using resources in unusual ways. Because Flight 93 is such a unique situation, however, it is useful to introduce an example of courageous collective action drawn from more common organizational circumstances. We chose this example deliberately for its contrast to the situation aboard Flight 93: the people in this example do not face a threat to their lives, nor are they trapped in a confined space with a limited amount of time. We heard about this case from the protagonist in a setting that was not directly related to our research, but we realized its relevance to our analysis of Flight 93 through research conversations. The people in the situation face duress and must determine if and how they will engage in a collective response. The case is intended only to serve as an illustrative comparison, taking a step toward addressing the differences between what occurred aboard Flight 93 and what we see in everyday organizational settings.

Courageous Collective Action as a Response to Downsizing

Lester (a pseudonym), a manager in a research facility at Fortune 500 company NewCo (another pseudonym), was shocked as NewCo's executive team made decisions to downsize from 244,000 to 51,000 employees.

NewCo's executives, facing a downturn in the economy and threats to the financial prospects of the firm, viewed the change as a necessary move to adjust to the market. Lester and those in his facility struggled to understand the decision and what it meant for their careers. Some people, to avoid being downsized themselves, began undermining their peers in an attempt to look good by comparison. These employees wanted to improve their own images, sometimes engaging in cutthroat behavior to do so. Others retaliated against those who they suspected of undermining them. In the wake of the duress caused by the downsizing, employees created more duress by destroying the culture of collegiality and replacing it with a distrusting and defensive culture.

Lester felt agonized over the situation at NewCo. He did not want to undermine his colleagues or to act defensively toward them, but continually acting collegially in this environment meant that he would be vulnerable to people undermining him. He had some spiritual experiences that helped him find meaning in his situation. He worked with his wife, who not only offered support and perspective, but also went over the family finances with him. They concluded that, if Lester lost his job, although it would be hard to do things like pay debts and help the children with their education, they could find ways to get by. As a result, Lester felt he could take risks. He began to call meetings with small groups of people to discuss the situation. He asked them provocative questions like: "What do you want this company to look like in ten years?" While initially skeptical, Lester's colleagues attended the meetings and discussed and debated the situation. One by one, people in these groups acknowledged the duress that the new behaviors were causing and agreed to do what they could to participate in counteracting it. They came up with ideas to help each other develop the skills they needed to be competitive inside and outside NewCo without participating in undermining or defensive behaviors, even if others continued to do so. Those who participated in these efforts were able to maintain a constructive work environment, to contribute to the success of the company, and to equip themselves for careers both inside and outside the company.

The decision that Lester and his colleagues made to work together to develop skills that would both help their company to be successful and make themselves more marketable is an example of courageous collective action. It was courageous because it was a confrontation (be collegial rather than capitulate to the pressure to undermine others and protect oneself) to duress (both the downsizing and the new, mean-spirited culture) that had moral and social worth (it benefited both the company and the people who developed new skills). And it was collective because it involved creating a collective identity of interdependent collaborators who coordinated action among themselves.

Prior to the downsizings, like the passengers and crew who boarded Flight 93, Lester and his colleagues were comfortable in their existing identities as research scientists, engineers, and managers. Most of them had spent their entire careers at NewCo. However, these career narratives were destroyed by the downsizings and mean-spiritedness that were imposed upon them. These events did not present an immediate threat to their lives, but they were threatening, stripping them of the narratives of productive careers as loyal employees to a loyal company.

Lester and his colleagues were able to take courageous collective action in response to this duress because they created or re-created personal narratives, a narrative for their duress, and a collective action narrative that enabled them to mobilize the resources they needed to be able to confront their duress constructively. Lester re-created personal narratives for himself by talking to his wife and through spiritual experiences that gave him positive sanction for his identities as a child of God, a husband, and a father. These identities allowed him to manage his emotions and to make sense of the adversity.

As Lester made sense of the duress, he connected with broader social and societal narratives both in his religion and in the contemporary business economy. The narrative he created for his duress was one in which the business world was changing rapidly for many reasons and was becoming more competitive. Irrespective of whether the executives at his company had good intent, and irrespective of whether they managed the situation well, Lester's experience was part of a larger set of economic pressures. This way of understanding the duress suggested that events like the massive downsizing at his company could happen again at his company or at other companies where he might work.

Given Lester's explanation for his duress, he realized that he would have to learn how to live within this changing business environment and that others would have to do so as well. In other words, Lester and his colleagues faced a collective action dilemma—even though they may not have articulated it that way. They could cooperate and work together to cope with their new situation or defect and undermine each other to attempt to preserve their jobs. Lester chose to cooperate in spite of the pressures to do otherwise, and he began trying to enroll others in creating a new, collective action narrative with him. His knowledge that his family could get by served as permission for Lester to call meetings, even if others at NewCo undermined him. He took risks and shared his thoughts with his colleagues, inviting them to take risks and work together to create and a new, collective narrative for how they could respond to their duress constructively. He shared his narrative of the duress with employees in his unit, sparking discussions and debates and prompting others to share their narratives of the duress. Lester's unit meetings became

a means for NewCo employees, like the people aboard Flight 93, to discuss the duress they faced and to work together to create a collective response. These conversations began the formation of a collective identity and helped reform a fragile trust.

The NewCo story and the story of Flight 93 are similar in that people involved in the stories both used communicative actions such as expressions, information, permission, and commitments to create personal narratives, a narrative for the duress, and a collective action narrative, mobilizing the resources they needed to take courageous collective action. These cases are not identical, however. For example, unlike Flight 93, the duress at NewCo lingered. The employees at NewCo needed to create a collective plot for actions that could create moral or social worth amidst ongoing duress. They could not accomplish their constructive opposition with one action, but they could work together to make their unit a place where people did not have to be subject to a cutthroat culture and where they could develop their competencies and skills that would be marketable inside and outside the organization. The type of duress and the form of collective action are different as well. In spite of these differences, however, the theoretical lens that we have developed here remains useful in understanding the conditions that enabled courageous collective action in both settings. The similarities in explanatory structure between these two cases suggest that the three narratives we have proposed as enabling courageous collective action are worth using as a template to explore courageous collective action in other domains.

Contributions of Understanding Courageous Collective Action

In a world with rife with globalization, political instability, terrorism, demographic transformation, and a business climate that is increasingly complex and dynamic, organizations and the people within them are likely to face duress with increasing regularity (Karoly and Panis 2004, *The Atlantic Monthly* 2004, World Trade Organization 2003). As a result, courageous collective action will likely be an increasingly desirable response to organizational and global pressures and will be needed in a wide variety of situations. By identifying narratives and resources that enable courageous collective action and the types of communicative actions that facilitate people's creation of these narratives and resources, we can improve our theoretical understanding of mobilizing collective action under duress, and of conditions that enable courageous action in organizations.

We have suggested that people can reestablish their personal life narratives under duress, which allows them to tap into identity as a resource for managing emotions and understanding adversity. We have suggested that people can also construct narratives of duress, which allow them to make sense of what is happening and form judgments about the moral and social implications of a response in contextually accurate ways. And, finally, we have suggested that people can create collective narratives, which provide them with the resources of collective identity and a collective plot for coordinated action. Although this is not a definitive theory of courageous collective action, it does provide a preliminary model of necessary and sufficient narratives and resources to guide further inquiry. We expect, for example, that the details of these narratives will vary according to the actors, assets, and pressures of each situation, but we also expect that, whatever the situation, people who need to take courageous collective action will engage in these types of communicative actions and narrative constructions, because language is the asset people use to create organizations (Barnard 1968, Cooren 2000). We believe that this model provides a first step toward unlocking the ways that people take courageous collective action across multiple contexts.

Contributions to Social Movement Research

Our analysis of Flight 93 posed a unique challenge because it was clearly an example of collective action and yet it also differed from existing approaches. We needed to understand collective action in a way that took into account how people manage the emotions that accompany duress, uses for social networks that go beyond mobilizing participation and material support, sensemaking through interactive discourse when considering moral issues, the creation of collective identities and narratives among uncoordinated but interdependent individuals, and the need for resourcefulness rather than just resources. Our use of a narrative lens that draws on the work of scholars like Weick (1995), Cooren (2000), and Feldman (2004) enables us to extend social movement literature in each of these ways.

Emotion and Networks. Our first contribution to research on social movements has both been to identify the need for individuals to manage their emotions when under duress and to provide a theoretical explanation for how they do this. This theoretical explanation suggests that, when people face duress, Snow and Benford's (1988) "core framing tasks" of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing may not be enough to enable courageous collective action. These tasks certainly played a role in the events that occurred aboard Flight 93: passengers and crew diagnosed their situation as a suicide mission, developed a prognosis for how they should act, and used vocabularies of severity and urgency (Benford 1993) to motivate action. For people who are under duress to even be able to engage in these tasks, however, they need access to identities grounded outside of their immediate situation. If they do not have access to these identities already, then a fourth task may

need to be accomplished before other framing begins: the reestablishment of a personal life narrative.

If people need to access identities outside of their immediate situation, it may require connecting to relevant people in one's personal network who are outside the arena of collective action. The idea of relying on personal networks to mobilize resources is common in the social movements literature (Tilly 1978), but rarely has this literature conceptualized identity as a crucial resource that comes from network connections. The case of Flight 93 is distinct in that it suggests that, rather than seeking to enroll others to participate or give material goods, people under duress rely on those outside of the situation for emotional and symbolic support. We suspect that receiving emotional and symbolic support from one's social network is particularly important for courageous collective action, but this extension merits further investigation in relation to mobilizing collective action generally.

Frame Development and the Morality of Frames. This focus on individual needs suggests another change in the way we understand the framing of social movements. If people have individual fears, individual needs, and individual networks to draw upon, then we may be doing a disservice to our understanding of framing when we view framing as an activity that social movement entrepreneurs engage in to try to influence generic audiences (e.g., Hopkins and Reicher 1997, Snow et al. 1986)—a sensegiving rather than a sensemaking approach to frame development. Although some approaches to frame development use sensemaking concepts (e.g., Gamson 1992), little research examines discursive approaches to frame development (Benford and Snow 2000).

Our analysis of Flight 93 incorporates sensemaking as a discursive approach to the mobilization of courageous collective action. We show that frame development—i.e., developing a narrative of duress—can involve exploration and learning, particularly when issues of moral judgment are at stake, increasing the felt need for accuracy in the narratives people are trying to create. We also identify specific types of communicative actions that contribute to the creation of narratives: expressions and permission that sanction retrospective and prospective actions, information that allows people to infer plausible and hopefully accurate narratives, declarations that confer new identities and narratives upon actors, commitments that allow people to submit to narrative roles, and directions that enable people to coordinate and request confirmation. The view that social movement entrepreneurs seek to impose frames on others may be accurate in many cases, but in some instances participants in collective action must also learn together how to respond constructively to duress. When this happens, the "audience," rather than being static a recipient of messages (e.g., McAdam et al. 1996), becomes a participant in cocreating a frame. In our view of courageous collective action, those facing duress also participate in trying to developing certainty about their circumstances and thus about appropriateness of various responses.

Collective Identity. A sensemaking approach to understanding social movements also lends itself to an examination of the individual and collective identities at play in collective action. Benford and Snow (2000, p. 631) point out that collective action hinges on "the correspondence between individual and collective identities," and Klandermans (2002) argues that a collective identity is necessary to overcome any collective action dilemma. Few studies address the creation of collective identity under duress. Our study suggests that scholars would do well to look to discursive actions that are legitimated in real time to see the development of collective identity. Our study extends the view of the development of collective identity as a resource for acting under duress and shows the ways in which people make their collective identities "real," as Asch (1952) points out, when they act as if those collectives are real and depend on them for interdependent action in the face of duress.

Resource Mobilization. Our analysis of Flight 93 also invites social movement scholars to consider a practice-based view of resource mobilization. By foregrounding narrative, identity, and language as assets that can become resources when put to use in practice, we have incorporated Feldman's (2004) idea of resourcing as central to enabling courageous collective action. A practice-based view of resource mobilization encourages researchers to see a wide range of resources—not simply material wealth or social connections, but also things like identity, emotion, narrative, and trust—as being created in practice. This view suggests that resources are endogenous to social movements as well as exogenous to them and emphasizes the practices that people use to do things every day as potentially generative (Feldman 2004). This notion is in line with scholars like Ganz (2000), bolstering our understanding of the way in which movement organizations can create resources in practice and helping to explain why some organizations are "resourceful" even when they are not materially wealthy. This view also builds on narrative scholarship in collective action research, suggesting that narratives are crucial and central resources for enabling collective action. This view would buttress the arguments of scholars like Polletta (2002), who see stories as critical in enabling people to engage in protest. We extend this line of thinking by suggesting that narratives not only carry resources within them, but also become resources in themselves, fueling people's capacity to engage in courageous collective action.

Contributions to Research on Courage

Our analysis of Flight 93 can contribute to research on individual actions that we consider to be courageous, as well as to research on collective action. One contribution to this line of research is our definition of courage. Our analysis has a more social flavor to it than much of the research on topics such as speaking up, whistle blowing, or prosocial rule breaking (Miceli and Near 1988, Morrison 2006, Morrison and Milliken 2003). This was a natural focus, given our interest in collective action, but it is likely that much of this difficult action in organizations has a similar social component. A social perspective on courage invites scholars who study topics like speaking up or whistle blowing to take a more explicit view of when actions like these are courageous and suggests new research questions about how to foster courage from a social perspective. Research on courage is a budding area of organizational studies, and new theoretical views on courage in social systems are useful to guide the development of empirical research in this growing field.

Conclusion

Millions of people have been inspired by the actions that occurred aboard United Airlines Flight 93. We suggest that there is much that organizational scholars can learn from Flight 93 as well. It would be better if the people aboard Flight 93 were still with us today, but, because we cannot have them here, our challenge and responsibility is to create a variety of ways to remember and learn from their sacrifices. Our hope is that our efforts to understand their actions will extend their legacy in some small way and help them to live on in the actions of those who choose to follow their example, even in much more ordinary circumstances.

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Endnote

[1]We provide only a sketch as context for our analysis. There are many topics of interest with regard to Flight 93, but we analyze only the conversations and events that relate to developing a collective capability to act courageously. For example, some people (in spite of evidence to the contrary from both Longman 2002 and the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004) argue that Flight 93 was shot down by U.S. military aircraft. Although we tend to believe the evidence provided by Longman and the Commission, this debate is irrelevant to whether and how the people on Flight 93 organized themselves. The telephone calls and cockpit voice recorder provide us with sufficient evidence that people on the flight organized and began executing a counterattack against their hijackers.

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